Worlds of Wonder:
National Parks, Zoos, Disney, and the Genealogies of Wonder in U.S. Culture

By

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For Patsy, a.k.a. Tank.

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Finally, there has not been a day of my graduate career when I have not thanked my lucky stars for Peggy McCracken. She has been the smartest and most reliable of co-chairs, mentors, and friends. She agreed to chair my committee early on, before I had landed in a field. When I did land in a project whose focus was centuries later than her own specialization, she not only stayed on as co-chair; she continued to be the closest, most intelligent reader of my work I am ever likely to find. The summer I wrote my prospectus, I had knee surgery and sat at home struggling to define the project. Peggy brought me bags of ice and a crucial critical eye. She has challenged me both personally and intellectually to grow in ways I might never have grown without her guidance. She has shown me over and over again what intellectual community is, reminded me of my

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Abstract

"Worlds of Wonder: National Parks, Zoos, Disney, and the Genealogies of Wonder in U.S. Culture" is an environmental cultural study that focuses on three institutional contexts and histories shaped by wonder rhetoric. These sites ground my articulation of three genealogies of wonder, based in (1) travel and the foundation of the U.S. national parks; (2) histories of scientific collecting and zoos; and (3) technological innovations and Disney attractions. Wonder, I argue, is not a conceptual given. It is a historically shaped emotion and discourse that has become a major discursive force for thinking about U.S. environments. Wonder has a distinctive history in the U.S., and I show that over the course of the nineteenth century, it was first used as a shifting signifier to describe a range of sights and experiences; it then became a codified rhetoric referring to particular kinds of landscapes and experiences that were, in turn, commodified through tourism. In tracing the codification of wonder and its institutional uses, "Worlds of Wonder" offers a cultural and literary analysis grounded in readings of a varied set of textual and visual media. Focusing on specific moments in institutional history, I analyze archival materials such as Northern Pacific Railway's *Wonderland* guidebooks and advertising campaign; visual and textual rhetorical practices of travel narratives by Washington Irving, Alexis de Tocqueville, Frances Trollope, John Charles Fremont, Edwin Bryant, Samuel Bowles, Theodore Dreiser; and material sites, such as exhibits at zoos in Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, San Diego, the Bronx, and theme park attractions

such as Disney California Adventure's "World of Color". Each chapter examines wonder in the context of several interdisciplinary fields: chapter one locates wonder in environmental history and American literary and cultural studies; chapter two treats wonder and affect studies, animal studies, and zoo history; and chapter three contributes to Disney studies and technological histories. These interdisciplinary contexts ground my argument that national parks, zoos, and Disney theme parks create and deploy wonder discourses in the making of "experience economies" that produce collective wonder practices and define ways of participating in the nation, ecological worlds, and globalized corporate environments.

Introduction

In Search of Wonder:
Histories and Geographies of Wonder in the United States

Like all scholarly projects, but perhaps somewhat more so than most, *Worlds of Wonder* has been a journey, or rather, a collection of journeys. Over the course of the past five years, I have traveled all over the country—by foot, bicycle, car, rail, and plane—in search of evidence and experience. That journey had many "beginnings," in Edward Said's use of the term,[1] one of which was at the Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek, MI (which I discuss in chapter two), and one of which was at the Whole Foods Market check-out in Ann Arbor, MI, where I routinely pick up the *National Geographic Magazine*. In the winter of 2011, the newsstands featured a "special edition" on "America's National Parks." I bought the magazine on the spot for its beautiful, expansive images, which transported me, however temporarily, from a mundane, mid-western winter to a distant world of nature, light, color, wonder. Most of the magazine's 96 pages consist of two-page photo spreads of full-bleed images. Each photo depicts dramatic nature scenes taken from around the country: Wrangell-St. Elias, Alaska, Crater Lake, Oregon, Grand Canyon, Arizona, Mammoth Cave, Kentucky, Shenandoah, Virginia, Badlands, South Dakota, and so on. Besides a relatively short essay, "A Parks Odyssey" by Kenneth Brower, the magazine contains very little text. The message is

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[1] Edward Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

obvious: the parks and these images of nature speak for themselves. What little framing the magazine provides states what the full-color vibrant photographs make clear: "Since the establishment of Yellowstone in 1872, these national treasures have been preserving the special corners of our land—places of wonder, exhilaration, and peace…. America's parks are shining beacons, drawing us to them in body and spirit."[2]

The visually dramatic collection of images in this "special edition" and the framing of the national parks as "places of wonder" seemed to be part of a broader National Geographic effort to engage in "wonder"-oriented projects, as the online journal *Wonderlust* notes in a March 7, 2011 posting: "How is this for wonder?! On Saturday [March 5, 2011], National Geographic launched a 16×16′ house into flight, inspired by the Pixar movie 'Up,' in what was the largest balloon cluster flight in history."[3] A film of the event subsequently aired as part of a National Geographic series called "How Hard Can It Be" in the fall of 2011. Reflecting on photographs of the event, Eliza Coleman, *Wonderlust*'s editor, comments that National Geographic is finally "getting their act together…. Suddenly they are doing tons of cool news-worthy stuff that is making them relevant again!" That relevance for Coleman has to do with National Geographic's ability to capture and create wonder(s), be it through nature or through the inspiration and facilitation of technology.

Coleman's journal *Wonderlust* was founded in 2008 with the express purpose of being a site to display wonderful things. The journal and its editor are "interested in all

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[2] "America's National Parks," *National Geographic* (March, 2011), 2.
[3] Eliza Coleman, "Up-Inspired Floating House," *The Wonderlust Journal*, March7, 2011, http://thewonderlustjournal.com/up-inspired-floating-house/.

things that delight the senses and inspire the mind to wander and wonder."[4] The journal

defines "Wonderlust" as "a strong, innate desire for things that inspire wonder or the urge

to create." Although the vast majority of the posts on the journal's site display some kind

of historical, artistic or technological creation (there are posts on iPhone apps, random

historical facts, technologically formulated composite images of "typical people," Ralph

Waldo Emerson's house, etc.), the journal's icon is of a black silk-screened elephant, an

image, which connects wonder to travel and colonial histories as well as to nature via the

exotic animal.

   Taken together, the national parks, National Geographic's recent and on-going

projects, and *The Wonderlust Journal* outline some of the major sites of wonder in

contemporary American culture. Wonder inheres in nature, animals, the exotic, the past,

science, technology, fantasy, art, spectacle. In addition, wonder is defined as a sensual,

inspirational, and creative experience, based in delight, surprise, and excitement. It is also

an "innate" drive, a desire, and state of mind that is about imagination seeking the

unexpected.

   "Worlds of Wonder" asks how and why wonder has come to be defined and

located in these ways in American culture. Although I was not entirely aware of it at the

time, when I picked up the *National Geographic* on the national parks, I was searching

for wonder, for some kind of momentary respite from the ordinary. *National Geographic*,

of course, in turn was banking on my—and other consumers'—"wonderlust" to draw me

into the magazine's representations of wonderful, distant natures. The magazine's cover,

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[4] Eliza Coleman, "Eliza Coleman," *The Wonderlust Journal*, last modified January 23, 2013,
http://thewonderlustjournal.com/author/eliza-coleman/.

indeed, advertises the issue as "An Insider's Guide to the Parks System," promising to allow buyers to "escape the crowds" and "find the best trails."

These promises are about escape and the possibility of having a distinctive, unique experience in the park. The magazine operates on emotional and rhetorical, natural and commercial levels. My analysis throughout "Worlds of Wonder" approaches wonder as an experience that is inextricably bound up in rhetorical, discursive practices that are at work in many different kinds of cultural texts and institutions. Wonder, as I will define in more detail shortly, can be said to exist in a taxonomy of other affects, emotions, and aesthetic paradigms. Associated terms like "exhilaration," "peace," "delight," "awe," "curiosity," "the sublime," even in some cases "horror" and the "grotesque" often intersect with or surround the rhetoric of wonder. The lines between these categories of experience and aesthetics are not always straight-forward, but part of what distinguishes wonder is its historical status as a rhetorical system, as well as the fact that it has been far more widely commercialized than these related affects and aesthetic categories. Wonder is also a dynamically shifting and open category of emotional experience, a versatility, which has made it adaptable to a wide range of uses.

As an object of study, wonder does not offer up a single methodology or approach. Thus, "Worlds of Wonder" performs a comparative cultural study of several different sites whose histories and framing have been bound up in wonder rhetoric and narratives. I ground my analysis in three institutional sites—the national parks, zoos, and Disney theme parks—in drawing some of the major genealogies of wonder in U.S. culture. These sites are all parks that frame particular environments: natural/national, zoological/educational, and technological/amusement-based. In these sites, wonder

participates in producing experiences of landscapes that constitute worlds unto themselves, as my title suggests. These worlds of wonder draw on and in some cases re-enact much broader histories of travel and tourism, colonial collecting practices, science and technology, and magic and spectacle, among others.

"Worlds of Wonder" argues that wonder has a unique history in the U.S., and that this history and its rhetorical practices have become major frameworks for thinking about U.S. environments. The project is situated in environmental cultural studies, a branch of the emerging, interdisciplinary environmental or ecological humanities, which seek to bridge traditional divides between the sciences and the humanities. In focusing on wonder as a category of significant environmental experience, I contribute to scholarship in the environmental humanities that is beginning to consider the relationships between affect/emotion and the cultural challenges surrounding the adoption of sustainable practices. In her book *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (2014), Stephanie LeManger, for example, argues that affective attachments condition our commitments to unsustainable practices, such as the use of oil, and shape political and economic choices that have deep ramifications for the prospects of environmental sustainability.[5]

She articulates a notion of "feeling ecological" based on the uneasy recognition that "humans mingle and are perhaps invaded by other 'agents,' [a sense that] does not necessarily feel good to the ordinary people enmeshed in these events [oil spill clean-ups, for example]."[6] Although "feeling ecological" is not particularly comfortable, there are

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[5] Stephanie LeManger, *Living Oil: Petroleum Culture in the American Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[6] Ibid., 105.

also versions of "feeling ecological" defined by "the positive sense of happy affect toward the nonhuman."[7] These happier affects, LeManger suggests, are often about a "feeling at home" with particular understandings of environments and human-nonhuman relations.[8] But in its more troubling sense "feeling ecological" is about the collapse of both bodily and intellectual boundaries between self and other, human and non-human.

Wonder in both its positive and negative manifestations presents instances of "feeling ecological," defined both by feeling at home in an expansive, aesthetic perception of nature and by feeling profoundly disturbed by new, unrecognizable sights, as well as impending natural and ecological disasters. Wonder rhetoric is frequently deployed to elicit a wide range of different feelings. My comparative cultural study of wonder environments examines the role of rhetoric in shaping environmental affects. My analyses of the function of wonder-discourse in institutional contexts uncovers the historical and cultural forces that have contributed to wonder's construction as a particularly American affect, experience of landscape, and opening to "feeling ecological." My focus on contemporary American institutions grounds this study in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American cultural contexts, but these institutions' roles and practices also reach back to earlier European histories of wonder. Drawing on these ideas and histories of wonder allows the dissertation to take a long view of the layered, interconnected genealogies of wonder and show disjunctures as well as continuities across time and place.

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[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

I.   Surveying the Territory: Wonder Scholarship

Flipping through *National Geographic* in a grocery store thus has taken me on more than just a brief imaginary journey. It has taken me not only to different parks, libraries, and archives around the country, but into a wide range of scholarly fields—from literary studies, to philosophy, environmental history, affect studies, animal studies, museum studies, and popular culture studies, to name a few. Wonder is an important concept and emotion in a number of contemporary fields, and its importance is particularly highlighted in response to ecological and epistemic crises. One of the major aims of environmental education scholars today, for example, is to cultivate wonder in students with the hopes that wonder will help create a healthier and more ethical relationship to the planet.[9] In literary studies, wonder is discussed primarily in relation to poetry and science fiction, as genres that transport readers to different realms.[10] In a different register, philosophers like Kenneth Schmitz are engaged in *The Recovery of Wonder* (2005) as a mode of dealing with the failure of "the modern project" and as an effort to expand "our glance beyond the modern [and postmodern] horizon."[11] Wonder has long been a Western philosophical concern, in some form, since both Plato and

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[9] See, for example, Lisa Sideris's "Environmental Literacy and the Lifelong Cultivation of Wonder," in *Teaching Environmental Literacy: Across Campus and Across the Curriculum*, eds. Heather L. Reynolds, Eduardo S. Brondizio, and Jennifer Meta Robinson with Doug Karpa and Briana L. Gross (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2010), a collection which focuses on place-based learning.
[10] In science fiction, see Neil Barron, *Anatomy of Wonder: A Critical Guide to Science Fiction* (New Providence, NJ: R.R. Bowker, 1981) and Jeffrey Allen Tucker, *A Sense of Wonder: Samuel R. Delany, Race, Identity, and Difference* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004). In poetry, wonder has been a topic in Romanticism for decades, but some critics and poets also more broadly talk about wonder as the aim of poetry. See, for example, Matthew Scott, "An Ethics of Wonder and the Cure of Poetry: Wordsworth, William James and the American Reader," in *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture,* eds. Joel Pace and Matthew Scott (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005)*,* and James Logenbach*, The Resistance to Poetry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).
[11] Kenneth Schmitz, *The Recovery of Wonder* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2005), xi.

Aristotle considered philosophy to be grounded in wonder.[12] Descartes, Hegel,

Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein, among others,[13] have written about wonder,

and these works have, in turn, generated a scholarly conversation on the philosophy of

wonder and wonder in philosophy.[14]

These investigations have remained largely separate from the emergence of

scholarship on the history of wonder. Most of the scholarly work tracing the history of

wonder has been located in the fields of medieval and early modern studies. These fields

have defined a historically-located European philosophical, artistic, and nature-based

tradition of "wonder." As Stephen Greenblatt describes in *Marvelous Possessions: The*

Wonder of the New World (1991), wonder and its close relatives—marvel and delight—

are considered to be part of "a whole complex system of representation, verbal and

visual, philosophical and aesthetic, intellectual and emotional, through which people in

the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance apprehended, and thence possessed or

discarded, the unfamiliar, the alien, the terrible, the desirable, and the hateful."[15] In

Wonders and the Order of Nature, *1150-1750* (2001), Lorraine Daston and Katherine

Park define wonder as less of a "system" than a set of discourses that "marked the

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[12] See Plato's *Theaetetus* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.
[13] See Descartes's *Passions of the Soul*, Hegel's *The Philosophy of History*, Kierkegaard's *Stages on Life's Way*, Heidegger's *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, and Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* and *The Philosophical Investigations*. Mary-Jane Rubenstein's *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008) discusses many of these philosophers in relation to wonder.
[14] See Cornelis Verhoeven, *The Philosophy of Wonder*, trans. Mary Foran (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1972) and Lissa Jill Skitol, "From Awe to Anxiety: The Nature of Wonder and Its Fate in the Current Age" (Dissertation, Emory University, 2003). Discussions of wonder in a philosophical register also often bleed into psychological, spiritual and/or religious realms. A recent example in this vein of scholarship, which has something of a literary bent with chapters on John Muir, William James, and Rachel Carson, is Robert Fuller's *Wonder: From Emotion to Spirituality* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006). Cecilia González-Andrieu's *Bridge to Wonder: Art as a Gospel of Beauty* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012) similarly focuses on wonder and art as spiritual/religious experiences.
[15] Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 22-23.

outermost limits of the natural."[16] Wonder is defined by rarity, the extraordinary, surprise, curiosity, the unknown.

Daston and Park's book is the most authoritative account of the history of wonder. It argues that medieval and early modern wonder defined a distinct, pre-scientific understanding of "the order of nature" that was at the heart of elite intellectual culture until the Enlightenment. The book distinguishes medieval and early modern wonder from the modern "marvelous"—"the fictional or fantastic"—defined by the Enlightenment.[17] For Daston and Park, the modern marvelous "is defined in privative terms as that which is excluded by modern views of the rational, the credible, and the tasteful: the products of imagination, the inventions of folklore and fairy tales, fabulous beasts of legend, freaks of sideshows and the popular press, and, more recently, the uncanny in all its forms."[18] Medieval and early modern wonder, however, is distinguished by its operation in a different "order of nature," a worldview and an "order" of "natural customs," rather than laws:

> defined by marvels as well as by miracles. Although highly ordered, this nature was neither unexceptionably uniform nor homogeneous over space and time. Wonders tended to cluster at the margins rather than at the center of the known world, and they constituted a distinct ontological category, the preternatural, suspended between the mundane and the miraculous. In contrast, the natural order moderns inherited from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is one of uniform and inviolable laws. On this view, nature is everywhere and always the same, and its regularities are ironclad. Wonders may occasionally happen, but they occupy no special geographical region, nor can they lay claim to any special ontological status outside the strictly natural. Only a miracle—a divine suspension of natural laws—can break this order.[19]

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[16] Loraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature: 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), 13.

[17] For a more targeted treatment of the fantastic, see Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la literature fantastique* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1970).

[18] Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 15.

[19] Ibid., 14.

In short, for Daston and Park, wonder in medieval and early modern contexts constitutes a different understanding of the world and nature, whereas the modern marvelous operates in opposition to the scientific, rationalist order of things, as "a disreputable passion in workaday science, redolent of the popular, the amateurish, and the childish."[20]

This argument lines up with Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's argument in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) that the Enlightenment brought about "the disenchantment of the world."[21] Although Daston and Park's analysis does not posit the disappearance of wonder in modernity, their historical narrative does suggest that its importance in modernity has substantially diminished or been diffused, since the marvelous has been defined primarily in opposition to authoritative scientific rationalism. For Daston and Park, whereas wonder was a major concern and interest of the medieval and early modern intellectual elite, in the modern world, wonder has been "vulgarized" and excluded from elite institutions and discourses, usually because it has been replaced by science and scientific discourses.

Scholarly work on wonder and wonders has largely conformed to this narrative that posits a linear progression cut off by a radical break between the early modern period and the Enlightenment. There have been few scholarly approaches to modern wonder in the European context, and scholarly treatments of wonders or wonderful things in American history and culture tend to focus on their associations with the vulgar and "low culture"—and rarely tie into scholarship on the history of wonder. Andrea Dennett's *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (1997), Rachel Adams's *Sideshow*

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[20] Ibid., 14-15.
[21] Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 1.

U.S.A. (2001), and Thomas Fahy's *Freak Shows and the Modern American Imagination* (2006) are characteristic of the ways in which modern American wonder has been studied and associated with freakish, marginalized bodies in the tradition of P.T. Barnum's spectacular shows and exhibits.[22] Barnum[23] is often a focus in discussions of wonder in America, because, as James Cook notes, Barnum "built much of what scholars now call the 'culture industry.'"[24] It is not, as Cook remarks, that Barnum was the first to exhibit wonderful curiosities for the public, but no one before or after him "came close to matching the Great Yankee Showman's durability, range of products, or cumulative impact.… Barnum was the driving force who transformed the show trade from a set of vernacular traditions and local markets into a global industry."[25]

Most scholars who examine modern wonder and wonders do so through the framework of "freakery" in the Barnum tradition, presenting postcolonial critiques that examine racial ideologies and relations of power produced through wonder in spectatorship. As Rosemarie Garland Thomson notes in her introduction to the edited volume *Freakery*, underlying the shift to discourses of freakery from discourses of wonder and/or marvel is a narrative about "our collective cultural transformation into modernity…. As modernity develops in Western culture, freak discourse logs the

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[22] Andrea Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997); Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), and Thomas Fahy's *Freak Shows and the Modern American Imagination* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006).
[23] Barnum has also been the basis of numerous studies, including, Bluford Adams's *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1997) and Benjamin Reiss's *The Showman and the Slave: Race, Death, and Memory in Barnum's America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2010).
[24] P.T. Barnum and James W. Cook, *The Colossal P.T. Barnum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe* (Urbana, IL: Illinois University Press, 2005), 1.
[25] Ibid., 2.

change… what aroused awe now inspires horror…. In brief, wonder becomes error."[26]

This framework is relevant to some of the dynamics surrounding wonder in the contexts I examine—particularly with regard to the histories and practices of zoos and earlier cabinets of wonder—but this focus on the wonders of so-called "low culture" has, at times, obfuscated some of the other ways in which wonder has operated and continues to operate in U.S. culture, particularly in relation to the environment.

One study that moves away from the examination of freakery into a broader study of wonder is Fred Nadis's *Wonder Shows: Performing Science, Magic, and Religion in America* (2005). Although Nadis does discuss Barnum, he does so in a context geared more towards scientific performance than unusual bodily forms. Thus, Barnum appears alongside people like Thomas Edison. Nadis treats what he calls "wonder shows" in three clusters. First, he "looks at the history of electricity and examines how performers, inventors, and electrical technicians perceived and promoted electricity as a quasi-magical force."[27] This history of the wonder and wonder shows is also central to my analysis of Disney's theme parks and uses of technology. Next, Nadis looks at hypnotists and mind readers and their performance of "mystic vaudeville."[28] Finally, he examines wonder shows as "a species of modern salesmanship…corporate-sponsored science shows, evangelical science shows, UFO occultists and their wares, and New Age promotions."[29] Here, Nadis aligns his analysis with studies of wonder and religion or

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[26] Rosemarie Garland Thomson, "Introduction: From Wonder to Error—A Genealogy of Freak Discourse in Modernity," in *Freakery: Cultural Spectacles of the Extraordinary Body*, ed. Rosemarie Garland Thomson (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 3.
[27] Fred Nadis, *Wonder Shows: Performing Science, Magic, and Religion in America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 19.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.

spirituality.[30] On the whole, however, these clusters of analysis allow for a broader

understanding of the use and application of the discourses of wonder in American culture,

within and outside institutional contexts, particularly with a focus on science and

technology.

Although Nadis suggests that his book owes much to Daston and Park's account

of wonder, he never discusses their book, nor does he fit his claims into a historical

understanding of wonder, except to say that his book begins where Daston and Park's

account ends "with the 'vulgarization' of wonder."[31] Nadis introduces his book as taking

up the historical presuppositions Daston and Park lay out: "Most recent defenders of

science reject wonder as an ally of ignorance and superstition." He warns, however, that

"wonder should be ignored only with caution in America…. the capacity for wonder,

although universal, is particularly well developed in Americans."[32] Despite this

statement, Nadis does not explain or elaborate upon the correlation between wonder and

Americans. In claiming that Americans are particularly attuned to wonder, however, he

perpetuates a long-standing, unexamined critical assumption: that the U.S. and

Americans constitute a nation of wonder(s). One of the aims of "Worlds of Wonder" is to

begin to define why and how wonder has figured so prominently in U.S. cultural history,

especially, I will show, as a defining emotion and rhetorical approach to U.S.-American

landscapes.

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[30] Another, more recent study in this vein is Christopher D. Bader, F. Carson Mencken, and Joseph O. Baker's co-authored *Paranormal American: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).
[31] Nadis, *Wonder Shows*, 263.
[32] Ibid., xii.

In addition to Nadis's work, over the past twenty years or so, the emergence of the Posthumanities, whose major figures include Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Cary Wolfe, among others, has called for a re-evaluation of traditional narratives of history and progress, particularly from the Enlightenment and modernity.[33] In this school of thought, political theorist Jane Bennett, for instance, has written about *The Enchantment of Modern Life* (2001), advocating an ecologically-minded ethics grounded in an "enchantment without design" view of the world.[34] The literary scholar Joshua Landy and the historian Michael Saler have compiled an interdisciplinary volume on *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Secular Magic in a Rational Age* (2009), an effort to showcase the wide variety of ways in which the process of "secularization," which has often been said to be the impetus for disenchantment, has brought with it new strategies for re-enchantment.[35]

This line of inquiry has produced a number of recent studies and dissertations that have sought to examine the "persistence of wonder" in modern, non-vulgarized contexts: in Victorian culture,[36] in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century American "wondrous" narratives,[37] in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literary cultures,[38] in twentieth-

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[33] See especially: Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2008), Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), and Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2010).

[34] Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, Ethics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 9.

[35] Joshua Landy and Michael Saler, *The Re-Enchantment of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.

[36] Verity Hunt, "Raising a Modern Ghost: The Magic Lantern and the Persistence of Wonder in the Victorian Education of the Senses," *Romanticism and Victorianism* 52 (November 2008).

[37] Allison Hutira, "The Wondrous Narrative in Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century American Literature and Culture" (Dissertation, Kent State University, 2006).

[38] Sarah Tindal Kareem, "Stranger than Fiction: Wonder and the Novel in Eighteenth Century Britain" (Dissertation, Harvard University, 2003); Jude Nixon, "'Lost in Vast Worlds of Science': Dickens and Science," *Dickens Studies Annual* 35 (2005); Michael Page, "Continual Food for Discovery and Wonder: Science and Nineteenth-Century British Literary Imagination from Erasmus Darwin to H.G. Wells" (Dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2008); Kara Elizabeth Wittman, "States of Wonder in the Nineteenth

century Latin American magical realist texts,[39] and in feminist theory and science and technology studies (STS).[40] With the exception of Arellano's *Wonder Texts and Wonder Chambers*, which approaches wonder as "a historical creature, changing shape and texture according to the time and the context in which it surfaces,"[41] these works take a largely theoretical and de-historicized approach to defining wonder, sometimes referring to Plato or Aristotle or to the now commonplace association of wonder with childhood or the child's perspective. Rarely do these studies situate themselves in the broader history of wonder.

On the whole, scholarship that invokes wonder in literary and historical fields breaks down into efforts to write the history of wonder (almost exclusively in medieval and early modern studies) or studies of texts from different eras that invoke a usually de-historicized concept of wonder to shed light on the object of study. Tony Tanner's 1965 *The Reign of Wonder,* one of the few studies of wonder in the U.S.-American context to examine a non-vulgarized cultural production, is a good example of the latter. Tanner's book, one of the first studies of American literature in British academe, claims that "wonder" has been a defining property of American literature from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Saul Bellow. This wonder is not the early modern understanding of the monstrous or distinctly "other" inhabiting the outskirts of the "natural" order, nor is it the performative "vulgar" wonder of Nadis's shows. It is, however, defined in terms Daston and Park suggest are dominant among modern perceptions of wonder: as childlike.

Century British Novel" (Dissertation, Stanford University, 2008); Riccardo Capoferro, "Empirical Wonder: Historicizing the Fantastic, 1660-1760" (Dissertation, Rutgers University, 2009).
[39] Jeronimo Arellano, "Wonder Texts and Wonder Chambers: Latin American Magical Realist Narrative and Its Early Modern Sources" (Dissertation, Stanford University, 2008).
[40] Martha Kenney, "Fables of Attention: Wonder in Feminist Theory and Scientific Practice" (Dissertation, University of California, Santa Cruz, 2013).
[41] Arellano, "Wonder Texts," 4.

Where Daston and Park suggest that wonder's associations with children have discredited it in the modern context, Tanner reclaims wonder as a naïve, innocent, and pure mode of perception that is at the heart of elite literary culture in the U.S. For Tanner, the desire to preserve child-like perception entered American literature through the Romantics—William Wordsworth and, most importantly, Thomas Carlyle, whose work Emerson read and translated avidly. [42] The sense of wonder that became so important in American literature is about a particular mode of perception, a way of being in the world that rejected or at least suspended "reason" and analysis. Tanner suggests that this mode of perception entered Romanticism through a misreading of Rousseau's *Emile* and its instructions on the proper education of a child. Where Rousseau advocated cultivating a child's sense of wonder as part of his pathway to becoming a rational adult, the Romantics latched on to the child's sense of perception as the end in itself:

> Not only because of his putatively innocent heart, not only because he seems free of all the besetting doubts and distress of adult life, but also because of his point of view, his visual relationship with reality [does the child hold such special interest to the romantics]. The distrust of judgment and analysis, the conviction of the need for a renewed sense of wonder and admiration, a new stress on 'the passive susceptibilities,' a longing to feel the wholeness of the universe rather than merely understand it—almost inevitably writers who embraced this cluster of ideas fastened on the child's relationship with nature as a symbol of their own aspirations. The child's wondering eye offered the romantic writer an avenue back to a reality from which he fast felt himself becoming alienated.[43]

For Tanner, these ideas infused Romanticism, but they remained "a polemical philosophic concept" in European literature, where beginning with Emerson, wonder became "a completely assimilated disposition, almost a way of life" in American

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[42] This understanding of both Wordsworth and his influence on American literature is still very much a part of contemporary literary criticism. See, for instance, Scott's "An Ethics of Wonder and the Cure of Poetry: Wordsworth, William James and the American Reader."

[43] Tony Tanner, *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety And Reality In American Literature* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 7.

literature,[44] linked to the effort of "many American writers… to develop a new point of view, a new way of appropriating reality, a new angle of vision."[45]

Tanner acknowledges that wonder is not unique to the American context, but it has a particular and specific importance in the U.S. that it does not have in European culture:

> From the start 'wonder' was put to much more far-ranging uses in American writing than in any other literature. The American writer faced different problems and had different needs, and 'wonder' became a key strategy where in Europe it tended to remain one idea among others…. A major problem facing American writers was simply, overwhelmingly, the need to recognize and contain a new continent. The wondering vision was adopted as a prime method of inclusion and assimilation…. The stance of wonder has *remained* a preferred way of dealing with experience and confronting existence among American writers.[46]

Although wonder has such a privileged place in American literature, wonder does not define "American-ness"; rather Tanner's privileging of wonder in the U.S.-American context suggests "that certain problems and certain solutions are observably present in many American writings and that these may be profitably approached by considering their predilection for the strategy of the naïve vision, that deliberate attempt to regard reality with minimum reference to previous familiarity and interpretive knowledge, that enduring preference for wonder over analysis."[47] Hence although, for Tanner, wonder emerged as a perceptual paradigm in the European Romantic movement, it became appropriated by American writers, in part because the philosophical position seemed to have a direct correlation to the "newness" of the American continent and its drive to create a distinctive U.S.-American culture.

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[44] Ibid., 10.
[45] Ibid., 11.
[46] Ibid., 10.
[47] Ibid., 11.

Set alongside Daston and Park and Nadis's studies, Tanner's work, along with the growing scholarly work in modern enchantment, problematizes the notion of the modern "vulgarization" of wonder. Although Tanner defines wonder in terms of child-like vision, he also places wonder squarely in the "serious," adult literary realm—in the works of Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Gertrude Stein, Sherwood Anderson, Ernest Hemingway, and Henry James, among others. In this sense, the supposedly clear dynamics Daston and Park lay out and Nadis confirms around wonder— between vulgar and non-vulgar, high and low culture, past and present, modern and non-modern, and child and adult perception and worlds—appear to be considerably more complicated in the recent U.S. context.

There are at least a number of different kinds of wonder: philosophic wonder, early modern order-contesting wonder, vulgarized "modern" wonder, child-like wonder, European Romantic philosophic wonder, Romantic-inflected American literary wonder, wonder as a mode of perception, wonder as an ontological event, and so forth. These are distinguished by their time and place, in some cases. In other cases, they overlap and exist simultaneously, as in Nadis and Tanner's accounts. These convergences and overlaps make clear that the discourses of wonder and the ways in which they are used are complex, often taken-for-granted, and largely under-studied.

II.   Setting Out: Materials and Methods

In the winter of 2011, when I found the *National Geographic Magazine* on the national parks, I may have been searching for some personal wonder. As this dissertation project became more defined over the course of the next several months, I undertook a

much larger search for wonder as I worked in archives, drove and hiked through national parks, browsed the web, walked through zoos, examined exhibits, experienced Disney's theme parks, and watched movies. As is often the case in cultural history projects, neither my material corpus nor my methods of inquiry were entirely pre-set. I knew that the rhetoric of wonder has been pervasive in U.S. cultural contexts since at least the nineteenth century. It has appeared in a wide range of cultural productions—advertisements, brand names, comics, films, literature, etc. And I knew that it would be impossible to account for all of those instances of wonder—from Wonder Bread to Wonder Woman.

"Worlds of Wonder" focuses on the institutional contexts of national parks, zoos, and Disney, sites, which historically have been considered to be wonders and have been defined by their capacity to invoke wonder. These sites form the basis of a comparative cultural study that takes a broad view, moving from early nineteenth-century travel narratives (by Washington Irving, Alexis de Tocqueville, Frances Trollope, John Charles Frémont, Samuel Bowles, among others) to railroad guidebooks of the American West to recent exhibition practices, advertising campaigns, films, and performances in zoos and amusement parks. I focus on nineteenth- and twentieth-century histories of U.S. parks, tracing their relationships to histories of wonder and travel, colonial collections, conservation, science, and spectacle. The histories and cultural contexts surrounding U.S. national parks, zoos, and Disney theme parks ground my efforts to draw genealogies of wonder that undergird the ways in which wonder has become a primary emotion and rhetorical framework for thinking about U.S.-American environments.

Although important work has been done in writing the history of wonder, Daston and Park's book, which covers 600 years of material, remains the only long-view approach to the history of wonder. Daston and Park acknowledge that writing the history of wonder requires suspending traditional periodization (in their case, the distinction between the medieval and early modern periods), but, despite the impressive historical range of their work, their study still leaves intact the linear narrative and periodizations of the Enlightenment and modernity. Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern* (1991), among other posthumanist texts, has done much to problematize traditional modern narratives of history and binaries, including the modern/non-modern distinction. "Worlds of Wonder" takes Latour's critique as a starting point for a long-view approach to examining U.S.-American wonder spaces that continue to participate in much older histories of pre-modern or non-modern wonder.

As a means of getting at these genealogies of wonder, I examine the multi-faceted histories and cultural positions of national parks, zoos, and Disney, the print culture that has surrounded them, and the ways in which they have used and been shaped by discourses of wonder. My central questions in examining these institutions and the histories they participate in are: Why and how have these institutions come to be so defined by wonder? What histories and practices of wonder do they participate in? How is wonder deployed and valued differently in them? What are the implications of the privileging of wonder in national parks, zoos, and Disney, and in environmental thought?

My analysis of these institutions draws on their cultural histories and ties to and interactions with transatlantic cultural processes and philosophic and artistic discourses.

"Worlds of Wonder" draws three main genealogies of wonder—one grounded in national parks and histories of wonder in travel literature; another based in zoos and the history of scientific collecting or "cabinets of wonder"; and the third focusing on Disney and the history of wonder and technology. All three institutional histories and genealogies of wonder are implicated in practices of commodification and tourism. And none of these genealogies is entirely distinct from the other, nor is any a straight, linear history.

"Worlds of Wonder" is primarily a cultural analytical and literary project. I have been trained as a literary scholar, and throughout this dissertation, my approach is grounded in readings of cultural documents within particular historical contexts. The comparative elements of the project are twofold. First, I draw together the scholarly conversations in the history of (medieval and early modern) wonder and modern U.S. cultural history. Second, in analyzing national parks, zoos, and Disney theme parks together, I bring together several different parks and sites of wonder in order to shed light on different uses of wonder discourse and the significant overlaps in how each institution frames U.S.-American environments and crafts visitors' experiences of landscapes.

The genealogies of "Worlds of Wonder" owe more to Foucault's genealogical practices than to more narrowly defined, linear historical genealogies. My genealogical approach to wonder shares with Foucault's work a focus on historically taken-for-granted elements of everyday experience, that—like sexuality, for example—people have tended to take for granted and "feel [is] without history."[48] Much like Foucault's conception of genealogy this project is neither about origins, nor about clearly linear developments and historical trajectories. Rather, it is about excavating a U.S.-American environmental

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[48] Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), 139.

"structure of feeling."[49] Indeed, the project's genealogical elements follow more of an "archaeological method," as Foucault describes this practice in "What Is Critique?" This method for Foucault is about excavating the structures undergirding particular institutional forms of knowledge and power and the ways in which they have become historically acceptable and therefore naturalized.[50]

Many scholars in the Posthumanities have assumed similar or related methodological approaches to cultural critique, based on examining particular institutions' or objects' historical trajectories and reframing them as multi-dimensional and complex historical processes. Donna Haraway, for instance, describes her own method through the example of analyzing a former student's diaper pin:

> She [the student] was very committed to the home birthing movement and wore diaper pins on her hat as a symbol of natural child-birth. She saw the diaper pin as a non-medical object, an object from daily use that signified women's relationships to their babies that was unmediated by the ultrasound machine, the speculum…. So we took the pin back in terms of the history of the plastics industry, the steel industry, and the history of the progressive regulation of safety. And pretty soon we saw how the safety pin was immersed in all these state regulatory apparatuses, and the history of the major industries within capital formation and so on. I hadn't removed it from the context in which she was wearing it, but… [showed] that it has many more meanings and contexts to it and once you've noted them you can't just drop them. You have to register the 'interference.' …. [I work] to make visible all those things that have been lost in an object; not in order to make the other meanings disappear, but rather to make it impossible for the bottom line to be one single statement.[51]

Haraway's approach, as it is articulated here, draws at least as much from Marxist and scientific materialisms as it does from Foucault's genealogical projects. In Foucault's work, as many critics have noted, history is painted in broad strokes. Unlike Haraway's

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[49] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
[50] Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?," in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), 61.
[51] Donna Haraway, *How Like a Leaf* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 105.

safety pin, but like sexuality, wonder is an abstract concept/emotion that operates in specific, muddied terrains. For this reason, "Worlds of Wonder" is organized around chapters that operate both as comparative contexts and as situated case studies, in the hope of avoiding some the of pit falls of broad-ranging historical projects, like Foucault's, while homing in on the historical conditions and materialities in which wonder has become such an important rhetorical and affective environmental paradigm.

The genealogies of wonder and travel, collection, and technology I trace in the following chapters intersect with a range of other histories of wonder. In her 1997 presidential address to the American Historical Association, entitled "Wonder," Carolyn Walker Bynum presents a critique of the way discussions of wonder "have been interpreted as moving in a more or less straight line from medieval scholastics to the Enlightenment."[52] One of her tactics for remedying this linear account is to point to three different wonder matrices in the Middle Ages, whose trajectories sometimes intersected, even as they operated in very different rhetorical and cultural contexts: "a theological-philosophical understanding of wonder emanating from university intellectuals; a religious discourse about wonder found in sermons, devotional writing, and…saints' lives; and a literature of entertainment [including travel writing, history writing, etc.]."[53] Bynum's approach to delineating multiple co-existing forms of wonder discourse informs my own approach.

Bynum differentiates between "wonder behavior" and "wonder talk," and she examines both wonder discourses and "the circumstances under which medieval men and

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[52] Caroline Walker Bynum, "Wonder" *The American Historical Review* 102, n. 1 (Feb. 1997), 4.
[53] Ibid., 6.

women experienced wonder, whether or not the sources use the term."[54] "Worlds of Wonder" studies discourses, but it does so through examining the making of geographies and spaces of wonder—wonderscapes, as I call them—be they explicitly named as such or not. In examining national parks, zoos, and Disney, this approach traces histories of wonder that are primarily, though certainly not exclusively, implicated in leisure practices, tourism, and recreation. Until now, the history of wonder has been traced primarily in conjunction with the history of science. Daston and Park's book aims, indeed, to tell the history of science through affect, rather than institutions. Nadis's book is also invested in the history of science, but his focus on "wonder shows" does begin to shift the focus to recreational contexts. "Worlds of Wonder" seeks to further prioritize the history of wonder, in its discursive and rhetorical formations, less as a branch of the history of science than as part of histories of emotional environmental experiences and leisure practices.

One of the problems with the notion that wonder operated in a "straight line" from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment, as Bynum critiques, rests in the fact that this narrative assumes a particular secularizing trajectory. The supposed "vulgarization" of wonder Daston and Park and Nadis posit rests on a particular understanding of the rise of secular institutional science. But science, like wonder, also has many discursive incarnations—and wonder has been a major presence in the development of science from the collecting practices of "cabinets of wonder" to the rhetoric and aims of popular science and nature writing well into the present day. Rachel Carson's *The Sense of Wonder* (1964) is an example that has been in print for nearly five decades. More

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[54] Ibid., 3.

recently, writers like the physicist Richard Feynman and evolutionary biologists Stephen Jay Gould and Richard Dawkins have also invoked wonder as part of their efforts to make science appreciable to a broader public, in the way that music is appreciable to non-musicians, to use Dawkins's explanation.[55]. Other works like Colette Brooks's *Lost in Wonder: Imagining Science and Other Mysteries* (2010) aim explicitly to bridge institutional science and the general public through wonder.[56] In narratives like these, wonder inhabits a kind of in-between middle-brow domain between popular culture and the intellectual elite, and it participates in a re-enchantment of the world.

In foregrounding American national parks, zoos, and Disney, "Worlds of Wonder" locates itself in what might be termed "mainstream" culture, while also tracing genealogies of wonder that traverse these mainstream locations and function in a multiplicity of histories and genres. Institutions of wonder like national parks and zoos do participate in scientific traditions, cultures, and practices—as places both amateur and professional scientists study and observe nature and animals. However, the prominence of wonder in nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. contexts has been equally embedded in the development of American recreational and leisure practices, as well as American corporate capitalism. Wonder articulated and continues to articulate a kind of suspended ontological realm. It is not utilitarian, and although there are objects of wonder, wonder has no aim. As many commentators suggest, wonder is bound up in novelty, and hence, it is markedly temporary. Because of its temporariness, it has to be constantly reinvented to

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[55] Richard Dawkins, "Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder," *The Richard Dawkins Foundation*, April 10, 2006, http://richarddawkins.net/articles/3-science-delusion-and-the-appetite-for-wonder. See also: Richard Dawkins, *The Magic of Reality* (Washington, D.C.: Free Press, 2011); Richard Dawkins, *Unweaving the Rainbow: Science, Delusion, and the Appetite for Wonder* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998); Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life* (New York: Norton, 1989).
[56] Colette Brooks, *Lost in Wonder: Imagining Science and Other Mysteries* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2010).

be sustained, a point, which I focus on specifically in chapter three. My approach to wonder aims to examine rhetorics and experiences that articulate, because of their "unscientific" quality, a different kind of affective relationship to nature, geography, and technology.

Much of the scholarship in American Studies and environmental history that has sought to define and historicize ideas of nature have focused on the categories of "pastoral" and "wilderness." Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964) examines "the pastoral ideal" as defining "the meaning of America ever since the age of discovery."[57] Marx's analysis attends to the centrality and persistence of the ideal of "the good shepherd…withdraw[ing] from the great world [to] begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape"[58] in U.S. literary and political history, even in an "urban, industrial, nuclear-armed society."[59] The paradox of a machine-oriented, complex society maintaining pastoral ideals is Marx's primary focus. My focus on environmental wonder does not displace Marx's highlighting of the importance of American pastoral, but wonder's applicability to both natures and advanced technologies, perhaps offers an American aesthetic and environmental ideal that accounts for the co-existence and complementarity of both untouched natures and advanced technologies.

Not long after *The Machine in the Garden* was published, Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* sought to foreground a different kind of natural environment—"wilderness." A foundational work in environmental history, Nash's book was first published in 1967 on the heels of the 1964 Wilderness Preservation Act, and

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[57] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid., 5.

remains one of the most extensive studies of how Americans have thought about the environment.[60] The Wilderness Preservation Act and scholars working on the history of wilderness sought to create a legal definition of wilderness and outline a federal National Wilderness Preservation System to encompass lands administered by the National Park Service, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Under the Wilderness Act, parts of federal lands administered by all four departments are protected in their "wilderness" state, which usually means that no roads or structures may be built on them, and they cannot be used for commercial purposes. Nash and his colleagues were concerned in large part with establishing the importance of the role of "wilderness" in American history. They foregrounded the centrality of the changing place of the wild in the development of modern American culture, beginning with the quintessential American struggle to "overcome" a hostile landscape. According to Nash, this struggle was one of the main themes of the nineteenth century. Nash's examination shows how European ideas of "wilderness" crossed the Atlantic and influenced American settlers and explorers. In turn, the American landscape altered European ideas of wilderness.

In the past several decades, scholars have begun to problematize the seemingly uncritical embrace of wilderness,[61] and, in the process, wonder has emerged on the map

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[60] Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001). More recent works in this vein include: William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: Norton, 1991); Michael Lewis, *American Wilderness: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
[61] See, especially, William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 69-90.

of environmental history. In "The Trouble with Wilderness," William Cronon, for example, writes that:

> The romantic legacy means that wilderness is more a state of mind than a fact of nature, and the state of mind that today most defines wilderness is *wonder*. The striking power of the wild is that wonder in the face of it requires no act of will, but forces itself upon us—as an expression of the nonhuman world experienced through the lens of our cultural history—as proof that ours is not the only presence in the universe.[62]

I will discuss Cronon's essay in more depth in chapters one and two, but as of yet, there have been no cultural histories of wonder or attempts to analyze the ways in which wonder-discourses have, over the course of at least a century and a half, participated in the gradual institutionalization of U.S.-American environments, particularly in park systems. "Worlds of Wonder" historicizes wonder as a key term in U.S. environmental history in order to begin to draw the contours of its place and function—as a rhetorical discourse and an emotion—in nineteenth-, twentieth-, and early twenty-first-century U.S.-American culture. If, as Cronon notes and I argue, wonder has defined and continues to define understandings of and approaches to nature in the U.S., how is it implicated in contemporary ecological crises?

In all three institutions I study here, wonder is galvanized as a form of respect and reverence for the natural environment, an affect that cultivates care and investment in nature. It is, on the one hand, a form of contemplative aesthetic, but it is also deployed as an affect with the potential to inspire concrete and creative action. In recent and contemporary cultural institutions, wonder is therefore not just an aesthetic, emotion, and a discourse; it is, as I will argue, galvanized as an environmental ethics and politics—a

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[62] Ibid., 88.

form of national, global, and ecological citizenship—all while also being a commercial tool of the recreational and leisure industries.

III.   Drawing Boundaries: Definitions and Contours

Before journeying too far into the territories of wonder, I want to further articulate some of the ways in which wonder has been critically defined in order to refine the ways in which I use the term. As I noted above, wonder is often associated with other emotions and aesthetic concepts, among them "delight," "awe," "curiosity," "the sublime." In each of my three chapters, wonder appears alongside a number of near-synonyms or a family of affective categories and concepts. The lines between these different categories of experience and aesthetics are rarely clear-cut, but there are nonetheless some historical and theoretical distinctions worth making here. In addition to the context of the history of wonder, which has defined a particularly historically located worldview in which wonder marked out the limits of the "natural" in a largely Christian world, wonder has been defined in aesthetic and emotional terms.

Daston and Park's and others' treatments of the history of wonder as a branch of the history of science has provided one of the most notable definitional distinctions between wonder and curiosity. In these frames, wonder is treated as a non-scientific emotion that is a precursor to curiosity, the impetus for scientific exploration. Daston and Park and others suggest that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, through the Enlightenment and associated processes of secularization, what earlier periods had considered wonder became a more scientific curiosity. Susan Scott Parrish's *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (2006)

makes a similar claim from a different vantage point and with more historical depth: "*wonder* at the preternatural and a belief in magic, demonism, and providential monsters turned gradually into *curiosity* about God's stable and orderly creation that involved a skepticism about the significance of prodigies."[63] Here curiosity is tied both to emerging scientific practices and a belief in order. The transition from wonder to curiosity is the basis for Parrish's examination of how colonial natural history cabinets and collections facilitated the making of scientific knowledge about the natural world that was becoming institutionalized in the British metropole.[64] The distinction is therefore both an historical one and purposive one. Wonder inhabits pre-scientific societies that believe in the super-natural, whereas curiosity emerges with science as an impetus for study and discovery.

This distinction, as I will show, is often tenuous. Wonder can and does give rise to curiosity and vice-versa, and although wonder's historical status and definitions have most certainly changed since the early modern period, well into the nineteenth century, it did still define the limits of the known/natural, particularly with regard to the exploration of previously unknown lands, the study of exotic animals, and the development of technological innovation. In these contexts, much as in the early modern context of travel, wonder operated as a discourse that marked out the boundaries of the known natural/scientific world and became part of the task of surveying and mapping the U.S.-American continent, increasing biological knowledge, and expanding technological possibilities.

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[63] Susan Scott Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Curiosity in the Colonial British Atlantic World* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2006), 25.
[64] Parrish's book, however, does make clear that a range of collectors and collecting practices in the colonies that most scholars and modern scientists would deem "unscientific" fundamentally shaped the institutionalization of science.

Scholarly accounts of the relationship between wonder and curiosity in the realm of science parallel accounts of the relationship between wonder and "resonance" in the context of literary and artistic production. In museum studies, in particular, scholars, following Stephen Greenblatt's essay "Resonance and Wonder" have considered wonder to be a prequel to a more sophisticated and complex experience of resonance, defined by "the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world, to evoke in the viewer the complex, dynamic cultural forces from which it has emerged and for which it may be taken by a viewer to stand."[65] Greenblatt describes wonder and resonance as "two distinct models" for the exhibition of art. In contrast to resonance, wonder is a much less dynamic experience that refers to "the power of the displayed object to stop the viewer in his or her tracks, to convey an arresting sense of uniqueness, to evoke an exalted attention."[66] Resonance, in this framework, is not just an affective response; it is an historical illumination on both the past and the present. Wonder does not have that same historical dimension; it is an immediate, singular, seemingly unhistorical response.

In Greenblatt's discussion of exhibition, resonance seems superior to wonder, because it can "awaken in the viewer a sense of the cultural and historically contingent construction of art objects, the negotiations, exchanges, swerves, and exclusions by which certain representational practices come to be set apart from other representational practices that they partially resemble."[67] Resonance, in this sense, is associated with

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[65] Stephen Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," in *Exhibiting Cultures*, eds. Ivan Karp and Stephen Lavine (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 42.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid., 45.

more than a mere "celebration of isolated objects;" it draws out "half-visible relationships and questions" not just about the objects but about the practice of exhibition itself.[68]

But just as Greenblatt's analysis appears to reduce wonder to a form of "enchantment," compared to resonance's ability to evoke "intertwining voices…historical memory…ethnographic thickness,"[69] He argues that the privileging of resonance in museum exhibition has "sacrificed…visual wonder centered on the aesthetic masterpiece" through the dispersal of attention "among a wide range of lesser objects" that collectively seek to embody a particular period, culture, movement's "creative achievement[s]."[70] Although Greenblatt admits to exaggerating the distinctions between wonder and resonance in exhibition practices, recognizing that most exhibitions contain elements of both, he argues for a privileging of wonder over resonance in exhibition, because "it is generally easier in our culture to pass from wonder to resonance than from resonance to wonder."[71] Greenblatt ultimately advocates exhibits that embrace intertwined goals of "wonderful resonance and resonant wonder," but in his essay, resonance, like curiosity in the context of histories of science, seems to be the more sophisticated, educational, and useful exhibition ideal and response, compared to wonder's immediate and short-lived aesthetic response that centers on the visual, emotional power of a work of art.

In the realm of aesthetics, the distinctions between wonder and curiosity and wonder and resonance are much less clear-cut. Literary critic Philip Fisher treats wonder

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[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 49.
[70] Ibid., 54.
[71] Ibid.

as "part of the aesthetics of rare experiences."[72] The association of wonder with rarity is a constant in most scholarship on wonder. For Fisher, rarity of experience is also associated with surprise and suddenness and "depends on moments in which we find ourselves struck by effects within nature whose power over us depends on their not being common or everyday."[73] Wonder is about the unknown and the unintelligible, although, as Fisher demonstrates, it can also participate in the catharsis of working through puzzlement to a solution and new understanding of a given phenomenon. In this sense, wonder and curiosity are very much co-constitutive.

Hovering between sensation and thought,[74] wonder is about uncertainty and what Fisher calls "defective but still manageable rationality," a form of "local intelligibility" that replaces the fiction of "certain knowledge."[75] Fisher, indeed, recognizes that scientific thought and experimentation have always been dependent upon "unreliable tools, unavailable technology, hidden errors," etc.[76] Thus, by definition, all rationality and intelligibility are "defective," and in this framework, "Defective but still manageable rationality is what we actually have to use to make sense of the objects of our curiosity. Wonder drives and sustains the defective rationality that gives us intelligibility under conditions where we will not even know that we have reached certain knowledge when and if we have."[77] For Fisher, then, wonder is not a pre-scientific emotion, but a seemingly agnostic and perhaps skeptical one.

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[72] Philip Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), 1.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 8.
[75] Ibid., 9.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.

In Fisher's work—and in aesthetics more broadly—wonder is more closely associated with and distinguished from the sublime. Although there is, as we will see especially in chapter one, overlap between the discourse of wonder and that of the sublime, Fisher notes that on the whole, "Modern thought since Romanticism…has been more interested in the sublime than in wonder."[78] The sublime, as Fisher describes, emerged in the Romantic movement and "secularized religious feelings of the infinite and of the relative insignificance of human powers" in an aesthetic paradigm that blended "fear and surprise, power and danger."[79]

A significant and useful distinction Fisher draws between the sublime and wonder hinges on fear and danger: "The sublime could be called the aestheticization of fear. Wonder…involves the aestheticization of delight, or of the pleasure principle rather than the death principle."[80] For this reason, Fisher argues that the sublime, despite being a major aesthetic paradigm, is not necessarily related to "the beautiful." Rather, it is closer to the grotesque, the noble, and pious. The sublime here does seem to carry over some of the more threatening elements of early modern wonder—the monstrous, the grandiosely non-human—but it does so very firmly within, rather than at the limits of, nature.

Wonder, by contrast, is more closely related to beauty, especially novel beauty. For Fisher, this novelty and the effects of wonder are fundamentally "tied to the visual"[81] and to the visual arts, especially architecture and painting. For instance, Fisher points to the George Washington Bridge and modern skyscrapers as examples of wondrous constructions, both employing radically new materials and techniques, which may

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[78] Ibid., 1.
[79] Ibid., 2.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid., 1.

challenge established perceptions of the possible.[82] The visual element of wonder defines

its instantaneousness. For Fisher, wonder does not unfold over time. It is immediate and

short-lived: "with wonder, above all else, there is the address to delight…to pleasure in

the unexpected and in the extension of means outside the limits where they might be

thought to come to an end. The rapid wearing out of the new is also part of the aesthetics

of wonder."[83]

In this insistence on novelty and immediacy, Fisher argues that the "narrative

arts" rarely participate in the aesthetics of wonder, because of their reliance on language

and duration: "Where painting and architecture find ever new continents of technique and

materials to explore, language remains the only given material of poetry and narration.

As a result the very basis for architectural wonder that rests on the effects of our first

experiences of never before used materials is denied to writing."[84] For Fisher, writing is

additionally barred from wonder, because it unfolds over time, depends on memory, and

is intelligible through language.

This insistence on the exclusively visual nature of wonder is a marker of a de-

historicized view of aesthetics and emotions, and is based on wonder's associations with

the ineffable and the indescribable. Despite these associations with notions of the failure

of language, as Greenblatt reminds us, "The experience of wonder was not initially

regarded as essentially or even primarily visual; reports of marvels [in the Renaissance]

had a force equal to the seeing of them. Seeing was important and desirable, of course,

but precisely in order to make possible reports, which then circulated as virtual

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[82] Ibid., 3.
[83] Ibid., 6.
[84] Ibid., 6.

equivalents of the marvels themselves."[85] As I will show in chapter one, in particular, wonder rhetoric and narratives of wonder experiences were at least as important as first-hand experiences in facilitating environmental wonder in the nineteenth-century U.S.

Through the mid-nineteenth century, wonder was a shifting and open signifier. It became attached to a wide range of sights and experiences, as travelers, explorers, and surveyors struggled to account for American landscapes, the likes of which Euro-Americans had never encountered before. This dynamism and versatility, I argue, is part of what made it adaptable to a diverse range of landscapes in the U.S. and valuable in the movement to form national parks out of vastly different kinds of lands. Wonder was further distinguished from such categories as the sublime and the picturesque in the U.S. context, because it was not explicitly associated with pre-existing European aesthetic categories, a fact, which, as we will see, made it an attractive rhetoric for nationalistic approaches to U.S. environments.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, wonder discourse became codified and came to refer to particular kinds of landscapes and experiences that were, in turn, commodified through tourism. Nonetheless, wonder never became a single, easy to define emotion or set of emotions. This lack of precise definition and wonder's portability made it seemingly endlessly adoptable for environmental, biological, and technological novelties and aspirations. My analyses of national parks, zoos, and Disney offer "selected examples"[86]—and not a comprehensive survey or history—of wonder's role in defining experiences of U.S. environments. These examples show a number of

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[85] Greenblatt, "Resonance and Wonder," 50.
[86] Marx, *The Machine in the Garden*, 4.

different ways in which wonder helps to define space and experiences of it, and they exemplify some of wonder's specifically, historically defined iterations.

In approaching wonder as a rhetorical, visual, and emotional construct and category, I draw on recent scholarship about "visual rhetoric" and "rhetorical landscapes" that understands visual experiences of nature to be rhetorically and narratively constituted.[87] Fisher's approach to wonder as an exclusively visual experience seems to imagine the possibility of a "pure" aesthetic encounter. "Worlds of Wonder" highlights the ways in which the cultural languages, narratives, and tropes we experience and participate in shape how we see and respond to the environments around us.[88] This approach to wonder is grounded in historical, context-specific analysis. Although Fisher's analysis locates wonder aesthetic within modernity, his approach is largely de-historicized and presents wonder as a transhistorical aesthetic, as he draws on sources ranging from Plato to Descartes, Pascal, Baudelaire, and Nabokov, ignoring scholarship in the history of wonder and emotion, which departs from the assumption that there are no "universal categories of emotion but historically specific, and therefore shifting, concepts of human experience and sensation."[89] My approach to wonder as a bio-cultural experience, an emotion shaped by rhetorical practices facilitates an attention to shifts and changes as well as continuities over extended periods of time.

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[87] See especially: W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994); Gregory Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); Thomas Patin, *Observation Points: The Visual Poetics of National Parks* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

[88] It is also worth noting here that there is a growing body of scholarship in music studies that examines wonder as not just a visual experience but a sonic one.

[89] Richard Meyer, "Introduction: The Problem of the Passions," in *Representing the Passions: Histories, Bodies, Visions*, ed. Richard Meyer (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2003), 2.

IV.   Project Map: Chapter Overview

"Worlds of Wonder" argues that wonder is a primary framework for thinking about the U.S.-American environment, and has been since at least the nineteenth century. Its three chapters focus on one of three institutional contexts and histories—national parks, zoos, and Disney—as the grounds for examining genealogies of wonder in U.S. culture. In each chapter, I examine wonder in the context of different institutions and interdisciplinary fields. Chapter one locates an analysis of wonder within conversations in environmental history and American literary and cultural studies; chapter two considers wonder in the contexts of affect studies, animal studies, and zoo history; and chapter three contributes primarily to Disney studies and technological histories. These different disciplinary contexts ground my argument that national parks, zoos, and Disney theme parks, as institutionalized parks, create and deploy wonder discourses in the making of "experience economies" that produce collective wonder practices and define ways of participating in the nation, ecological worlds, and globalized corporate environments.

Chapter one, "Traveling Wonder: Travel, Rhetoric, and the Making of an Experience Economy," begins in the early to mid-nineteenth-century U.S. and examines travel narratives and guidebooks from an era of increasing westward expansionism. The chapter tracks evolutions in the ways wonder discourse was used to describe and account for new, unexpected sights and places. Through a struggle to define these new landscapes, wonder came to be a privileged descriptive category for American landscapes between the 1830s and 1890s. The chapter culminates in an analysis of Northern Pacific Railway's "Wonderland" campaign of the 1890s, which capitalized on the success of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), using images of Alice in the "new

wonderland" of Yellowstone National Park to locate wonder not in a dreamlike fiction, but in the splendor of American landscapes. In these promotions, the railroad used wonder-rhetoric to create a narrative experience of landscape that functioned as a form of "experiential capital" (after Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "cultural capital"), which became an important element in defining late nineteenth-century U.S.-American citizenship.

This first chapter follows multiple figures on their journeys across expanding U.S.-American territories. Chapter two, "Pedestrian Wonders: Zoos' Affective Collections" follows a pedestrian pathway through a collection of zoo exhibits. The chapter draws a genealogy of wonder and collection from early modern cabinets of wonder through to contemporary "naturalized" zoos that exhibit animals in habitats meant to resemble the "wild." I argue that contemporary zoos constitute wonder "collectives," to use Bruno Latour's term, for multi-species entities. These collectives seek to redefine zoos' historical status as "collections" into affective sites that foster wonder as an impetus for conservation and an ecologically-conscious cosmopolitan global citizenship.

In moving from examining national parks in chapter one to looking at zoos in chapter two, "Worlds of Wonder" shifts towards more technologically-crafted and staged environments. In chapter three, this move towards technologically-defined landscapes is even more substantial, as I examine Disney theme parks in a chapter entitled "(Re-) Animated Wonder: Disney's Techno-natural 'Movies, Magic, and More.'" This chapter focuses on one of Disney's nighttime spectaculars, the "World of Color," in drawing a genealogy of wonder and technological innovation. The analysis of the show is interspersed with historical flashbacks to earlier Disney attractions and histories of

technology. Disney's animations and re-animations of similar stories, motifs, and technologies become the context in which I argue that wonder is not just, as we tend to believe, about uniqueness and singularity. It is also a function of creative repetition and change. In the context of Disney theme parks in particular, I argue that the experience of wonder in techno-natures has the potential to inspire visitors to active, creative transformations in an increasingly immobilizing world of global corporate capitalism. The irony of this potential emerging from the Disney context highlights the often contradictory nature of wonder.

My conclusion, "The Whale in the Room: Wonder, Waste, and Environmental Imagination," asks whether, in an era of ecological crisis, wonder has reached its limit as a paradigm for thinking about nature and environmental experiences. I speculatively close in contemplating such phenomena as "atomic wonder," the wreckage of nuclear techno-politics, and exploding whales, whose food sources have been contaminated with so much human trash that their bodies cannot contain it. These troubling images capture the complex and contradictory nature of wonder in U.S. and, indeed, global environments in the midst of serious and radical ecological transformation. I speculate here that such imaginative wonder as Disney's techno-natures sometimes offer may suggest the need for closer alliances between scholars, environmental activists and corporations in fostering forms of environmental imagination that might allow us to re-envision environmental futures.

Chapter One

Traveling Wonder:
Travel, Rhetoric, and the Making of an Experience Economy

> "The Pacific Railroad unlocks the mysteries of Our New West. It opens a new world of wealth, a new world of natural beauty, to the working and wonder of the old. The eastern half of America offers no suggestion of its western half. The two sides of the continent are sharp in contrasts of climate, of soil, of mountains, of resources, of productions, of everything. Nature, weary of repetitions, has, in the New West, created originally, freshly, uniquely, majestically."[1]

In 1869, the Springfield, MA journalist and editor Samuel Bowles set about compiling and revising his accounts of two excursions westward across the United States and its territories. The book he published, *Our New West*, brought together his 1865 *Across the Continent* and his account of his 1868 journey to Colorado, *The Switzerland of America*. As the epigraph to this chapter—the opening lines of *Our New West*—shows, Bowles presented the American West as a unique novelty that could not but provoke the wonder of the "old world." Bowles, indeed, implicitly compares the opening of the "New West" by the transcontinental railroad to Columbus's fifteenth century "discovery" of the Americas. The eastern United States could not have anticipated what the western half contained, and, for Bowles, by 1869, a seemingly new era of discovery and conquest had opened up.

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[1] Samuel Bowles, *Our New West* (Springfield, MA: Samuel Bowles & Company, 1869), v.

The wonder of this new era and world, as Bowles frames it, depends on the dynamic between old and new. In this sense, the wonder of the West emerges as relational, based in comparison and contrast. Like Fisher's account in *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experience*, Bowles's here posits wonder as participating in the aesthetics of surprise and the unexpected. American landscapes are figured not just as aesthetic experiences but artistic creations. Nature is an artist who has turned away from repetition in order to create original, fresh, unique, and majestic lands. The dynamics between old and new, familiar and unfamiliar, repetition and novelty are central to the ways in which wonder has been used to understand U.S. landscapes.

The wonder and delight associated with the West, however, go far beyond beautiful scenery and the possibility of riches. As Bowles proceeds, he further frames the West as an emblematic landscape that embodies the nation's aspirations to greatness and exceptionality. Bowles thus aims to show the reader that:

> Here is a nature to pique the curiosity and challenge the admiration of the world; an atmosphere to charm by its beauty and to heal by its purity and its dryness; a wealth of minerals and a wealth of agriculture that fairly awe by their boundlessness; an aggregation of elements and forces that, with development, with increase and mixture of populations, with facility and cheapness of intercourse,—with steamships on the Pacific Ocean, and railroads across the Continent to the Atlantic,—are destined to develop a society and a civilization, a commerce and an industry, a wealth and a power, that will rival the most enthusiastic predictions for our Atlantic States Empire, and together, if we stand together in the future, will present on the North American Continent such a triumph of Man in race, in government, in social development, in intellectual advancement, and in commercial supremacy, as the world never saw,—as the world yet never fairly dreamed of. [2]

The passage is worth quoting at length, because of the way it unfolds to reveal a whole family of emotions and aesthetic ideas associated with the wonder that western

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[2] Ibid., vii-viii.

landscapes inspire: curiosity, admiration, charm, beauty, healing, purity, awe, boundlessness. The creations of nature are here invested with aesthetic and affective powers that are, it seems, destined to change human bodies and cultures. The passage moves over the course of a single, breathless sentence from a curiosity and wonder inducing "nature" to a dramatic momentum that portrays the West as the mobilizing force of what Bowles envisions will become a North American civilization that is so exceptional, it has not yet even been imagined.

Bowles tacitly acknowledges the Civil War and its effects on national unity in the conditional phrase "if we stand together in the future," but otherwise seems to have little doubt as to the inevitability of the country's—even the Empire's—rise to exceptional greatness, thanks to "Our New West." Bowles's syntax, with its accumulation of descriptors and prepositional phrases, captures the excitement with which he aims to imbue the very idea of *Our New West*. The rhetorical shift *Our New West* embodies in Bowles' revision and compilation of *Across the Continent* and *The Switzerland of America* stresses the excitement of novelty, rather than repetition. Where *The Switzerland of America*, in particular, frames the American West as a re-iteration of a European landscape, *Our New West* works to do the very opposite: elevate the West as a wondrous new world for the old world—Europe and the eastern United States—to behold.

In 1869, the West of which Bowles speaks—current-day California, Oregon, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, Washington, Nevada—was not "new." The discourse of novelty is not only part of the aesthetics of wonder; it is a function of a colonial perspective that imagined as "new" land that which had not yet been explored and settled by Euro-Americans. Wonder, as Stephen Greenblatt has shown in *Marvelous*

Possessions, is often part of that colonial, expansionist apparatus. But, as I will show in this chapter, in the nineteenth-century U.S. wonder was not just a product of colonialist conquest. It also became a central rhetorical tool for thinking about, appreciating, and eventually preserving U.S. environments in national parks. In the process, it became a kind of national aesthetic and a civic aspiration. By the late nineteenth century, experiencing America's "wonderlands" through travel to Yosemite, Yellowstone, and a few other natural treasures, was a privileged marker of "Americanness."

Earlier in the nineteenth century, however, wonder was much more markedly a response to novelty, bafflement, and at times horror in landscapes that challenged many travelers' understandings of what nature looks like. Explorers had been going west for the better part of six decades, since the early nineteenth-century launch of the Lewis and Clarke expedition. Nonetheless, compared to the Atlantic coastline, relatively little was known about the lands west of the Mississippi. In the 1830s and 1840s explorers had begun surveying territories in an attempt to more systematically account for lands that had until then been primarily known to trappers and Native Americans.

John Charles Frémont wrote one of the most widely read descriptions of the American West in his *Report on the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains* (1845) that served for years as the primary guidebook for travelers. In 1848, Mexico ceded much of the territory Bowles describes to the United States, and over the ensuing decades, with the Gold Rush, thousands of travelers journeyed west, most of them following in Frémont's footsteps. Many of them, including prominent journalists, published popular accounts of their travels, among these—and perhaps most famously—Francis Parkman's *The California and Oregon Trail* (1849), Bayard Taylor's *El Dorado: Adventures in the*

Path of Empire (1850), and Horace Greeley's *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco* (1860). By 1869 hundreds of narratives were in circulation that sought to describe and often promote the wonders of the West.

Thus, Bowles's West was not even "new" to Euro-American readers. But it was a novelty, in the sense that western landscapes and Americans' ideas and images of them were not yet part of most Americans' conception of the nation. In 1851, when James Fenimore Cooper published "American and European Scenery Compared" in *The Homebook of the Picturesque: or American Scenery, Art, and Literature*, a collective assessment of American art and scenery put together by Cooper, Washington Irving, W.C. Bryant, Bayard Taylor and several other figures of the nascent American literati, he concluded that "As a whole, it must be admitted that Europe offers to the senses sublimer views and certainly grander, than are to be found within our own borders, unless we resort to the Rocky Mountains, and the ranges in California and New Mexico."[3] The final phrase of this sentence considers the "New West" to be parenthetical—not part of Cooper's sense of the nation at all. For Cooper, the United States—and its scenery—is defined largely by the east coast or the "older portions" of the country. Cooper notes that in some ways—thanks to the "greater natural freedom that exists in an ordinary American landscape"—one can say that "the older portions of the United States offer to the eye a general outline of view that may well claim to be even of a higher cast, than most of the scenery of the old world." However, the great exception to this point is the coastline: "Our own is low, monotonous, and tame. It wants Alpine rocks, bold promontories,

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[3] James Fennimore Cooper, Washington Irving, W.C. Bryant, and Bayard Taylor, *The Home Book of the Picturesque: Or, American Scenery, Art, And Literature* (New-York: G.P. Putnam, 1852), 52.

visible heights inland, and all those other glorious accessories of the sort that render the coast of the Mediterranean the wonder of the world."[4]

Cooper's essay—and *The Homebook of the Picturesque* on the whole—is an "experiment" published "to ascertain how far the taste of our people may warrant the production of home-manufactured presentation-books, and how far we can successfully compete with those from abroad."[5] For the publishers, there is a direct relationship between American landscape and literary-artistic book culture. For Cooper, in particular, the American landscape's lack of sublimity and grandeur—aesthetic categories to that point defined by European Romanticism—is a marker not only of the United States' geographic inferiority, but of its cultural inferiority as well. The underlying questions behind many of the essays collected in *The Homebook* not only concern Americans' "taste" for presentation books but, indeed, Americans' cultural and aesthetic taste *tout court*. The book asks: Can the United States compete with Europe? Do American landscapes measure up to Europe's? Is there a prospect for the development of American art and literature?

In the early 1850s, the answers to these questions were unclear. On the one hand, the existence of *The Homebook* suggests that the response to all of them could be "yes"— as some of the essays celebrate eastern scenery in the Catskills, Pennsylvania, New Haven, the Adirondacks, and so on, and discuss the rising interest in and production of American art, since the nation's achievement of a degree of prosperity. On the other hand, essays like Cooper's maintained the superiority of the "Old World," particularly defined by Mediterranean history, culture, and geography, in a geographic determinism

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[4] Ibid., 54.
[5] Ibid., 7.

that would seem impossible to surmount—after all, the coastline of the eastern U.S. could not very easily transform itself into the dramatic coastline of the Mediterranean. The United States might well develop its art and literature, but, for Cooper, it seems, the new nation could never have that distinctive wonder of the "Old World."

Cooper's claim that the Mediterranean coast is "the wonder of the world" harkens back to the seven wonders of the ancient world, all located around the Mediterranean.[6] The Mediterranean coast's status as "the wonder of the world" bars the much newer nation of the United States not just from the natural beauty of the Mediterranean, but from its cultural status and historical ties to classical antiquity, as well. Indeed, in Cooper's purview, "newness" is not an asset in the way that age and its associated cultural maturity are. Cooper's claim draws in part from the practice of documenting "wonders" in illustrated "presentation books," as *The Homebook of the Picturesque* also describes itself. These books were an outgrowth of the proliferation of travel narratives of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and were meant as comprehensive, scientific catalogues.[7] Hundreds of such presentation books were published on both sides of the Atlantic, providing textual, illustrated collections of wonders. Some such books called themselves "museums" or "cabinets of wonder," as they showcased the greatness of the

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[6] These were all architectural wonders that were often listed in guidebooks popular with Hellenic tourists: the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria.

[7] They were also the "modern" iterations of a practice of documenting wonders that goes back to Greek and Roman paradoxography: "a literary genre that had grown out of the Aristotelian project of compiling descriptive histories of natural phenomena and had coalesced in the third century B.C.E. in the form of catalogues of things that were surprising, inexplicable, or bizarre." Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 23-24. In the nineteenth century, with the rise of industrialization, presentation books showcased a much a wider range of wonders, including new forms of transportation, architecture, even labor.

"modern" world.[8] I will discuss this tradition of wonder and collection in more depth in chapter two. Here, I stress histories of wonder and travel.

Of course, traveling experiences formed the basis of many of these collections of modern wonder. C. G. Clarke's 1821 *The Hundred Wonders of the World* begins with a preface that claims: "The Ancients boasted of their Seven Wonders of the World, but this work will prove that Moderns may boast of their Hundred Wonders."[9] Similarly, the 1856 *Wonders of the World* notes: "The Ancients boasted of their Seven Wonders of the World.... But the wonders known to the *present* day, may be counted by the hundreds: Wonders of Nature, Wonders of Science, Wonders of Art...."[10] Many of the presentation books showcased more than a hundred wonders—in efforts to claim the cultural superiority of the moderns over the ancients, as well as to showcase scientific cataloguing practices of documentation and illustration, intended to appeal to a general reader and establish the authority of the writer and the wonders. But most of the "wonders" were long-established topographies, natural phenomena, or cultural artifacts, not novelties.

In the 1850s, in keeping with Cooper's assessment of American landscape, few U.S. landscapes, architectural structures, or natural phenomena made the cut, so to speak, for these books. Kentucky's "Great Mammoth Cave" was an early exception, along with Niagara Falls, and the Great Lakes—all geological features that had long natural

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[8] See, for example, *Cabinet of Curiosities: Natural, Artificial, and Historical* (Hartford, CT: Samuel Griswold Goodrich, 1822) and *The Wonders of the World: A Complete Museum, Descriptive and Pictorial of the Wonderful Phenomena and Results of Nature, Science, and Art* (Hartford, CT: Case, Tiffany, and Co., 1856).

[9] C.G. Clarke, *The Hundred Wonders of the World: and of the Three Kingdoms of Nature, Described According to the Latest and Best Authorities,* 1st American, from the 10th London edition (New-Haven: J. Babcock and Son, 1821), ix.

[10] John Loraine Abbott, *The Wonders of the World: a Complete Museum, Descriptive And Pictorial, of the Wonderful Phenomena And Results of Nature, Science And Art* (Hartford, CT: Case, 1856), 3.

histories.[11] By the early 1870s, with the "opening" of the West and a different sense of the geography of the nation, writers' understandings of wonder had substantially changed to incorporate many more American sights. By then, some presentation books became dedicated almost entirely to American wonders. For example, Henry Freeman's 1873 *Wonders of the World* devotes its first twenty-nine chapters to U.S.-based wonders, leaving only fifteen chapters for the rest of the world. Switzerland and Italy are the only other two countries granted more than one chapter (Switzerland gets three, Italy gets two, one for Northern Italy and one for Southern Italy), the one for its mountains and their centrality to Romanticism's sublime, and the other for its cultured and religious histories and privileged location on the Mediterranean, a site of beauty and cross-cultural exchange.[12] By 1880, all such books included extensive lists of American wonders, including the "Giant Trees of California," Yosemite Valley, gold in California—and sometimes California as a whole—Yellowstone National Park, the great American deserts, Crater Lake, and many other sites that are current-day national parks.

In the nearly two decades between the publications of *The Homebook of the Picturesque* and *Our New West*, much had changed. Americans and Europeans came to value the "newness" of the West and its wonders. The West went from being peripheral to the young nation's conception of itself to being integral not only to its sense of unity—in the era of Reconstruction—but to the nation's futurity and sense of importance.

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[11] The Mammoth Cave system encompasses the longest cave system in the world. It was discovered in the late eighteenth century and became well-known in part for its role in the war of 1812 as a salt mine that allowed the U.S. to bypass the British blockade. It became a national park in 1941. Even today, the National Park Service website claims that: **"**The human experience of Mammoth Cave reflects one of humanity's most potent emotions: wonder." National Park Service, "History and Culture," *National Park Service—Mammoth Cave*, June 3, 2014, http://www.nps.gov/maca/historyculture/index.htm.

[12] Henry Freeman, *Wonders of the World: Places and Objects of Great Historic Interest* (Boston: Alfred Mudge and Son, 1873).

Between the 1850s and the early 1870s, travelers, foreigners, and nationalists alike portrayed the American West—far more consistently than the Mediterranean coast—as "the wonder of the world." In the second half of the nineteenth century, thanks in part to railroad accessibility and narratives like Bowles's, the West—and the national parks that first began emerging there—became defined as "America's wonderlands." These lands formed the basis of a national past and the foundation for the development of much American art and literature. In this way, one could argue that the discursively constituted "wonders" of the West came to epitomize the character and exceptionality of the nation.

This argument is visible in texts like Bowles's. However, it also makes wonder a homogeneous category and a teleological function of American nationalism. Viewing wonder at/in the West solely or even primarily as a marker of exceptionality also, perhaps, functions as a slightly revised reiteration of Fredrick Jackson Turner's controversial frontier thesis of the 1890s. For Turner, the "frontier" and Americans' experience of conquering it defined the exceptionality of the nation.[13] Similarly, one could argue that the wonders of the West and wonder at the West came to define America and a unique "American" character. The past twenty-five years of New Western History as well as the more recent "globalization" of American Studies, however, have duly problematized the racist, colonialist underpinnings and values of such arguments about American exceptionality.[14]

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[13] Turner's thesis also claimed that the "frontier" was a process that came to a close in 1890. For more on Turner and his thesis, see *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner: "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" and Other Essays*, ed. John Mack Faragher (New York: Henry Holt, 1994).

[14] The New Western History of the 1990s took Turnerian understandings of American history to task for adopting the perspective of the conquerors, at the exclusion of the experiences and stories of Native people, African Americans, Latinos, immigrants, and women. New Western History marked a transition from a nationalistic, mythic, Hollywood understanding of the American West to one that examines the complex relationships and forces at work in the process of forming and changing the region. Patricia Limerick's *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987) is often

My focus on wonder—as emotional response and rhetoric—aims to trouble homogenous, linear narratives about places, histories, and discursive practices. It also seeks to complicate the ways in which scholarly work, particularly in environmental history and environmental studies, uses the term wonder—usually unquestioningly—to describe landscapes or natural features, as well as to define conservation work and ethics. Wonder, I argue, is not a conceptual given. It is a historically and culturally shaped emotion and discourse whose history of the past several hundred years has not yet been written. This chapter draws a narrative history of "wonder," much as environmental historians have, over the past several decades, written the cultural and intellectual history of "wilderness."

In "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," William Cronon critiques the ways in which scholars and environmentalists have turned to the concept of "wilderness" as a way of remedying the ills of culture. The concept of

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named as one of the founding books in the field. See also Limerick's co-edited *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991), Richard White's *"It's Your Misfortune And None of My Own": a History of the American West (*Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991) and *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, And Republics In the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Donald Worster's *Under Western Skies: Nature And History In the American West (*New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and *An Unsettled Country: Changing Landscapes of the American West* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); and William Cronon's co-edited *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992). More recently, historians like Michael Adas have moved towards fitting U.S. claims to exceptionalism into comparative historical assessments of both European and non-European societies. "From Settler Colony to Global Hegemon: Integrating the Exceptionalist Narrative of the American Experience into World History," *The American Historical Review* 106, n.5 (Dec., 2001): 1692-1720. Similarly, David Wrobel examines American and European accounts of the West in the context of a broader discussion of other developing regions and colonial territories in questioning the West's perception as an exceptional place. David Wrobel, "Global West, American Frontier," *Pacific Historical Review* 78, n.1 (February 2009): 1-26. These articles are part of a larger movement in history and American Studies of the past decade to consider the U.S. within a global context of relations, influences, and flows of information and cultures. See, for example, the 2007 presidential address of the American Studies Association: Emory Elliot, "Diversity in the United States and Abroad: What Does It Mean When American Studies Is Transnational?,*" American Quarterly* 59, n.1 (March 2007): 1-22; and the September 2010 special issue of *American Quarterly,* "Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies."

"wilderness" that environmentalists tend to uphold contributes to the perpetuation of a damaging divorce between "nature" and "culture," Cronon argues. "Wilderness" has come to stand for distant, "untouched" places. This notion of wilderness has encouraged selective valuing of certain kinds of nature over others and the protection of distant "wilderness" areas over more local landscapes. Cronon urges abandoning "the dualism that sees the tree in the garden as artificial—completely fallen and unnatural—and the tree in the wilderness as natural—completely pristine and wild. Both trees in some ultimate sense are wild; both in a practical sense now depend on our management and care."[15] Cronon urges us to see our local environment as equally "natural" as the distant "wilderness." In arguing for custodial responsibility of both distant and local natural resources, as we saw briefly earlier, he invokes a particularly defined romantic wonder:

> When we visit a wilderness area, we find ourselves surrounded by plants and animals and physical landscapes whose otherness compels our attention.... The romantic legacy means that wilderness is more a state of mind than a fact of nature, and the state of mind that today most defines wilderness is *wonder*. The striking power of the wild is that wonder in the face of it requires no act of will, but forces itself upon us—as an expression of the nonhuman world experienced through the lens of our cultural history.[16]

For Cronon, this dynamic in itself is not problematic: "Wilderness gets us into trouble only if we imagine that this experience of wonder and otherness is limited to the remote corners of the planet, or that it somehow depends on pristine landscapes we ourselves do not inhabit."[17] The goal, therefore, is to make wonder a part of the landscapes we live in and to consider as "natural" all the landscapes that surround us.

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[15] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 88-89.
[16] Ibid., 88.
[17] Ibid.

Cronon's claim that wilderness is today defined by the "state of mind" of wonder, perhaps, makes it all the more important that there be a history of wonder as well as a history of wilderness. This history of wonder, as I frame it here, is largely a rhetorical one—although, as we will see, the rhetoric of wonder and the experience of it are often difficult to distinguish. Part of the movement this chapter tracks is a naturalization of wonder rhetoric through the production of what Gregory Clark calls "rhetorical landscapes."

Clark's notion comes from Kenneth Burke's idea of rhetoric—which is broadly defined to encompass anything that "prompts 'a persuasion to attitude' as well as 'persuasion to out-and-out action.'" [18] As Clark defines it, Burke's notion of the rhetorical is essentially aesthetic, and Clark uses Burke's ideas to analyze American tourist experiences and landscapes. My analysis, however, differs from his in that he attributes "rhetorical landscapes" with coherent, unified meanings. In what follows, I argue that the value and effects of wonder as a rhetoric are precisely its openness to shifting, personalized meanings. Nonetheless, Clark's and Burke's distinction between what we might call the "contemplative" and the "active," to invoke a classic philosophical and devotional dynamic, is a central, sometimes contradictory dichotomy at the heart of wonder's place in contemporary American culture. [19] On the one hand, wonder is an open-ended and personal affective, contemplative experience—an exaltation and appreciation of the environment that is an end in itself. On the other hand, its deployment,

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[18] Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes in America*, 2, quoting Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 50.

[19] For more on this dynamic, see Robert A. Bonnell, "An Early Humanistic View of the Active and Contemplative Life," *Italica* 43, no. 3 (Sep., 1966): 225-39.

as we will see more explicitly in chapter two, is frequently instrumental for cultivating

care and creative action for the environment. My argument about wonder's rhetorical

nature is therefore two-fold: it works both as a "persuasion" to contemplation or aesthetic

admiration and as a "persuasion" to particular kinds of nationalist and/or conservationist

actions.

My analysis of wonder in the context of the rhetorical histories and movements

that led up to the founding of the first national parks contributes to a growing body of

literature in the environmental humanities that aims to complicate the history of the

national parks and of the environmental movement in the U.S. Marguerite Shaffer

explains in a recent essay, "Performing Bears and Packaged Wilderness," that:

> Beginning with Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, the history
> of the national parks has been used to document the story of wilderness and
> wildlife protection…. And although historians have been quick to point out the
> flaws and limitations of these early preservation attempts, Yellowstone National
> Park and other national parks that followed are still lionized as the harbingers of
> what would become the baseline of modern-day environmentalism. The result of
> this history is that the national parks, despite a complicated past, have emerged in
> the public imagination as icons of wilderness and the poster children of the
> environmental movement.[20]

In this political and historiographic tradition, political scientist and public policy

specialist William Lowry published *The Capacity for Wonder* in 1994 to address the

growing need to preserve the national parks in the face a supposedly increasingly

politicized public conversation about natural resources. Lowry opens his book by quoting

Yosemite's superintendent at the time, Mike Finley: "Today, decisions are made for

politics instead of for the resource."[21] It is clear from the beginning of Lowry's

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[20] Marguerite Shaffer, "Performing Bears and Packaged Wilderness: Reframing the History of National
Parks," in *Cities and Nature in the American West*, ed. Char Miller (Las Vegas: University of Nevada
Press), 138.
[21] William Lowry, *The Capacity for Wonder* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1994), 1.

discussion that he and Finley imagine an era of unpoliticized environmentalism, a moment when the government and the people cared about preserving resources—and Lowry wants us to return to that era, to that "capacity for wonder."

For Shaffer, this narrative of a pure environmentalism obfuscates the ways in which preserving the environment has always been political and, perhaps even more importantly, commercial. Instead of recovering a pure past of environmentalism, she shifts the conversation to examine "a much larger story about the promotion and display of nature in the national parks."[22] This story emerges when we examine the history of national parks "not through the lens of environmentalism, but rather through the lens of consumer culture."[23] Nature consumerism has been the focus of scholarship on tourism for some time,[24] but Shaffer's focus on the branding of wilderness through Yellowstone's performing bears reframes the wilderness movement of the 1950s and 1960s as "an extension and refinement of the consumerist frame firmly established and institutionalized in national park wilderness."[25] For Shaffer, this reframing allows us to see some of the ways in which wilderness and consumption have gone "hand in hand" for much longer than we often recognize or admit.[26]

In a similar vein, scholars in art history and cultural geography have also been examining the "visual poetics of national parks" and the ways in which nature—through images, films, public broadcasts—is deployed for political means.[27] As cultural

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[22] Shaffer, "Performing Bears," 138.
[23] Ibid., 139
[24] See, for instance, Peter Blodgett, "Selling the Scenery: Advertising and the National Parks, 1916-1933," in *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2001), 271-98.
[25] Shaffer, "Performing Bears," 150. Michael Lewis's 2007 edited collection *American Wilderness* is also invested in reframing critical discussions of wilderness.
[26] Shaffer, "Performing Bears," 151.
[27] See, especially, Thomas Patin, *Observation Points*.

geographer Gareth John writes, it is impossible to understand the establishment of

national parks "without taking into account the role of the images, texts, and practices"

surrounding their natures. The founding of the national parks—and Yellowstone, in

particular, as the first national park—was "the culmination of the formation of a

discursive object that encapsulated many discursive fields—art, science, commerce,

politics."[28] The association of natural landscapes with discourses through images,

narratives, and advertising naturalizes those rhetorical practices, "conferring upon them

legitimacy, inevitability, and incontrovertibility."[29] It is, therefore, especially important to

understand both what discourses have been naturalized and how. Much of this critical

work, like Shaffer's, is concerned with the relatively recent commercialization of

landscape and how it is sold to consumers.

In what follows, I examine an earlier history of the entanglement of nature and

consumption to highlight the process by which Yellowstone National Park and American

natures more broadly became branded as "wonderlands."[30] I trace the evolution of the

uses of discourses of wonder in travel literature and other cultural documents—

newspapers, guide books, advertisements—depicting the American West from the 1830s

through the early twentieth century. In three sections of the chapter, which examine pre-

1850 travel narratives, I argue that wonder was a shifting signifier that participated in a

number of different realms: nature, architecture, technology, economic development. In

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[28] Gareth John, "Image/Text/Geography: Yellowstone and the Spatial Rhetoric of Landscape," in *Observation Points*, ed. Thomas Patin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 157.
[29] Ibid.
[30] John's essay focuses on a very brief period in early Yellowstone history (1869-1873) with an emphasis on Thomas Moran's paintings. Although he is also attending to the rhetorical forces at play in the foundation of Yellowstone, he takes for granted that those forces are "dictated by Romantic conventions for recognizing and appreciating the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque in scenery." John, "Image/Text/Geography," 146.

narratives of travel in the 1840s, which set the stage for the codification of wonder discourse in the context of writing about U.S. landscapes, wonder marked out an external world that acted upon and often destabilized the subject-traveler. This breakdown between traditional subject-object relations pointed to radical, environmental newness and travelers' inability to assimilate these sights/sites and experiences into familiar understandings and narratives of place and the possible.

To return to the epigraph with which I began, the "wonder" Bowles identifies emerges as a reaction to the "new," which is to say the radical differences between the East and the West that become visible through travel, and magnified through the accelerated travel made possible by the transcontinental railroad. Although a discourse of wonder participates in Bowles's sense of nationalist pride and greatness that feeds his narrative of an exceptional future, the place of wonder in his narrative—and indeed in American history—is a travelling one, I argue, embedded in movement and (often implicit) comparative practices that distinguish American sites from European ones. Comparative practices were and are also imaginative ones, in which physical features of the American West called up images of other parts of the world or of fictional traditions. By the second half of the nineteenth century, U.S. landscapes began to be transformed into the imaginative experiential territories I call "wonderscapes."

As more people traveled west with the transcontinental railroads wonder discourse began to be codified and naturalized; wonder became a more definite experience to be sought out, and wonder-laden experiences became commodified and marketable, particularly with the advent of the early national parks movement. The later sections of this chapter analyze this process through the "discovery" and early marketing

of Yosemite National Park (founded as a state park in 1864 and turned into a national park in 1890) by Euro-Americans in the 1850s and 1860s. The final sections of the chapter examine Yellowstone National Park (founded in 1872) and Northern Pacific Railroad's "Wonderland" campaign, begun in the 1870s, which defined the park and nationalist responses to it well into the twentieth century. I argue that much of the discourse of wonder in the second half of the nineteenth century in the U.S., shaped by the 1865 publication and widespread popularity of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, aimed to construct a particular kind of narrative in which wonder(land) was always located "elsewhere." To attain it, one had to travel, usually by rail.

The gradual codification and commodification of wonder went hand in hand with changes in transportation and modes of travel that facilitated the birth of an "experience economy." [31] In the aftermath of the Civil War, as the U.S. economy was becoming industrialized, Northern Pacific Railway and other railroads forged a domestic tourist industry that transformed the service of transportation into an experiential commodity. Wonder served to brand and narrate the experience of landscape that became a form of what I call *experiential capital*, building upon Bourdieu's idea of "cultural capital." I use this term not in the sense that business scholars have used it[32]—to designate skills

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[31] James Gilmore and B. Joseph Pine II, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* 76, n.4 (July-August 1998), accessed November 5, 2012, http://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy/ar/1.

[32] A Google search of the term "experiential capital" turns up pages and articles dedicated to the self-described "futurist" and "trends and innovation expert," Jim Carroll. Carroll uses the term to mean business experience and experimentation. Jim Carroll, "Experiential Capital," *JimCarroll.com,* 2009, http://www.jimcarroll.com/2009/03/innovating-for-the-future-think-experiential-capital/#.U6lKoleTLoY. Consumer research scholars Gülnur Tumbat and Russell W. Belk use the term in their article "Marketplace Tensions in Extraordinary Experiences," which examines the "extraordinary consumption experience" of climbing Mt. Everest. For Tumbat and Belk in this context, "experiential capital" stands at odds with "economic capital," money. They explain that "Everest is a context in which the hard-earned experiential capital of most guides (and some clients) often leads to resentment when it is trumped by the economic capital of the clients." Gülnur Tumbat and Russell W. Belk, "Marketplace Tensions in Extraordinary Experiences," *Journal of Consumer Research* 38, no. 1 (June 2011), 54.

acquired through professional experience—but rather to mark out a sought-after experience that, in the late nineteenth century, performed and confirmed a particular kind of race- and class-based citizenship. Participation in discourses of wonder and the acquisition of wonder experiences—via traveling to Yellowstone and other American "wonderlands"—marked a way for citizens to perform their belonging to a nation whose ideas of citizenship were in the throes of transformation.

The trajectory for the codification of wonder that this chapter draws roughly maps onto the different historical "phases" exploration historian William H. Goetzmann laid out in his ground-breaking, Pulitzer-prize winning *Exploration and Empire: the Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West*: "Exploration and Imperialism: 1805-1845," "The Great Reconnaissance and Manifest Destiny: 1845-60," "Exploration and the Great Surveys: 1860-1900."[33] Because I am studying language and rhetorical practices that are much more fluid, the eight sections of this chapter break down along changes in uses of wonder-discourse. Those changes do partially parallel the different kinds of exploration, colonization, and settlement Goetzmann follows. The first three sections of this chapter follow narratives of early, informal exploration; the next two cover military expeditions from the early 1840s to the founding of Yosemite as a state park; and the last several sections that focus on Yellowstone and F.V. Hayden's survey of Montana coincide with the era of geological surveys Goetzmann analyzes. The changes

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[33] *Exploration and Empire* was the third book in a trilogy on exploration of the West that Goetzmann wrote in the 1960s. His work has been taken up by many scholars, in building a more complex understanding of the multicultural, multinational West, but it remains the most comprehensive look at nineteenth century exploration of the American West from 1803 to the 1890s. William Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966).

in language practices are considerably more amorphous than Goetzmann's subject; thus, I do not designate clearly-marked periods so much as a process of gradual change.

I.   **Situating Wonder in the Nineteenth-Century U.S.**

The story this chapter tells took decades to unfold. Because I am following a discourse whose importance became manifest in the act of traveling and the process of narrating that travel, I necessarily follow tangled and circuitous trajectories. The meanings and implications of this discourse were multiple and changing over the course of much of the nineteenth century. Wonder as a signifier is as much in motion as the subjects who professed to experience it. Given that the history of wonder discourse is much larger than the scope of this dissertation, I provisionally situate the established, if contested, uses of wonder discourse in popular accounts of the American West—as it was defined in the 1830s and 1840s. I begin by summarizing relevant genealogies of wonder and travel from the late medieval period and go on to show that these European traditions of wonder remained part of the cultural discourse of the nineteenth century U.S.

Wonder has long been an established response to traveling in unknown or unfamiliar lands and seeing new things, which do not fit neatly into established understandings of everyday life. As medieval historian Carolyn Walker Bynum notes, we cannot "wonder at that which we fully understand."[34] Daston and Park begin *Wonders and the Order of Nature* with a chapter about "writing on extraordinary natural phenomena in the literature of travel and topography, chronicles, and encyclopedias, which, we argue, constituted the core tradition of medieval reflection on wonders."[35]

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[34] Bynum, "Wonder," 3.
[35] Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 19.

Travel and travel literature thus serve as a site for mapping a "Topography of Wonder," as their chapter is entitled.

The vast majority of wonders were "topographical," or "linked to particular places...and often to particular topographical features, such as caves and springs, rocks and lakes."[36] Daston and Park delineate several different kinds of wonders and marvels—beginning primarily with "experience[s] of the novel or unexpected," unfamiliar or exotic encounters that were outside of the ordinary and the "more common but puzzling, counterintuitive, or unexplained phenomena."[37] They note that by the thirteenth century, there was "if not a fixed canon of individual phenomena [that constituted wonders], then certainly a canon of the *types* of things" that provoked wonder. Writers in the late medieval tradition of "topographical wonder" often wrote about established wonders but also aimed to supplement these with new wonders, hence emphasizing "verification through personal experience and oral report."[38] In this tradition, later travel literature and the "age of exploration" emphasized eyewitness accounts.

For medieval writers, wonders were often located at the "margins of the world."[39] They were marked by newness, diversity, and possible "natural transgression"[40]—and hence travel was a privileged site of the experience of wonder. Daston and Park identify the writings of Marco Polo as an instance of the transformation of travel writing into a genre of wonder writing.[41] In the twelfth and thirteen centuries, wonder and the

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[36] Ibid., 24.
[37] Ibid., 23.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Medieval maps were usually circular, placing the Holy Land, Europe, and the Mediterranean at the center, leaving the rest of the known world (Asia and Africa in particular) to the margins. As Daston and Park note, most medieval writers agreed that the "most wonderful wonders" were farthest away—in the southern extremities of Africa and the distant East in India. Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 26.
[40] Ibid., 25.
[41] Ibid., 33.

marvelous had been important categories of experience in romance: "in its rhapsodic descriptions of Eastern luxuries, its emphasis on quest and adventure, its exploitation of the unexpected, its taste for exotic settings, its reliance on magical natural objects, its constant invocation of wonder and wonders, described in terms of diversity, and its association of those wonders with weather and power."[42] After Marco Polo's collaboration with the writer of romances, Rustichello of Pisa, to produce his "description of the world" (*Devisement du Monde*), these characteristics became features of travel narratives.

In this context, wonder and marvels were overwhelmingly positive and desirable.[43] This is in part because much of travel literature was secular and portrayed the "marvels of creation" without referencing a deity or moral order. But in the pre-modern era, wonder also played a part in religious writings—including encyclopedias, bestiaries, and other collections that stressed the "symbolic uses of wonders as keys to scripture," indications of moral lessons, and confirmation of God's power and benevolence.[44] Religious scholars and writers made wonder into a more sobering emotion, one that stressed "religious awe" above novelty and pleasure.[45] In the religious context, believers had a pious duty to wonder at all of God's creation. As a religious discourse, wonder enacted contemplative reverence of the sacred world.

The topographical wonders associated with travel that were "at the margins of the world" functioned as part of this creation. Daston and Park note that medieval writers

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[42] Ibid.
[43] This is so, in part, as Daston and Park remark, because merchants like Marco Polo also recognized the logic of supply and demand, which "created value, just as they created wonder" for expensive non-European commodities—spices, dyes, etc. Daston and Park, *Wonders*, 38.
[44] Ibid., 39.
[45] Ibid., 40.

incorporated foreign and exotic wonders into "a view of nature...as possessed of an independent internal order" that allowed for variety and difference.[46] Although the wondrous geographies, animals, and cultures travelers perceived were wondrous because of their radical difference and existence at the margins of the Christian world, they still, on the whole, participated in a Christian cosmos, which allowed for difference and irregularities. Topographical wonders or exotic species were "natural marvels," and ideas of nature anticipated regular anomalies that, in fact, enhanced "the beauty and diversity of the world."[47]

Not everything, however, fell within the bounds of nature in this way. Monstrous phenomena—individual events or beings—"erupted in the Christian center, brought on by its corruption and sin." These wonders were not to be appreciated or enjoyed; they were to inspire "horror, anxiety, and fear."[48] Later in this chapter I show that this horror-inducing wonder, which also perhaps influenced the developments of grotesque and gothic aesthetics, was at times still part of the American nineteenth century. Monstrous wonders of this sort were taken to be omens of catastrophes—death, disease, famines, natural disasters, conflicts. They had moral meanings, whereas topographical wonders on the whole did not.

The distinction between what qualified as a positive wonder as compared to a horrifying one has to do with distance and scale. Narratives of wonders at the margins of the European world, Daston and Park argue, functioned like novels or movies do today—providing pleasure and entertainment and demanding "emotional and intellectual

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[46] Ibid., 49.
[47] Ibid., 50.
[48] Ibid., 51.

consent" to a form less concerned with authenticity than with providing an expanded sense of the possible.[49] More local wonders at home—individual deformities or momentous events (like an eclipse)—signaled frightening destabilizations of the natural order. This dynamic already establishes one of the ways in which wonder inhabits distant "elsewheres" in the tradition Cronon marks out for wilderness. In the medieval period, however, even when wonders inspired fear, the infusion of romance and travel had created a context in which "Europeans craved direct contact with wonders in all their myriad forms." Whether marvels were carried home from the East or Africa by travelers or "collected" as first-hand experiences, "they formed part of a social and material culture of the marvelous" that defined nature and its limits in the late medieval period.[50]

This tradition of topographical wonders puts the East and Africa at the heart of European ideas of nature and culture. In this sense, the history of wonder as a sub-field shares in the broader movement, in postcolonial studies and beyond, to think the ways in which the non-European world has shaped Europe, as much as Europe has shaped the non-European world.[51] In turn, this chapter shows how the "European" tradition of wonder, which shaped early encounters with the Americas and thus the Atlantic world,[52] was still a part of the cultural discourse of the nineteenth century U.S. I begin here by drawing a framework that is Atlantic-focused in its movement—following an ostensibly European tradition into U.S. cultural history. However, as will become clear, other major

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[49] Ibid., 60.
[50] Ibid., 66.
[51] Arguably, this movement began with Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979). For more recent scholarship, see Mary Louis Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[52] See Greenblatt's *Marvelous Possessions* and Arellano's *Wonder Texts and Wonder Chambers.*

perspectives and points of contact, especially those of indigenous populations and the Pacific World, are also important to this story.

Medieval and early modern traditions of wonder were not coherently transmitted in the form of a particular aesthetic or cultural movement, but these inheritances were influenced and changed by aesthetic movements like Romanticism and the development of an American gothic tradition.[53] Neither of these movements and genres is my focus here, but the history of wonder in the U.S. does intersect with them. Early in the nineteenth century, the place of wonder in the U.S. was difficult to define.

In the remainder of this section, I draw on three accounts that approach wonder in different ways—two of them actively seek it out, and the third deliberately avoids not just the emotion but also the use of wonder discourse. These three widely read texts—from a range of perspectives: French, American, and British—allow us to glimpse the ambiguous and contested position of wonder in the early nineteenth-century U.S. I have selected texts here and in the rest of the chapter that address wonder in a condensed way. The texts I use are, of course, not all about wonder, nor is wonder the sole source or destination for most of them. I present selective readings in order to trace the movements of an under-acknowledged rhetoric and its associated experiences.

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[53] Much work has been done on Romanticism in the U.S. See, for example, Richard E. Brantley, *Coordinates of Anglo-American Romanticism: Wesley, Edwards, Carlyle & Emerson* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993); E. Miller Budick, *Nineteenth-century American Romance: Genre and the Construction of Democratic Culture* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996). In recent years, Romanticists have been especially active in the development of eco-criticism and ecological ethics. See Timothy Morton's *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) and *An Ecological Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). The Gothic is less prolifically studied, but several strong accounts are: David Mogen, Scott P. Sanders, and Joanne B. Karpinski, *Frontier Gothic: Terror and Wonder at the Frontier in American Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1993); Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Robert Martin and Eric Savoy, eds., *American Gothic: New Interventions in a National Narrative* (Iowa City: Iowa University Press, 2009).

Traveling to the U.S. to study the nascent democracy, the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville is one of the first writers to assess Americans' relationship to wonder. In the early 1830s, Tocqueville was met with disbelief when he wanted to experience the wonders of American wilderness. In July of 1831, when he arrived in Detroit, Michigan, he found that Americans had no desire or capacity to experience wonder in wilderness, and they could not understand his desire to leave civilization in search of wonder.[54] Astonished by his aim to explore the wilderness, the Americans he encounters refuse to help him find his way:

> It was not as easy as one might think to inform ourselves [of how to get to the wilderness]. Crossing nearly impenetrable forests and deep rivers, braving foul swamps, sleeping exposed to the humidity of the forest: these are feats that the American will undertake willingly to earn a dollar, because that is the point. But to do such things for the sake of curiosity is beyond his comprehension. Inhabitant of the wilderness, he values only the works of men. He will gladly direct you to visit a road, a bridge, a beautiful village, but that we might value large trees and solitude is absolutely incomprehensible.[55]

Tocqueville's writing here exemplifies how Americans, who were working to build homes in "the wilderness" could not see any wonder or reason to desire wonder where Tocqueville, the foreigner, seeks it. Paul Kucera's dissertation on "Abroadlessness: The Sense of Wonder and Nineteenth-Century American Travel Writing," which focuses of Americans' travel abroad with one chapter on the domestic travels of Washington Irving,

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[54] This account is from *Voyage en Amérique,* a collection of letters and short essays, including "Quinze jours au désert." Translations of Tocqueville are all my own. "Nous touchions... aux bornes de la civilisation." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Voyage en Amérique*, ed. R. Clyde Ford (Boston: D.C. Heath and Co., 1909), 19.

[55] "S'en informer n'était pas chose aussi aisée qu'on peut le croire. Traverser des forêts presque impénétrables, passer des rivières profondes, braver les marais pestilentiels, dormir exposé à l'humidité des bois: voilà des efforts que l'Américain conçoit sans peine s'il s'agit de gagner un dollar, car c'est là le point. Mais qu'on fasse de pareilles courses par curiosité, c'est ce qui n'arrive pas jusqu'à son intelligence. Ajoutez qu'habitant d'un désert, il ne prise que l'oeuvre de l'homme. Il vous enverra volontiers visiter une route, un pont, un beau village; mais qu'on attache du prix à de grands arbres et à une belle solitude, cela est pour lui absolument incompréhensible." Tocqueville, *Voyage en Amérique*, 19-20.

Margaret Fuller, Francis Parkman, and Bayard Taylor, echoes the sentiment Tocqueville

expresses here. Kucera writes that: "The means of engendering the wonder available

during travel, and in travel writing, is available only as a function of abroadlessness:

only, that is, when the obsession with Home (and its corollary, Abroad) has been

foresworn."[56] When Tocqueville finally finds someone who will help him, he notes that

the man, Mr. Biddle, who was in charge of selling unsettled lands in Michigan,

"understood perfectly [with wonder] what he wanted to do."[57] To Tocqueville, it is a

wonder that Americans seem to have no interest in American landscapes beyond

domesticating them for settlement. Before embarking for Detroit, he discusses the beauty

and destruction of American landscapes, remarking that, as a "daily witness to these

wonders, the American does not see anything in all of this that surprises him."[58]

This passage has a counterpart in a section of the later (1840) *Democracy in

America (Vol. 3)* in which Tocqueville is discussing the sources for poetic thought and

poetry among democratic peoples. For Tocqueville, poetry is about the ideal, and

democracy figures the nation as an ideal. He argues that "The Americans do not have

poets; I would not, however, say that they do not have poetic ideas."[59] He further explains

this point:

> In Europe, we think a great deal of the wilds of America, but the Americans
> themselves never think about them; the wonders of inanimate nature find them
> insensible, and they do not perceive the admirable forests that surround them until
> they fall beneath their hatchets. Their eyes are fixed upon another spectacle. The

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[56] Paul Q. Kucera, "Abroadlessness: The Sense of Wonder and Nineteenth-Century American Travel Writing" (Dissertation, Michigan State University, 2003), 160.

[57] "...comprit cette fois à merveille ce que nous voulions faire." Tocqueville, *Voyage en Amérique*, 20.

[58] "Temoin journalier de ces merveilles, l'Américain ne voit dans tout cela rien qui l'étonne." Tocqueville, *Voyage en Amérique*, 10.

[59] "Je conviendrai aisement que les Américains n'ont point de poètes; je ne saurais admettre de même qu'ils n'ont point d'idées poétiques." Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie en Amérique, Volume 3* (Paris: Pagnerre Editeur, 1848), 145.

American people see themselves marching across these wilds, draining swamps, turning the course of rivers, peopling solitudes, and subduing nature.[60]

This "magnificent image" of conquest and domestication structures daily life in the U.S., according to Tocqueville, supplanting the appreciation of non-human wonders.

If wonder, exploration, and conquest go hand in hand, as Stephen Greenblatt has argued in *Marvelous Possessions*, in the context of the early settlement of the "New World" in the sixteenth century, Tocqueville's texts suggest that by the time nineteenth-century visions of Manifest Destiny and settler colonialism[61] were looking westward in the U.S., wonder was nowhere to be found in the practical materialism of settlers and pioneers. Only Tocqueville, as an outsider whose livelihood does not depend on settlement and domestication of the land, seems able to experience the wonders of nature and appreciate the "untrodden" wilderness. In short, wonder here is an aesthetic experience that seems to stand in direct opposition to the practical and material considerations of settlement and domestication.

Tocqueville's seeking out the wonders of wilderness bears the influence of Wordsworthian Romanticism, which is more closely associated with the sublime. As I

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[60] "On s'occupe beaucoup en Europe des déserts de l'Amérique; mais les Américains eux-mêmes n'y songent guère. Les merveilles de la nature inanimée les trouvent insensibles, et ils n'aperçoivent pour ainsi dire les admirables forêts qui les environnent qu'au moment où elles tombent sous leurs coups. Leur oeil est rempli d'un autre spectacle. Le peuple américain se voit marcher lui-meme a travers ces deserts, desséchant les marais, redressant les fleuves, peuplant la solitude et domptant la nature." Tocqueville, *De la Démocratie*, 145-6.

[61] Settler Colonial Studies is an emerging field that differentiates itself from colonial and post-colonial studies. One of the significant differences the field posits between settler colonialism and colonialism is the kind of relationship each system forges with "indigenous 'others;'" colonialism operates on the permanent subordination of others, where settler colonialism essentially awaits the erasure of these others and works to erase itself: "whereas colonialism *reinforces* the distinction between colony and metropole, settler colonialism *erases* it." Lorenzo Veracini, "Introducing Settler Colonial Studies," *Settler Colonial Studies* 1 (2011), 3. For more on settler colonialism, see Caroline Elkins and Susan Pedersen, eds., *Settler Colonialism in the Twentieth Century: Projects, Practices, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Alyosha Goldstein and Alex Lubin, eds., Settler Colonialism, special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, n.4 (2008); Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

elaborated in the introduction, for Fisher, the sublime is an aestheticization of fear, whereas wonder is an aestheticization of delight. The Romantic appreciation of nature shares something with the type of wonder associated with medieval religious, contemplative awe—as well as the tradition of wonder and horror. Wordsworth's longing for the wild was related to his response to the French Revolution, inspired in part by the ideas of freedom in Jean Jacques Rousseau's work. Scholars suggest that Wordsworth's appeal to "untamed nature" can be traced to Rousseau's notion of the "noble savage," which in turn was foundational for the Revolution: "Those who followed Rousseau thought of the countryside as pure and uncorrupted by the evils of town and court life. This in turn was a reaction against a decadent aristocratic society that was too sophisticated, too artificial, and too unnatural. Rousseau put forward the idea of the return to a natural state, where man's natural instincts would be free to develop."[62] A love of nature became a code for the revolution, and artists and poets depicted the Revolution through the trope of a storm coming to clear the landscape. It is, in this context, not surprising that Tocqueville's commentary on American wilderness fits into his broader purpose of evaluating the fruits of the American Revolution: democracy in America. Tocqueville's yearning for the wilderness and wonder of America is tied to the European context behind him. The European "wild" had long been domesticated, and in the absence of that wild, Europeans sought to experience wilderness elsewhere as much as they sought to import it from their colonial possessions.

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[62] Alan Woods, "British Poets and the French Revolution: The Death of an Ideal," *Marxist.com* (2003), http://www.marxist.com/ArtAndLiterature-old/british_poets2.html.

Although a similar form of Romantic wilderness appreciation would, in time,

penetrate American ideas about nature,[63] Tocqueville's surprise at and confusion over

Americans' apparent inability to appreciate the wonders of wilderness exemplifies the

differences between the historical and cultural contexts of nineteenth-century Europe and

the nineteenth-century U.S. Although the early U.S., as we have seen, drew heavily on

Europe and European tradition, Tocqueville's response to American wilderness and

Americans' apparent oblivion to its aesthetic beauty is conditioned by a set of political,

economic, and aesthetic movements that were not part of the lives of most of the

Americans—many of them backwoodsmen—he encountered. One of the major lessons in

reading Tocqueville's texts today is that the cultural history of wonder in the U.S. was

and is different from the cultural history of wonder in European traditions, though those

different histories do clearly intersect and interact.

Only several years after Tocqueville's travels, Washington Irving gave a very

different impression of the place(s) of wonder in American culture. Irving's earlier

works—*The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1819) and *Rip Van Winkle* (1820)—are

considered to be romantically-inflected Gothic tales, but in the 1830s, his travel

narratives took a different tone. Upon his return to the U.S. after seventeen years in

Europe, Irving published *A Tour on the Prairies* (1835), the first of several well-received

"western" books, followed by *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*

(1837). Where Tocqueville actively seeks out wonder as an experience, Irving seeks to

[63] Among the earliest iterations of American Romanticism and Gothic literature are Washington Irving's *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* (1819) and *Rip Van Winkle* (1820) and Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales* (1820s). Edgar Allen Poe is an important figure in Gothic literature, but Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) are considered to be the first true iterations of American Romanticism. Transcendentalists Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson (prominent from the 1830s through 1860s) are also important figures.

avoid participating in any form of wonder discourse. Irving's long absence from the U.S. earned him the reputation of having become more European than American,[64] and thus Irving embarked on the trip that produced *A Tour on the Prairies* in part to reacquaint himself with his country. His account begins with a strikingly honest introduction in which Irving addresses and dispels popular assumptions about his trip west and his account of it. The passage is worth quoting at length:

> Having, since my return to the United States, made a wide and varied tour, for the gratification of my curiosity, it has been supposed that I did it for the purpose of writing a book; and it has more than once been intimated in the papers, that such a work was actually in the press, containing scenes and sketches of the Far West.
>   ...I have always had a repugnance, amounting almost to disability, to write in the face of expectation; and, in the present instance, I was expected to write about a region fruitful of wonders and adventures, and which had already been made the theme of spirit-stirring narratives from able pens; yet about which I had nothing wonderful or adventurous to offer.[65]

Irving's introduction, on the one hand, suggests that the American West was a region already cloaked in "wonders and adventures." However, he disavows the discourse—in order to counter the expectations surrounding his trip. We can also read these statements as critiques of embellished travel narratives, but Irving's failure to find the American West adventurous and wonderful stands in sharp contrast to his earlier, prolific writings in Europe—about his travels as well as the early Spanish explorations of the Americas. The three books he published before returning to the U.S.—*The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828), *The Chronicles of the Conquest of Granada* (1829), and

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[64] Guy Reynolds, "The Winning of the West: Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 34, Nineteenth Century Travel Writing (2004), 88.
[65] Washington Irving, "Introduction," *A Tour on the Prairies* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1835), http://xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=legacy/uvaBook/tei/IrvTour.xml.

Voyages and Discoveries of the Companions of Columbus (1831)—all focused on travel in

the early modern "era of wonders" and were invested in discourses of wonder.[66]

The era Daston and Park delineate as that of early modern wonder came to a close

roughly in the middle of the eighteenth century. Thereafter, in the tradition of

"topographical wonder," wonder became associated with a particular genre, as

Margarette Lincoln describes, the "tale of wonder," a neglected sub-genre of travel

literature that emerged from the "era of discovery"—and like the topographical tradition

Daston and Park describe, shared affinities with romance. These stories,

> ...were written for a popular audience and most described wondrous exploits or the frightening effects of unusual natural phenomena. Often they had maritime themes: arduous voyages, storms, shipwrecks or miraculous landfalls. Early in the period, stories tended to be located on the east coast of America but as buccaneers published their journals and circumnavigations became less rare events, so authors made increasing reference to the Pacific. Generally, all "wonderful" events were ascribed to the workings of Providence; certainly they were presented as facts even if the reader would have needed uncommon credulity to believe that they had actually taken place.[67]

As Daston and Park note of the tradition of topographical wonder, authenticity was not the

primary concern of the "wonder tale," usually because the tales took place in far-away

places. The genre was one of entertainment and fantasy. But, as the eighteenth century

drew to a close, Lincoln tells us, "Writers... were anxious to differentiate their own work

from earlier 'romantic' productions" of tales of wonder and travel.[68] Although earlier tales

often sought ways to authenticate their accounts as well, by the late eighteenth century,

elite writers increasingly distanced themselves from the wonder-discourse of wonder tales

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[66] For example, in *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus*, many aspects of the discovery of the New World filled, not just Columbus or Spain, "with wonder and delight," but, "the whole civilized world." Washington Irving, *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (New York: G. & C. Carvill, 1829), 113.

[67] Margarette Lincoln, "Tales of Wonder, 1650-1750," *British Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* 27 (2004), 219.

[68] Ibid., 227.

as part of their efforts to authorize and legitimate their narratives and distinguish themselves from less sophisticated popular writings.

Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* is invested in explicitly avoiding the possibility of being categorized as a "tale of wonder." It aims, as Irving takes pains to explain, to focus on "every-day occurrences; such as happen to everyone who travels the prairies. I have no wonders to describe, nor any moving accidents by flood or field to narrate; and as to those who look for a marvelous or adventurous story at my hands, I can only reply, in the words of the weary knife-grinder: 'Story! God bless you, I have none to tell, sir.'"[69] Irving's emphases on the quotidian nature of his account and the absence of wonders attest both to the apparent lack of authority accorded to wonder tales by a cultural elite, as well as to Irving's awareness that his audience nonetheless expects tales of wonder and adventure. Although he was willing to perpetuate wonder and adventure narratives about past travels and discoveries in the context of his books on Columbus, in the American present, he deliberately refuses to succumb to these expectations.

The narrative is laced with comedic effects that render *A Tour on the Prairies* a kind of parody of the "wonder and adventure tale" Irving so wishes to avoid. As Clark notes in his essay on the book, despite Irving's explicit disavowal of traditional adventure narratives, he pays close attention to many of the conventions of these narratives: from setting the stage of a dangerous war-ridden Indian country, to describing the traveling party and their origins, to the build-up towards excitement or discovery. But, as Reynolds notes, Irving "has this terrible habit, if you want a travel literature of excitement, of setting up moments with the potential for confrontation and melodrama, only to deflate

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[69] Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, "Introduction."

the crisis."[70] The parodic mode of presenting a near-wonder or near-adventure serves to discredit the more conventional wonder tale, as for example in Irving's later *Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837).

Here, Irving willingly takes up the discourse of wonder and adventure in the West in a text that follows the exploits of Bonneville, a prominent French-born U.S. army officer, fur trader, and explorer of the Rockies. In *Adventures*, Irving aims to capture the adventure narratives and experiences of wonder that Americans so expected of travels west—but again, he does so not without poking fun at his protagonist, the wistful European adventurer whose notebooks Irving purchased to write the story. For Irving, it seems, wonder is associated with non-literary travel narratives and adventure tales, it appears as a childish, nearly ridiculous discursive realm, in line with Daston and Park's historical argument about the waning of wonder after the Enlightenment.

Even in his later, more serious contribution to *The Homebook of the Picturesque*, entitled "The Catskill Mountains," Irving at first describes the "wild and romantic"[71] mountains as wonders, even "fairy lands."[72] His somewhat exaggerated rhetoric of beauty, however, gets contextualized as being based on "early impressions; made in the happy days of boyhood, when all the world had a tinge of fairy land."[73] The whole journey up the Hudson and through the mountains is "full of wonder and romance," and young Irving "relish[es] everything which partook of the marvelous."[74] Here, too, as if

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[70] Reynolds, "The Winning of the West," 97.
[71] *The Homebook of the Picturesque*, 71.
[72] Ibid.. 72.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 73.

confirming Daston and Park's narrative about the vulgarization of wonder, Irving downplays wonder as being part of the point of view of a child.

The notion that wonder was childlike or the marker of the absence of reason or sophistication was also present in nineteenth-century descriptions of Native Americans and animals. In *Astoria*, for example, a book Irving wrote at the behest of the fur trading magnate John Astor, Irving describes Native Americans who are awe-struck by the appearance of a pocket compass and then a small microscope: "This new wonder again fixed the attention of the savages, who have far more curiosity than it has been custom to allow them."[75] Scientific objects qualify as "wonders" here for the unsophisticated, unscientific "savages," whose curiosity is surprising.

Later, William Hornaday, the man now known for being a major early voice for conservation of the bison, exemplified the association between wonder and the sub-human. (I will discuss Hornaday more extensively in chapter two for his role as director of the Bronx Zoo.) In his 1889 *The Extermination of the Bison*, in a section entitled "Mental Capacity and Disposition," Hornaday explains that the bison are "of a rather low order of intelligence," one of the reasons for which they face extinction: "He [the bison] was provokingly slow in comprehending the existence and nature of the dangers that threatened his life, and, like the stupid brute that he was, would very often stand quietly and see two or three score, or even a hundred, of his relatives and companions shot down before his eyes, with no other feeling than one of stupid wonder and curiosity."[76] There are hundreds of examples of such uses of wonder discourse and of the association

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[75] Washington Irving, *Astoria* (Paris: Baudry's European Library, 1836), PDF e-book, 109.
[76] William Hornaday, *The Extermination of the Bison* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1889), 429-30.

between wonder and the childish, uneducated, and unsophisticated. Because these uses of wonder discourse are well-known and accepted iterations of modern wonder, they will not be my focus, but I mention them as part of a broader range of associations that make up the context for Irving's moves to distance himself from wonder discourse in *A Tour on the Prairies*.

Despite these associations between wonder and lack of sophistication in Irving's writing, wonder can also be read in Irving's work as an experience and expression that marks out foreignness or an outsider status—not just the strangeness or foreignness of a sight/site but of the viewer/experiencer, him or herself. Irving's Bonneville, the wonder-seeking adventurer and the "savages" are clearly marked as non-normative and non-American. But Irving's own narrative of travel is marked by a deliberate absence of wonder that we can read as part of Irving's effort to claim for himself and his writing a "native" status of familiarity with the U.S. and its prairies, especially after his long sojourn in Europe. In Irving's writings we thus get a sampling of some of the often contradictory ways in which wonder was used (or avoided) to situate writers, characters, and Americans' place and status in a still new national context whose sense of culture, taste, and aesthetics was in constant negotiation.

Tocqueville and Irving offer diverging examples of Europeanized perspectives on wonder that circulated in partially conflicting ways in the 1830s. These perspectives frame wonder-experiences as both potentially desirable and categorically undesirable and debased/debasing. They also frame wonder-discourse as carrying a certain kind of Romantic cachet *and* a disreputable, unscientific perspective or tone of exaggeration to be avoided. In another view, they allow us to begin to see how wonder discourse also

participates in negotiations of the native and the foreign—a point to which this chapter will return in showing how, by the end of the nineteenth century, in an almost complete reversal of Irving's approach in *A Tour on the Prairies*, participating in wonder discourse came to signal of form of belonging to the U.S. nation. This reversal is, perhaps, surprising given Irving's status in American literary history, but it is less surprising when one considers that by the 1830s a plethora of different kinds of positive wonder rhetoric was also circulating widely—if not in a clearly defined way—in the American press, particularly in regards to the "West."

This rhetoric drew travelers, like the English woman Francis Trollope, west with expectations that were formed by various, more or less defined ideas of what constituted "wonder." In her scathing *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), Trollope gives an account of her time in Cincinnati, the "Queen of the West": "We had heard so much of Cincinnati, its beauty, wealth, and unequalled prosperity, that when we left Memphis to go thither, we almost felt the delight of Rousseau's novice, 'un voyage à faire, et Paris au bout!' …We set forth to view this 'wonder of the west.'"[77] Still very much a frontier town—and not Paris!—Cincinnati turns out to be disappointing to Trollope in its failure to live up to her high expectations: "But, alas! the flatness of reality after the imagination has been busy! I hardly know what I expected to find in this city, fresh risen from the bosom of the wilderness, but certainly it was not a little town, about the size of Salisbury, without even an attempt at beauty in any of its edifices, and with only just enough of the air of a city to make it noisy and bustling."[78] The town's recent

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[77] Frances Milton Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 4th ed. (London: Whittaker, Treacher, 1832), PDF e-book, 53.
[78] Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 54.

affiliation with wilderness, its relative smallness, and its lack of architectural

sophistication form the conditions upon which the expectation of wonder is not

fulfilled.[79]

Where Tocqueville's narrative locates wonder in the context of "inanimate

nature" and Irving's negative account of wonder is concerned with experiences of travel

and adventure, Trollope's disappointment suggests a number of different contexts in

which wonder might operate. On the one hand, for her, wilderness and wonder seem to be

opposed, since Cincinnati's recent ascent from wilderness is one of the reasons Trollope

gives for not being able to expect too much of the city. Wonder is, in that sense, not

apparently a property of wilderness. Her expectations, however, and the reputation of the

city to which she alludes certainly suggest that the "wonder of the west" arose in part

through its wild(er)ness. Cincinnati is supposed to be a "wonder" because it represents

civilization in the wild. The kind of wonder Trollope expects would derive from a

complementarity between the beauty of nature and the sophistication and grandeur of the

city.

Her disappointment at the unsurprising hills surrounding Cincinnati and the

mediocrity of the trees establish nature as a possible site of wonder. Likewise, her

disappointment with the city's dependence on pigs for trash removal and its lack of

drainage and sewer systems also suggest that the realm of culture is another possible site

of wonder. Her reference to Rousseau and Paris, as well as her sense that bricks and

mortar are "refreshing" suggest that cultural and architectural achievements also might

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[79] The comparison to Salisbury explicitly invokes the Wordsworthian Romantic tradition of the "On Salisbury Plain" poems. Trollope's expectations of Cincinnati were clearly for a larger city, but, even in its smallness, Cincinnati lacks what Salisbury evokes: a well-established, architecturally pleasing town with beautiful surroundings that could be the seat of an influential aesthetic and philosophical movement.

satisfy her sense of wonder. Cincinnati's failure is thus two-fold: neither the city and its culture, nor its surrounding natural setting fulfills Trollope's expectation of the "wonder of the west."

Domestic Manners of the Americans and Trollope's assessment of Cincinnati as a failed wonder exemplify a range of different possible roles and arenas in which wonder participated in the 1830s. Wonder is a shifting signifier whose associations include both "natural" and "cultural" phenomena. What specifically defines wonder, Trollope's narrative suggests, is unclear. Was Cincinnati supposed to be a wonder for its nature, for its culture, or for its economic success? This ambiguity in the uses of wonder discourse was widespread. Over the course of the nineteenth century a range of cities, areas, and phenomena were referred to as *the* "wonder of the west." Adams, Ripley, and Reichman note that in 1804, New Harmony, Indiana became "the economic 'wonder of the west.'"[80] St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Chicago, Kansas City and other cities were claimed to be singular wonders in a similar vein—in their emergence as *the* economic centers in the former "wild."[81] In 1849, the *Daily National Intelligencer* refers to California as the "wonder of the west" for its gold shortly after the beginning of the Gold Rush.[82] An 1867 article in the *New Hampshire Sentinel* refers to the "Salt Plains" near Topeka, Kansas as

[80] Willie Paul Adams, Lavern Ripley, and Eberhardt Reichman, *The German Americans: An Ethnic Experience* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), www.maxkade.iupui.edu/adams/toc.html.

[81] For example, an 1882 article in *The Daily Picayune* of New Orleans covering the "English metaphysician" Herbert Spencer's "astonishment at the evidence of civilization in America" calls Chicago "the wonder of the west… [and] the nation." "Herbert Spencer. His Astonishment at the Evidences of Civilization in America," *The Daily Picayune* (October 26, 1882), 9. *America's Historical Newspapers*. Web. 3 March, 2011. In 1885, Kansas City's "immense growth" allowed *The Kansas City Times* to claim it as "the wonder of the west." "It Is Indeed A Daisy. Kansas City's Immense Growth the Wonder of the World," *Kansas City Times* (May 31, 1885), 11. *America's Historical Newspapers*. Web. 3 March, 2011.

[82] "Lieut. Edward F. Beale; United States; Navy; San Francisco," *Daily National Intelligencer*. 37, n. 11320 (2 June, 1849), 3. *America's Historical Newspapers*. Web. 3 March, 2011.

"the wonder of the west."[83] That same year, a *New York Times* article refers to the "Big trees" of California as "these gigantic wonders of the West" which "dwarf" all trees in the East.[84] An 1869 article from the *Weekly Champion and Press* of Atchison, Kansas, refers to the West as "that wonderful region." Later in the article, the Santa Fe and Salt Lake areas, as well as the "Garden of the Gods" in Colorado, are called "that wonder of the West."[85] In short, what constituted *the* "wonder of the west" was up for constant reinvention and re-appropriation by the media. If Tocqueville and Irving seem to have somewhat defined—and contradictory—uses and impressions of wonder, those definitions were certainly not the only ones available. In that sense, from the early nineteenth century, wonder was a shifting, malleable category of experience and rhetorical landscape, ripe for a wide range of appropriations.

II.   Seeking a Vocabulary: Wonder and the Struggle to Describe the West

The shifting status of wonder—in terms of the contexts in which it was used and the objects with which it became identified—made it a useful signifier for what became in the 1840s and 1850s a broader struggle to find appropriate language for the landscape of the western parts of the U.S.-North American continent. Wonder was one among many different descriptors invoked in this struggle to describe the American West. In this section, wonder-discourse takes a secondary role, as I give center stage to the broader struggle to describe and define the West—a process through which some travelers began

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[83] "The Salt Plains," *New Hampshire Sentinel* 69, n.38 (Sept. 19, 1867), 2. *America's Historical Newspapers*. Web. 3 March, 2011.
[84] "Minor Topics," *New York Times* (April 13, 1867), 4.
[85] "Our Future Watering-Places," *Weekly Champion and Press* 12, n.8 (April 3, 1869), 2. *America's Historical Newspapers*. Web. 3 March, 2011.

to think of the landscape as a park or a potential park. Other aestheticized categories also came into play—including the picturesque, the sublime, and the grandiose. The struggle to define American landscapes called for an accumulation of sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory descriptors. This struggle set the stage for the ways in which wonder would come to play a leading role in defining and promoting American landscapes in the second half of the nineteenth century.

As Anne Farrar Hyde has documented in *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920*, the earliest accounts of travels often struggled to describe the landscapes of the Far West. As a result, travelers often turned to comparisons with Europe as the primary means for apprehending what they saw. Hyde begins with an analysis of John Charles Frémont's 1845 account of his travels from 1842 to 1844 and shows how when first faced with the geographies of the West, travelers sought to fit landscapes into European paradigms that were already in operation in the eastern U.S.[86] Because much of the American West offered up sights for which travelers had no reference points, Hyde shows how travelers sought out analogies to more familiar sights and architectural structures.

Hyde's focus is on the "Far West," as Frémont and other explorers traveled to the Pacific coast, but even Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies* struggled with describing the landscape. Although the idea of founding American national parks was not taken seriously until the 1870s, one paradigm writers used to describe and think about the West was that of the European park, which itself owed much to the development of landscape painting

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[86] Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 7.

and the tradition of picturesque guidebooks.[87] Irving was among the first to explicitly think

of the "Far West" of the 1830s—the prairies of current-day Oklahoma, a territory that had

become part of the U.S. through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803—as being park-like.

Although Irving avoids discourses of wonder and adventure, his narrative does

think aesthetically about the wilderness. He talks about the "grandeur and sublimity" of the

prairies[88] and draws extended descriptions of "the characteristic scenes of the 'Far West'":

> An immense extent of grassing, undulating, or, as it is termed, 'rolling' country,
> with here and there a clump of trees dimly seen in the distance like a ship at sea,
> the landscape deriving sublimity from its vastness and simplicity. To the south-
> west, on the summit of a hill, was a singular crest of broken rocks resembling a
> ruined fortress. It reminded me of the ruin of some Moorish castle crowning a
> height in the midst of a lonely Spanish landscape.[89]

The aestheticization and comprehension of the American landscape, indeed, begins with

these ties to European vistas. Irving's title invokes the elite tradition of the European "grand

tour," an integral part of a proper aesthetic education from the sixteenth through the

nineteenth centuries. The idea of an American "grand tour" developed much later in the

nineteenth century, through the railroads and the development of package tours, as we will

see in greater detail later.[90] Some such tours were explicitly centered around seeking out

the picturesque—or landscapes that resembled art or "pictures." As Andrews describes:

> There is a peculiar circularity in the tourist's experience. He values the kinds of
> scenery which has been aesthetically validated in paintings, postcards and
> advertisements; he appraises it with the word 'picturesque'; and then he takes a
> photograph of it to confirm its pictorial value. Scenery valued in this way becomes

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[87] For a comprehensive look at the history of the park idea and its many international incarnations, see
Karen Jones and John Wills, *The Invention of the Park: From the Garden of Eden to Disney's Magic
Kingdom* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2005). For an overview of the emergence of the picturesque as a
tourist aesthetic, see Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University
Press, 1989), and Lynne Withey, "Touring in Search of the Picturesque," in *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours*
(New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997): 32-57.
[88] Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, Chapter 17.
[89] Ibid., Chapter 18.
[90] For more on the grand tours and the development of package tours, see Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and
Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1997).

a commodity, as the modern tourist industry is well aware. But it is a source of pleasure not necessarily debased because of its commercial exploitation: indeed it existed long before commercialised tourism…. [The term picturesque] was coming into vogue in the early eighteenth century…. Initially it carried no particular reference to landscape but meant the kind of scenery or human activity proper for painting.[91]

Through the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century in Europe, especially, picturesque tours became a major form of tourism, and the guidebooks and travel narratives that emerged from them were widely read and emulated. It was not just images that guided tourists to particular places, but narrative accounts and rhetorical frames, which helped travelers identify sights to be seen and understand landscapes through aesthetics. Irving situates his "tour" on the prairies in this tradition, which seems opposed to that of wonder and adventure.

Both the grand tour narrative and the wonder and adventure tale had established conventions: they focused on travel through Europe and to distant lands, but a key here is that they were lands *known* to Europeans, lands for which a vocabulary had been developed. The tension between these two frameworks—the narrative of the picturesque tour and the wonder tale—exemplifies *A Tour on the Prairies*'s search for an adequate vocabulary to account for the West. Without appealing to "wonder," Irving writes of an "expansiveness" that later writers would call wonder: "There is always an expansion of feeling in looking upon these boundless and fertile" prairies.[92] His descriptions invoke the sublime, the grand, and the vast and refer, as above, to European landscape and architectural parallels. They also call the land "a lonely waste" whose "immense extent" gives the traveler the feeling of deliriously "moving in the midst of a desert world."[93]

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[91] Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, vii-viii.
[92] Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, Chapter 29.
[93] Ibid.

Irving dwells in a kind ambivalent aestheticization of the land, coupled with incidental story-telling that avoids wonder tales and the scientific cataloguing practices of travel narratives.[94] The result, according to Reynolds, is that Irving's literary tales make the West into a site of culture, of story-telling, rather than action. Irving's text makes the West seem like a park: "...here is the 'wilderness', already taking on the ornamental cultivation of the European park."[95] Irving does repeatedly allude to parks in his encounters with the "wild scenes." Along the shores of the Arkansas River in current-day Oklahoma, he writes:

> After a gloomy and unruly night, the morning dawned bright and clear, and a glorious sunrise transformed the whole landscape as if by magic. The late dreary wilderness brightened into a fine open country, with stately groves and clumps of oaks of a gigantic size, some of which stood singly, as if planted for ornament and shade in the midst of rich meadows; while our horses, scattered about and grazing under them, gave to the whole the air of noble parks. It was difficult to realise the fact that we were so far in the wilds beyond the residence of man. Our encampment alone had a savage appearance, with its rude tents of skins and blankets, and its columns of blue smoke rising among the trees.[96]

Irving insists that the landscape appears "to have been laid out by the hand of taste"[97] or later "by the hand of art,"[98] creating scenes that seem like landscape paintings or designed environments: "As we cast our eyes over this fresh and delightful valley, we beheld a troop of wild horses quietly grazing on a green lawn about a mile distant to our right, while to our left, at nearly the same distance, were several buffaloes.... The whole had the appearance of a broad beautiful tract of pasture land, on the highly ornamented

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[94] For more on the compulsive cataloguing practices of U.S.-focused narratives, see Susan Manning's "Naming of Parts; or, The Comforts of Classification: Thomas Jefferson's Construction of America as Fact and Myth," *Journal of American Studies* 30 (1996): 345-64. Manning examines the "originating myth of America as catalogue of plenty" (346) from John Smith's 1624 *General History of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* to Jefferson's 1782 *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
[95] Reynolds, "The Winning of the West," 99.
[96] Irving, *A Tour on the Prairies*, Chapter 17.
[97] Ibid., Chapter 18.
[98] Ibid., Chapter 25.

estate of some gentleman farmer."[99] And when the landscape does not immediately appear familiar, what he sees brings him to imagine what would render his surroundings more park-like or picturesque: "They only want, here and there, a village spire, the battlements of a castle, or the turrets of an old family mansion rising from among the trees to rival the most ornamented scenery of Europe."[100] Irving's narrative thus sits somewhat ambiguously between proclaiming the West as a distinctly American space and imagining the West transformed into a more European place—emptied out of Native Americans, with a land of rolling hills, estates, and well-designed, picturesque vistas.

In elaborating on Irving's style, Reynolds invokes a comparison to two American visual artists of the time: "Instead of the grand vista, the towering peaks and the big skies of Albert Bierstadt, Irving created the literary parallel to the domestic sketches of George Catlin."[101] This comparison is apt, given that Catlin, too, although with different motives, pictured western landscapes as parks. Indeed, he is often credited with coming up with the national park idea. If Irving envisioned the West as a European park, Catlin, who became famous for his depictions of Native American life, published an early call for the creation of a "nations park" to preserve both American nature and Native American cultures.

Catlin was very concerned with the particulars of Native American life, which Irving all but ignores. Catlin travelled widely and published his notes in the *Daily Commercial Advertizer* in New York from 1830 to 1839. These reflections were collected and published in 1841 in two volumes of *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs,*

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[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., Chapter 18.
[101] Reynolds, "The Winning of the West," 92.

and Conditions of North American Indians. Through his travels and observations, Catlin became alarmed by the decimation of the bison on the Great Plains. Noting the Native American reliance on the bison, Catlin fears the extermination of both the animals and the native people. After lamenting their seemingly inevitable demise, he writes:

> And what a splendid contemplation, too, when one (who has travelled these realms and can duly appreciate them) imagines them as they *might* in future be seen (by some great protecting policy of government) preserved in their pristine beauty and wildness, in a *magnificent park*, where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse, with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes, What a beautiful and thrilling specimen for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A *nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty.[102]

Catlin's idea is clearly a nostalgic romanticization of native life that is aimed at framing it and the land in order to capture and arrest them before their inevitable demise. This desire is based on his appreciation for the beauty of the landscape, the animals, and the Native Americans, as well as a desire to preserve them—in their "American-ness."[103]

Catlin rarely appeals to discourses of wonder (though he does not reject them either), but he seeks to preserve—indeed shape—a rapidly disappearing world of native natures and cultures. He aims to capture the "enchanting shores of the Yellow Stone,"[104] and "the wonderful manner in which the gorges of the river have cut out its deep channel through these walls of clay on either side, of two or three hundred feet in elevation."[105] Appealing to the European tradition, Catlin calls these scenes "picturesque," a category

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[102] George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and conditions of North American Indians* (Philadelphia : J. W. Bradley, 1859), PDF e-book, 294-5. Catlin's emphasis.
[103] For a fuller analysis of Catlin's project, see Joshua Masters, "Reading the Book of Nature, Inscribing the Savage Mind: George Catlin and the Textualization of the American West," *American Studies* 46, n.2 (Summer 2005): 63-89.
[104] Catlin, *Notes and Letters*, 75.
[105] Ibid., 85.

that was at the time one of the most popular aesthetic descriptors of landscape. But references to European scenery and established understandings of the "picturesque" did not capture all of the land's features—such as the "imposing features" of the mountains. Thus Catlin, too, searches for a vocabulary to account for the variety and complexity of American landscapes.

The struggle to find an adequate vocabulary was one that nearly all travelers shared—sometimes implicitly, and sometimes more explicitly. It became amplified as more formal expeditions moved farther west across the Rockies, the desert, the Sierras. Although the 1830s and early 1840s saw a growing number of representations of far western landscapes, most Americans still had little knowledge of what the Far West looked like. By 1840, the only widely publicized expedition to explore the West remained the Lewis and Clark expedition of 1803-6.[106] After Louis and Clark, perhaps the most important overland expedition was John Charles Frémont's.[107] Between 1842 and 1845, Frémont was commissioned by the U.S. government to survey the lands of what

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[106] And popular knowledge of the findings of that expedition was scarce. Although the journals from that expedition are now in wide circulation, as Gary Moulton notes in his "General Introduction" to *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online*, after Jefferson deposited the earliest edition of the journals with the American Philosophical Society in 1817, they were virtually untouched until Elliot Coues set out to produce a new edition in 1891: "Although they were not lost, they were certainly little known.... It was Coues [in the 1890s] who rekindled the nation's interest in Louis and Clark." Gary Moulton, "Introduction," *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Online*, http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=introduction.general&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xsl.
[107] Almost simultaneous with Frémont's expedition, the so-called "Corps of Discovery" headed by Charles Wilkes undertook a much wider-ranging journey by sea. The four-year voyage of the U.S. Exploring Expedition was documented in *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition: During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842*. Published in five volumes in 1845, the narrative recounted the passage from Norfolk, Virginia, down the east coast of South America, around Cape Horn, up the west coast of South America, west and south to Tahiti and Samoa, south to New South Wales (Australia) and Antarctica, back north to Fiji, north and east to Hawaii, then east to the northwest coast of America and the mouth of the Columbia River. From the Columbia, the expedition sailed to San Francisco and explored the Oregon coast before turning to Honolulu and Singapore and then returning to New York. Although this expedition was at least as important as Frémont's in terms of the information gathered for purposes of commerce, whaling, scientific knowledge, and so on, the five-volume work was much less widely read and only reported on a relatively small part of the U.S.

subsequently became the "Overland Trail" to the Pacific. In 1845, with the literary help of his wife, he published the *Report on the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842, and to Oregon and North California in the Years 1843-1844*. Before Frémont, there had been virtually no formal expeditions—and certainly none that gained such a readership as Frémont's did. As Patricia Limerick's chapter on Frémont in *Desert Passages* notes, the reports were far more important than the travels themselves.[108] It wasn't that Frémont "discovered" any new or particularly important sites, but he offered one of the earliest "big picture" descriptions of the Far West.

Limerick notes that Frémont's main "standards" for commentary rested on "beauty and use," and his aim was to classify the landscapes of the West. This classification impulse was part of what helped make the report so successful. Frémont also appeals to the park paradigm as one way of thinking about the Far West. Having crossed the Sierras as he moved towards Sacramento, Frémont describes a "surpassingly beautiful country, entirely unequalled for the pasturage of stock than anything we had ever seen." He comes upon deer, as the group follows the course of a river, and he notes that "the grassy surface gave to it [the scene] the appearance of parks in the old settled country."[109] On the return trip east, Frémont follows a specific route along the Platte through the Rockies in order to see "three remarkable mountain coves, called Parks,"[110] which he notes are known to trappers and hunters, but not "to science and history."[111] Describing one of these areas (current-day North Park valley in Colorado), he writes:

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[108] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Desert Passages: Encounters with the American Deserts* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1985), 28.
[109] John Charles Frémont, *Report on the Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains in the Year 1842 and to Oregon an North California in 1843-44* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1845), PDF e-book, 244.
[110] Ibid., 281.
[111] Ibid., 282.

> The valley narrowed as we ascended, and presently degenerated into a gorge, through which the river passed as through a gate. We entered it, and found ourselves in the New Park—a beautiful circular valley of thirty miles diameter, walled in all round with snowy mountains, rich with water and with grass, fringed with pine on the mountain sides below the snow line, and a paradise to all grazing animals.... the enclosure, the grass, the water, and the herds of buffalo roaming over it, naturally presenting the idea of a park.[112]

Frémont's framing of landscapes as park-like is part of his larger project of translating unfamiliar landscapes into more familiar terms. As Hyde notes, he aimed to use "language and analogies that made the Far West comprehensible to Americans."[113] His report is the first of many travel narratives and survey reports that Hyde examines in her analysis of the evolving role of the Far West in helping forge a national culture with its own distinctive aesthetics. Hyde argues that well into the second half of the nineteenth century, the strangeness of the Far Western landscape provoked a kind of crisis of language.

For Hyde, Frémont's *Report* exemplifies this crisis and serves as the starting point for her arguments, as his descriptions attempt to come to terms with a wide variety of landscapes for which he was not prepared. As he moved west from St. Louis, his initial accounts appeal primarily to European aesthetic categories—especially of the picturesque and romantic beauty. On July 1, 1842, in crossing Nebraska, Frémont's entry begins: "Along our road today the prairie bottom was more elevated and dry, and the hills which border the right side of the river higher, and more broken and picturesque in the outline."[114] From July 1 to December 10, when Frémont reaches Klamath Lake in Oregon, which he describes as "a picturesque and beautiful spot,"[115] Frémont invokes the

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[112] Ibid., 282.
[113] Hyde, *An American Vision*, 2.
[114] Frémont, *Report on the Exploring Expedition,* 19.
[115] Ibid., 203.

picturesque twenty times. Other modes of description include—like Irving—comparisons to European sites or architecture: "And here among the mountains, 9,000 feet above the sea, we have the deep blue sky and sunny climate of Smyrna and Palermo."[116] Frémont's descriptions of Wyoming include "domes" and "slender minarets" that make the landscape look like "an old fortified town."[117]

However, as Frémont went through the Rocky Mountains, European references failed him, as Hyde points out. He finds that the Rockies are not like the Alps, as he had expected, and, as a result, he shies away from attempting to account for them: "Though these snow mountains are not the Alps, they have their own character of grandeur and magnificence, and will doubtless find pens and pencils to do them justice."[118] Frémont's reluctance here to describe these sites in further depth attests to the ways in which travel writing in the nineteenth century depended upon travelers' readings of existing accounts of landscapes to facilitate their own writing. When Irving, Frémont and others refer to American landscapes as "deserts," they are rarely naming arid, uninhabited lands; rather, they are pointing to rhetorical deserts, places about which little or nothing has been written to facilitate their own understandings and descriptions.

In moments when existing aesthetic categories and rhetorical accounts seem inadequate to describe the land, Frémont turns to "a kind of negative description,"[119] labeling sights as "not" fitting familiar paradigms. This pattern of comparison and negative description reached its limits in the arid West. Frémont, like travelers after him, found the land "parched and sterile," horrifying, worthless and indescribable. His struggle

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[116] Ibid., 237.
[117] Ibid., 35.
[118] Ibid., 61.
[119] Hyde, *An American Vision*, 4.

to account for the geography of "hills and ridges which rise abruptly, and reach too high to be called hills or ridges, and not high enough to be called mountains" left him frustrated. He claimed that "no translation, or paraphrasis, would preserve the identity" of these sites.[120] As Hyde remarks, Frémont's account points to the fact that "The words and imagery did not yet exist to describe large portions of the Far Western landscape."[121] For these places, no guidebooks or narratives existed to inform Frémont's and others' experiences. After reaching the Pacific coast, Frémont summed up his experience of the Far West: "Having completed this circuit, and being now about to turn the back upon the Pacific slope of our continent... it is natural to look back upon our footsteps, and take some brief view of the leading features and general structure of the country we had traversed. These are peculiar and striking, and differ essentially from the Atlantic side of our country."[122] This sentiment is similar to the one Bowles articulates fifteen years later in *Our New West*, positing radical difference through comparisons that simultaneously act to undermine difference. Although the sense of difference and inability to account for it is not resolved, Frémont concludes that the land on the Pacific coast must have great commercial value.

At this point, wonder is not one of the primary categories of landscape and emotional experience available to describe the land, but it does enter Frémont's vocabulary occasionally—though not nearly as often as we will see later in the context of Yosemite and Yellowstone—when pre-existing categories seem to fail. In his attempt to account for the Rockies and their difference from the Alps, he writes that: "It is not by the

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[120] Frémont, *Report on the Exploring Expedition,* 161.
[121] Hyde, *An American Vision*, 6.
[122] Frémont, *Report on the Exploring Expedition,* 274.

splendor of far-off views, which have leant a glory to the Alps, that these impress the

mind; but by a gigantic disorder of enormous masses... in wonderful contrast with

innumerable green spots of a rich floral beauty."[123] The wonderful here is characterized

by unexpected contrast in a localized view, rather than in the "far-off view." What is

wonderful about this scenery is clearly not anticipated or even comparable to what

appeals to Frémont about the Alps. Wonder thus enters into Frémont's vocabulary as a

way of articulating difference, and in instances when other categories are inadequate.

More frequently, however, wonder is a general, vague term referring to the

"wonders of the country"[124] as a whole. For Frémont, wonder is also associated with the

tall tales of earlier eras and accounts told by back-country hunters and trappers. Along the

shores of "the Great Salt Lake," he notes that:

> We were now entering a region which for us possessed a strange and
> extraordinary interest. We were upon the waters of the famous lake which forms a
> salient point among the remarkable geographical features of the country, and
> around which the vague and superstitious accounts of the trappers had thrown a
> delightful obscurity, which we anticipated pleasure in dispelling, but which, in the
> meantime, left a crowded field for the exercise of our imagination. In our
> occasional conversations with the few old hunters who had visited the region, it
> had been a subject of frequent speculation; that the wonders which they related
> were not the less agreeable because they were highly exaggerated and
> impossible.[125]

We see that wonder here remains associated with an American version of the "wonder

tale" told—usually orally—by trappers and "mountain men" who were the first to explore

the westernmost regions of the continent. This passage goes on at some length as

Frémont discusses his speculations and others', what they hope to find and verify.

Wonder is about "delightful obscurity" and uncertainty, which Frémont's expedition, in

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[123] Ibid., 66.
[124] Ibid., 35.
[125] Frémont, *Report on the Exploring Expedition*, 132.

its more scientific aims, is meant to illuminate. Frémont takes care to frame his comments in terms of doubt at trappers' exaggerated tales, but the narrative nonetheless relishes the wonder of the unknown that gives this unexplored and unaccounted for region an aura that the picturesque, sublime, and other European categories of landscapes do not have or capture. This aura is one that, as I will show, leads to the codification of wonder in the marketing of the Yosemite Valley and the Yellowstone region—both of which remained little known to Euro-Americans long after Frémont's expedition.

III.   Imagining Wonderscapes: Landscape and Fantasy

Frémont's purposes were both scientific and utilitarian. His aim was to ascertain the potential value and uses of western lands. His narrative pays some attention to the beauty of the landscape, particularly in ways that make the West seem more hospitable and familiar. He acknowledges the existence of wonder tales about the West, but situates his own task as being quite different from the narratives of fantastical wonders and adventures that trappers and hunters had been telling. Frémont's narrative certainly recounts adventurous encounters with Indians and animals, but still his purpose in these encounters remains largely utilitarian. His account, as Limerick suggests, was not just a description of his travels; rather, it became a guidebook for future travelers: "'Travel' was Frémont's highest concern. The information in his reports was not only collected *by* traveling; the purpose of collecting that information was to offer a guide *for* traveling. In his records, 'traveler' is almost interchangeable with 'American.'"[126] This notion of travel being at the heart of American identity and citizenship later became central to the

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[126] Limerick, *Desert Passages*, 33.

promotion of the national parks and of a domestic tourist industry, as Marguerite Shaffer

has shown in *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940.*[127]

Frémont's narrative served as a kind of blueprint for later travelers, especially after the

Mexican-American war of 1846-48.

His report was published in 1845, around the same time the U.S. annexed Texas,

causing the Mexican-American war. Long before the start of the war, the national

rhetoric of "Manifest Destiny" had been on the tongues of politicians. An 1846 report of

the U.S. Senate stated this destiny quite bluntly: "The *untransacted* destiny of the

American people is to subdue the continent—to rush over this vast field to the Pacific

Ocean...."[128] Even before Mexico ceded California and its surrounding territories to the

U.S., Americans were moving west en masse. As a November 7, 1846 article in the

Monterey *Californian* notes: "Emigrants from the United States are daily flocking into

California; their landmark, after crossing the Rocky Mountains, is the Sacramento

valley."[129] The article goes on to suggest that these emigrants would soon prove that even

lands considered useless could be turned to great use and value.

These westward emigrants followed Frémont's path, and some of them also

recorded their crossings. Their narratives had less clearly defined purposes than

Frémont's and more readily embraced wonder practices, beginning the codification of

wonder that would, in turn, influence later scientific surveys. Edwin Bryant, who became

the third mayor (alcade) of San Francisco in 1847, published *What I Saw in California*

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[127] Marguerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism And National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

[128] William Gilpin, "The Untransacted Destiny of the American People," in *So Glorious a Landscape: Nature and the Environment in American History and Culture*, ed. Chris Magoc (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002), 43. Emphasis in the original.

[129] "Americans Spread All Over California," in *So Glorious a Landscape*, ed. Chris Magoc, 45.

(1849) upon returning to the east coast briefly before going west again. Bryant's narrative is noteworthy for the ways in which it connects sights and sites of wonder to the realm of fantasy, in effect imagining American landscapes as what I call "wonderscapes." I use the term wonderscape to describe a physical environment that has been rhetorically transformed into an imaginative realm of fantasy. Indeed, in Bryant's narrative, the American West is turned into a land of supra-natural occurrences through visual projections and imagined transformations.

Bryant certainly does not embrace the fantastical fictions of earlier wonder tales, but his narrative exemplifies some of the ways in which traveling through geographical space was figured as an imaginative experience. That is so, in part, because the West is defined by variety and a multiplicity of evolving perspectives and narratives. Before he recounts these experiences, he describes a conversation with other members of his party that captures the range of ambiguous perceptions of the West people held in the 1840s:

> Many tales of Rocky Mountain adventure, some of which were sufficiently dismal and tragical for the most horror-tinctured taste, others contrasting as widely therefrom as possible, were related. The merits of the countries bordering the Pacific were discussed: by some they were denounced as abodes suitable only for the condemned and abandoned of God and man; by others they were extolled, as being scarcely inferior in their attractions to the Eden described in the history of the creation, and presenting such fascinations as almost to call the angels and saints from their blissful gardens and diamond temples in the heavens. Such are the antipodes of opinion among those who rely upon second-hand testimony for their information.[130]

From the beginning of the narrative Bryant situates the Far West as an ambiguously valued place that provokes extreme reactions. In these extremes, Bryant suggests, the West draws people to it out of curiosity and wonder. In the final sentence of this passage,

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[130] Edwin Bryant, *What I Saw in California* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1849), PDF e-book, 16.

Bryant—like earlier travelers—emphasizes the importance of first-hand experience, as a marker of validation.

Bryant next recounts an obviously "absurd" story about a man who lived in California and was 250 years old. He wanted to die and kept praying for death, but so long as he remained in California, he kept living vigorously. A friend advised him to leave the state, and doing so, he fell ill and died. In his will, he stipulated that his remains be returned to California. When his body was brought back, it reanimated and he went on living. Bryant remarks that "Stories similar to the foregoing, although absurd, and so intended to be, no doubt leave their impressions upon the minds of many, predisposed to rove in search of adventures and Eldorados."[131] This kind of story is characteristic of tales of wonder. Unlike Irving, Bryant indulges in a retelling of this fantastical wonder, in part to convey the mystique the West had acquired. His perpetuation of the clearly "absurd" situates the West as a geographic region that is a landscape of the imagination. This had been the case before Bryant, for sure, but Bryant's text exemplifies some of the ways in which the imaginative dimension of geography remained central and vibrant in a scientific era—and as an integral part of experiences and understandings of landscape.

Bryant assures the reader that despite these imaginative tales, his text's purpose is to represent his travels and experiences accurately:

> My design is to give a *truthful* and not an exaggerated and fanciful account of the occurrences of the journey and of the scenery, capabilities, and general features of the countries through which we shall pass.... The scenery is neither so diversified, nor are the incident and adventure so dramatic and striking as most readers may suppose from having perused the daily unauthenticated histories, fabulous and imaginary, with which the press has of late teemed, professing to be descriptive of mountain and prairie life. The vast interior of North America, with the reputed Eldorado on the shore of the Pacific furnishes, however, much that is worthy of

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[131] Ibid., 17.

the inquiry, examination, and admiration of the naturalist, and much that is calculated to awaken and please the desultory curiosity of the mass."[132]

Even while presenting the reader with fantastical tales, Bryant aims to provide a rectifying narrative that distances itself from the "absurdity" of tales of wonder but still makes sure to recount those tales as a way of igniting readers' imagination and maintaining the mystique around the Far West. Bryant also here downplays the uniqueness and difference of the West.

As a "truthful" narrative, Bryant's account describes not just what he saw—as the book's title suggests—but what he imagined and felt in the seeing. Indeed, his narrative is one in which the landscape takes on a life of its own, provoking visions and "mirages" that border on the supra-natural, if not the supernatural. These visions sometimes come from Bryant's inability to account for what he sees. Early on in his voyage, on the plains, he notes that "It is impossible for me to convey to the reader the impressions made upon my mind by a survey of these measureless undulating plains.... and variety of production far above our feeble conceptions or efforts at imitation.[133] In this passage, the trope of ineffability goes hand in hand with a sense of the land acting upon Bryant to make "impressions" on his mind. The failure of language to describe objects of wonder is neither surprising nor new, but in Bryant's iteration, the land makes him feel his feebleness and limited ability to conceive of what he is seeing—a theme to which the narrative returns often in defining the power of the landscape itself.

Like Irving and Frémont before him, Bryant imagines these plains and their slopes as the "parks, avenues, and pleasure-grounds of some princely mansion, which the

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[132] Ibid., 18.
[133] Ibid., 27.

imagination was continually conjecturing might be hidden behind their dense foliage."[134]

These imaginings, on the one hand, like Irving's and Frémont's, seek to fit Bryant's

observations into a familiar context—the park, avenue, and pleasure-ground. On the other

hand, Bryant's images also function in a more dramatic way: they are moments in which

Bryant's sense of wonder transports him, as the landscape takes on a physical power of

transformation through the conjuring of images. Although it is clear that these conjurings

come from Bryant's own cultural reference points, he attributes them to the land itself.

Later in the narrative this power is even stronger. As Bryant's party is traversing

the Salt Plains (current day Utah),[135] he describes a view of "the vast desert plain"

ahead.[136] The "icy desolation" of the landscape that awaits them—without any apparent

animal or vegetable life—provokes an ambivalent wonder of "excited mingled emotions

of admiration and apprehension." As they move forward, they arrive at the edge of a

precipice, beyond which they see some "highly agitated water."[137] The sight alarms them

and makes them think they have taken a wrong path. As they consult one another about

what to do, however, they "discovered that what represented so perfectly the 'rushing

waters' was moveless, and made no sound! The illusion soon became manifest to all of

us, and a hearty laugh at those who were the first to be deceived was the consequence."[138]

As they push on to cross the plain of "blue clay" and "white saline substance" they are

enveloped in a "dense smoke." In the distance ahead, they see snow-topped mountains.

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[134] Ibid., 38.
[135] Bryant's language at times comes very close to Frémont's architectural descriptions of the land: "This ridge, stretching far to the north and the south as the eye can reach, forms the western wall (if I may so call it) of the desert valley we had crossed yesterday, and is composed of rugged, barren peaks of dark basaltic rock, sometimes exhibiting misshapen outlines; at others, towering upwards, and displaying & variety of architectural forms, representing domes, spires, and turreted fortifications." Ibid., 169-70
[136] Ibid., 173.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid.

And here, Bryant launches into an extended description of "the mirage," which is worth

quoting in its entirety:

> The mirage, a beautiful phenomenon I have frequently mentioned as exhibiting
> itself upon our journey, here displayed its wonderful illusions, in a perfection and
> with a magnificence surpassing any presentation of the kind I had previously
> seen. Lakes, dotted with islands and bordered by groves of gently waving timber,
> whose tranquil and limpid waves reflected their sloping banks and the shady islets
> in their bosoms, lay spread out before us, inviting us, by their illusory
> temptations, to stray from our path and enjoy their cooling shades and refreshing
> waters. These fading away as we advanced, beautiful villas, adorned with
> edifices, decorated with all the ornaments of suburban architecture, and
> surrounded by gardens, shaded walks, parks, and stately avenues, would succeed
> them, renewing the alluring invitation to repose, by enticing the vision with more
> than Calypsan enjoyments or Elysian pleasures. These melting from our view as
> those before, in another place a vast city, with countless columned edifices of
> marble whiteness, and studded with domes, spires, and turreted towers, would rise
> upon the horizon of the plain, astonishing us with its stupendous grandeur and
> sublime magnificence. But it is in vain to attempt a description of these singular
> and extraordinary phenomena. Neither prose or poetry, nor the pencil of the artist,
> can adequately portray their beauties. The whole distant view around, at this
> point, seemed like the creations of a sublime and gorgeous dream, or the effect of
> enchantment. I observed that where these appearances were presented in their
> most varied forms, and with the most vivid distinctness, the surface of the plain
> was broken, either by chasms hollowed out from the action of the winds, or by
> undulations formed of the drifting sands.[139]

Here wonder and illusion or wonder and imagination go hand in hand. Although Bryant

knows that what he sees is not "real"—there is no city in the distance—the sense of

wonder instills the landscape with the ability to produce these powerful visions.

Several pages later, a similar illusion takes place, as the group becomes aware of a

"gigantic moving object" six to eight miles away. The hugeness of the object "greatly

excited our wonder and curiosity" once again. As the men guess at what the object could

be, a group of fifteen to twenty men and horses appear, coming towards them. At first,

Bryant thinks they are Indians. Then, as they approach, they multiply to three or four

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[139] Ibid., 174-5.

hundred. Bryant imagines the men to be members of Frémont's 1848 expedition. When

he asks another in his party to confirm the sight, the man tells him he has seen the

mounted men, appearing and disappearing periodically:

> He had observed the same appearances several times previously, but they had
> disappeared, and he believed them to be optical illusions similar to the mirage. It
> was then, for the first time, so perfect was the deception, that I conjectured the
> probable fact that these figures were the reflection of our own images by the
> atmosphere, filled as it was with fine particles of crystallized matter, or by the
> distant horizon, covered by the same substance. This induced a more minute
> observation of the phenomenon, in order to detect the deception, if such it were. I
> noticed a single figure, apparently in front in advance of all the others, and was
> struck with its likeness to myself. Its motions, too, I thought, were the same as
> mine.[140]

To test his theory about the forms, Bryant wheels around and makes sudden movements,

which he then observes the figure in front of him making. He concludes that "The fact

then was clear. But it was more fully verified still, for the whole array of this numerous

shadowy host in the course of an hour melted entirely away, and was no more seen.... I

cannot here more particularly explain or refer to the subject. But this phantom

population...although we were entirely convinced of the cause of the apparition, excited

those superstitious emotions so natural to all mankind."[141] Bryant's narrative here

situates itself at the interstices of scientific rationalism and mystical wonder. The

mysteriousness and unknown nature of the land he is traversing feeds the possibility of

unlikely or even supra-natural occurrences.

Bryant's narrative thus figures a form of wonder that owes much to the well-

studied early modern paradigm of wondrous phenomena that challenge the "order of

nature." Although Bryant tests the wondrous occurrence in what might be considered a

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[140] Ibid., 177-8.
[141] Ibid., 178.

scientific fashion to determine the nature of the appearance, the illusions, mirages, and shadows of his journey maintain the openness of the possibility of phenomena that might operate outside of the scientific, materialist purview of things. The wonders of the West were, indeed, ones that challenged the nature of European science—a point to which this chapter returns in discussing both Yosemite and Yellowstone.

In challenging established understandings of the order of things and the possible, the experience of wonder becomes a relationship between seer and seen in which both are temporarily transformed. For Bryant, wonder triggers possibilities of experiential transformations—however temporary—that alter the landscape. That transformation is one that superimposes more familiar images—of architectural structures, Frémont's men—on the unfamiliar landscape, but in those transformations, the landscape is invested with a life of its own. That animation of the physical geography defines a "wonderscape"—a landscape of the imagination which generates the feeling that unexpected, even impossible things can take place. A "wonderscape" as I am defining it is a rhetorical landscape, but it is not the kind that Clark defines in *Rhetorical Landscapes*. His analysis examines public discourses that shaped public experiences that gave people "the same symbolic experience of the nation."[142] Wonderscapes, though rhetorically constituted and mediated through common images and texts, are open, imaginative experiences that take on particular, individual characteristics and personal meanings.

Like Bryant's text, this kind of wonder still conforms to modern scientific principles, even as it inhabits an imaginative realm. The verification that an image is a

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[142] Clark, *Rhetorical Landscapes*, 4.

mirage or illusion does not diminish or falsify the experience of it—as Bryant faithfully includes these "illusions" in *What I Saw*. The book is aptly titled in its emphasis on the contents of perception—shaped at times by imagination and optical effects—rather than on the country itself. The book, as such, stands as an account of a search for a language with which to adequately describe a visual experience that produces imaginative, generative wonder. Here, the more conventional categories of the picturesque and the sublime are left behind as Bryant depicts a world that poses serious challenges to his imaginative and perceptive capabilities.

Wonder—as an emotion and a rhetoric—begins to emerge here as a category of experience whose openness and relatively undefined qualities make it an ideal word and concept to fill the rhetorical deserts of the American West. Unlike the picturesque and the sublime, wonder was not an established aesthetic that had been described and defined in textual, poetic, and artistic terms. This very fact ultimately made it far more suitable a word for lands that consistently failed to fit into European aesthetic ideas and models. Bryant's particularly strange and imaginative apprehensions of American landscapes as wonderscapes exemplify some of the ways in which the land seemed to invite imaginative narrativization. Such imaginings paved the way for the much fuller narrativization of western landscapes, especially by railroad advertising campaigns that turned geographies into stories and travelers into characters.

IV.   Gold and Beyond: Californian Wonders

Although more than half of Bryant's narrative is about things he saw on his way to California, the book's title announces a focus on the region that was, as he suggests,

being painted as a mythic Eldorado. California itself, more than the journey across the country, was becoming a site of exoticized wonder, even before the discovery of gold. Bryant's drive to go to California is colored by the land's status as foreign. In this respect, wonder remains tied to the exotic and the distant. When he arrives there, however, he is greeted by the strange news that the "foreign country" he had come to explore was on the verge of joining the United States.[143] Although ideas of Manifest Destiny had long forecasted this eventuality, it is clear that Bryant has a difficult time reconciling the foreignness of California with his sense of the (primarily eastern) nation.

That conceptual difficulty was a major part of a national process in the second half of the nineteenth century: fitting the western half of the country into the nation's sense of itself and its history. As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, it took some time for California and other parts of the Far West to figure into people's sense of the nation. That process began with an influx of travelers and migrants to the west and took off more forcefully with the advent of the transcontinentals, as Samuel Bowles's *Our New West* indicates.[144] The conception of landscape as a potential wonderscape came with travelers who went west for their own, non-scientific purposes. The broader codification of wonder discourse also began to take shape as California became a destination of choice for emigrants and travelers.

Before the railroads crossed the continent, California's statehood and the discovery of gold in 1848 encouraged a flood of emigrants. California became identified as the mythic El Dorado, whose wonders only seemed to begin with the discovery of

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[143] Bryant, *What I Saw*, 244.
[144] For a more extensive history and analysis of the role of transcontinental railroads in the "making of modern America," see Richard White's *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2011).

gold. Bayard Taylor's 1850 *El Dorado, or Adventures in the Path of Empire* popularized

that mythology and fed the American and British publics' appetite for adventures in the

wonderful west.[145] When Taylor's account was published, as he recounts, the mines

extended "from the base of the proper Sierra Nevada to the plains of Sacramento and San

Joaquin...upwards of five hundred miles in length."[146] From 1848 to 1855, over 300,000

people came west to work in those mines, half of them taking the overland journey from

the east coast, and experiencing the vastness of the continent and the variety in its

landscapes. Increasingly, in journalistic accounts as well as emigrant narratives, wonder

discourse became associated with the state that was construed as a much more permanent

wonderscape than Bryant's—a state that became rhetorically framed as the realization of

mythic fantasy worlds and "promised lands." It is in California that the process of what

Susan Davis calls "place-building" took hold through wonder discourse in the

"construct[ion] of a landscape of sights and experience" for the sake of tourists.[147]

The growth of the mines and the arrival of settlers to California led to the

discovery of natural wonders besides gold. Among the earliest and most astonishing of

these were the "big trees" of Calaveras—now Calaveras Grove of Big Trees State Park—

which were famous by 1853, especially for their bark, exhibited on the east coast in

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[145] Within two weeks of publication, the book had sold 40,000 copies.

[146] Bayard Taylor, *El Dorado, or Adventures in the Path to Empire* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850), PDF e-book, 195.

[147] Davis's analysis focuses on contemporary tourism. Susan Davis, "Landscapes of Imagination: Tourism in Southern California," *Pacific Historical Review* 68, n.2 (May 1999), 173. There has been a plethora of studies of nineteenth century tourism in the west. Canonic ones include: Earl Pomeroy, *In Search of the Golden West: The Tourist in Western America* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1957); John Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Hyde's *An American Vision*. More recently, David Wrobel and Patrick Long's co-edited *Seeing and Being Seen: Tourism in the American West* (Lawrence: Kansas UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2001) gives a long-view of western tourism from the nineteenth century onwards, and Hall K. Rothman, ed., *The Culture of Tourism, the Tourism of Culture: Selling the Past to the Present in the American Southwest* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003) examines how the past is packaged for contemporary consumption.

1854.[148] In 1854, Galen Clarke, who later became one of the custodians of Yosemite, discovered another grove of big trees in Mariposa. These, too, were advertised as wonders. An 1857 article in the *California Farmer* reported on the Mariposa grove and noted that: "The mightiest tree that has yet been found, now lies upon the ground, and fallen as it lies, it is a wonder still."[149] The trees were celebrated for their astounding size as well as for the thickness of their bark. In the 1880s, the trees' fame led to some of them being chopped into pieces and reassembled and put on display on the east coast and in Europe. In 1893, a tree called General Noble Tree was cut down and sent to Chicago for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.[150]

The press these kinds of "wonders" attracted and the growing number of accounts of western wonders began the codification of wonder discourse. By the mid-1850s, newspapers across California were valuing wonders as much, if not more, than gold: "Apart from the extraordinary mineral productions, this State displays vegetable and other natural wonders equally, perhaps of a more interesting and surpassing character." Soon, Yosemite Falls and Yosemite Valley became singled out as the "chief among these wonders," a form of value that led to their preservation and production as consumable wonderscapes for tourists.[151]

This production of "wonder" as a tourist experience took root in the settlement of the West—and the military conflicts by which Native Americans were dispossessed of their lands. The cultural value places like Yosemite Valley gained as wonders was bound

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[148] United States Forest Service, *Report on the Big Trees of California* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), PDF e-book, 11. The *Report* claims that the Calaveras Grove was first discovered in 1841 (8).
[149] Colonel Warren, quoted in James Mason Hutchings, *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California* (San Francisco: J.M. Hutchings & Co, 1862), PDF e-book, 216.
[150] Dayton Duncan, *The National Parks*: *America's Best Idea* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 54.
[151] A reprinting from the *Stockton Republican* in the December 16, 1853 of the *Daily Democratic State Journal* of Sacramento.

up in their status as "ancient" Indian territories. For decades after the foundation of

Yosemite Park, part of the aura of this wonder was its mythic origin story, handed down

in large part by Lafayette Bunnell and the Mariposa Battalion, who were the first white

people to enter Yosemite Valley, on a military expedition launched to settle conflicts

between white miners and Native Americans in the Sierra Nevada region brought on by

the Gold Rush. The founding of Yosemite was bound up in the context of the Mariposa

War of 1850-1. The initial land grant that founded Yosemite as a state park in 1864 was

coterminous with the removal of many Native Americans, namely the Ahwahnechees of

Yosemite Valley, from their lands.[152]

In 1851, Lafayette Houghton Bunnell and the Mariposa Battalion entered the

Yosemite Valley for the first time. The Mariposa Battalion was formed that year to fight

the Miwok and Chowchillas in the Mariposa War, a conflict that erupted between miners

and Native Americans. The Mariposa Battalion came upon the Yosemite Valley while

pursuing a group of Native Americans. Bunnell's *Discovery of the Yosemite* was not

published until 1880, although he notes in the introduction that "Many of the facts

incident thereto have already been given to the public by the author at various times since

1851."[153]

Long before he published his book, Bunnell led one of the earliest tourist

expeditions into the Yosemite Valley in July of 1856. The trip yielded the first thorough

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[152] There is an extensive literature on Yosemite and its history. The most comprehensive histories, include: Margaret Sanborn, *Yosemite: Its Discovery, Its Wonder, and Its People* (Yosemite National Park: Yosemite Association, 1989) and Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1990). Sears' *Sacred Places* also has a strong history of Yosemite's quick rise as a symbolic landscape that was viewed as art ("Scenery as Art: Yosemite and the Big Trees," 122-155). None of the literature focuses on the landscape's relationship to wonder; indeed, most of it exemplifies scholarship that takes wonder for granted as a naturalized category.
[153] Lafayette Bunnell, *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian War of 1851* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1880), 9.

description of the valley and documents participants' clear astonishment at the sight of the valley's features:

> Even now with feelings of awe and veneration we recall the gorgeous array of the vast and wonderful combined in this superb display of the beautiful and the sublime. The hand is not yet formed that, with pen, pencil, or brush, can portray even a reflection of the excessive majesty of aspect that prominently fronts the vision of the shrinking visitor. We travel to foreign climes to obtain a sight of what travelers have written of—some renowned falls, mountains or rivers—or landscapes amid the Alps of Switzerland or the valleys of Italy. We eagerly seek after books wherein some novice traveler has magnified the sight-seeings of Europe, many of which possess no wonderful attributes of greatness, save in the mind of the traveler, that will compare with the scenery, separately or in whole, of the Yosemite Valley.[154]

Like earlier accounts of the West, this passage again highlights the viewer's difficulty in accounting for a landscape that has no precedent in the continental U.S., or even in Europe. It attests to the popularity of European picturesque guidebooks and their depiction of what Bunnell considers to be far inferior landscapes.

This early account also appeals to a range of aesthetic categories: the vast, beautiful, the sublime, and later in the text, the wonderful and the grandiose. The accumulation of descriptors may make them seem interchangeable, but the writer makes a distinction between "the wonderful" and "the sublime." In describing "the grandest of all the cascades," he notes that "The impression made on the mind of the beholder is, that it partakes more of the wonderful than the sublime. The water of the last runs, or rather springs, over the precipice, with a languid splash, striking upon a projecting bunch of a hard strata of rock, which, when the stream above is full, it freely overleaps with great

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[154] This selection and the ones that follow are from an article entitled "A Trip to Yosemite Fall," originally published in the August 6, 1956 *Mariposa Democrat*. The author is unknown, but the article is often attributed to Warren Baer, then editor of the *Mariposa Democrat*. "A Trip to Yosemite Fall," *Mariposa Democrat* (August 6, 1956), www.yosemite.ca.us.

force, and in an unbroken fall." [155] In this passage, what exactly renders this scene "wonderful" rather than sublime is left unexplained, but it seems that, in keeping with Fisher's distinction, wonder and delight partake in pleasurable and somewhat peaceful sensations that can be differentiated from the intensity of "thrill" and sublimity in the Wordsworthian tradition.

Like Bryant's narrative, this text also frames the valley in fantastical, magical terms: "As though the enchantress of the woods had suddenly waved her magic wand o'er the mountains, was this fairy scenery opened to our view." This enchantment creates "thrilling sensations" and awe and eventually these "subsided into pleasurable emotions of wonder and delight, similar to those produced upon the soul by distant music echoing amid the hills and valleys in the quiet hours of midnight." The scenery is such that it stretches the viewer's apprehension of reality: "the imagination recoils back upon itself, content to follow the reach of vision, completely paralyzed by the magnitude of the expanding vista." The description here paints a wonderscape that expands notions of what is naturally and experientially possible.[156]

The article ends with a passage that claims wonder as an overarching category under which the full range of the writer's responses might fit: "Here, then, we end our task, as conscious now as when we began this attempt, of our inability to do justice to the scene. Perhaps some poet may arise, who, in verse or prose, may, in some happy moment, stamp a page with the seal of genius, and reflect the glories of the Yosemite Valley, whose every rock is an object of study and of wonder."[157] Finally, then, among

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[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.

the other terms the writer uses to describe his experience in the valley—the sublime, the grandiose, the immense, the delightful, etc.—wonder is, perhaps, the only one that is malleable enough to account for "every rock" and aspect of the Valley. Thus, in the struggle to account for the variety of different kinds of landscapes and aesthetic forms represented in California and the West more broadly, wonder emerges as a capacious category that can encompass the range of sublime, picturesque, grandiose, vast scenes that Bunnell and his co-travelers encountered. Furthermore, although wonder discourse circulated in Europe and the rest of the world before the nineteenth century, unlike the picturesque and the sublime, it was not associated with any particular European aesthetic movement, a fact that made it all the more suitable for American appropriation in framing landscapes that became understood as particularly American treasures.

Yosemite was quickly popularized by prominent easterners who came west, publishing accounts of their travels. Among these were the journalists Samuel Bowles and Horace Greeley, whose descriptions of California, the big trees, and Yosemite Valley were published and read throughout the nation. Both men painted the Yosemite Valley in quasi-religious terms, which perpetuated a mystical wonder and mysterious aura around the valley. Greeley's *An Overland Journey* calls the valley "the most unique and majestic of nature's marvels."[158] Looking down into the valley from the mountain heights at night, he writes: "The medium of moonlight that fell into this awful gorge gave to that precipice a vagueness of outline, an indefinite vastness, a ghostly and weird spirituality."[159] He ends his account authoritatively with the assessment that there is "no single wonder of

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[158] Horace Greeley, *An Overland Journey: From New York to San Francisco in the Summer of 1859* (Lincoln: Nebraska University Press, 1999 [1860]), 307.
[159] Ibid., 304.

nature on earth which can claim a superiority over the Yosemite."[160] Bowles similarly

describes "this assemblage of natural wonder and beauty" as sweeping in an

"overpowering sense of the sublime, of awful desolation, of transcending marvelousness

and unexpectedness."[161] The Valley is for him a site of "wandering," "wondering," and

"worshipping."[162] Comparing the features of Yosemite to cathedrals and "fantastic forms

of Gothic architecture,"[163] Bowles also proclaims Yosemite to be "the great natural

wonder of our western world. Indeed, it is not too much to say that [there is] no so

limited space in all the known world [that] offers such majestic and impressive

beauty."[164] These accounts quickly popularized Yosemite, making it, as John Sears

suggests, a nearly instant iconic landmark—one that was immediately articulated as

surpassing the landscapes of any other country in the world.[165]

If in 1856 wonder was still one term among many being used to account for the

Yosemite Valley and its features, we can see that by the early 1860s, it was becoming the

term of choice for describing Yosemite in relation to European nature, art, and

architecture, and as a singular, unique national symbol. By the 1880s, when Bunnell

finally published his account of the "discovery" of the Valley, wonder had firmly

emerged as the primary paradigm for describing such natural sites. Wonder discourse

served as a codified, legitimizing and authorizing marker of experience. Bunnell's book

opens with a poem entitled "Wonder Land":

> Hail thee, Yosemite, park of sublimity!
> Majesty, peerless and old!

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[160] Ibid., 308.
[161] Bowles, *Our New West*, 376.
[162] Ibid., 377.
[163] Ibid., 380.
[164] Ibid., 377.
[165] John Sears, *Sacred Places*.

> Ye mountains and cliffs, ye valleys and rifts.
>> Ye cascades and cataracts bold!
> None, none can divine the wonders of thine,
>> When told of the glorious view!
> The wild world of light—from 'Beatitude's' height,
>> Old 'Rock Chief,' 'El Capitan' true![166]

The poem consists of four octets, each built around a series of exclamations about the setting in different seasons. The poem ends by granting the park divine power. The exclamations seem to allude to Bunnell's earlier acknowledgement that the book was difficult to write both because he had limited "opportunities for culture" growing up (and has little literary expertise) and because language is simply inadequate to describe a place that must be seen.[167] The discourses of the sublime and wonder are both deployed to account for the inadequacy of language to describe Yosemite, but wonder is marked out as the larger over-arching category.

Bunnell's descriptions of Yosemite's features are rather vague. He dwells on the impact of the scenery, the fact that "it was utterly indescribable…. It is not possible for the same intensity of feeling to be aroused more than once by the same object, although I never looked upon these scenes except with wonder and admiration."[168] The "indescribable" quality of the scenery seems to mean he can only constantly reiterate his "wonder." He notes that: "The public has now [by 1880], to a certain degree, been prepared for these scenes. They are educated by the descriptions, sketches, photographs and masterly paintings of Hill and Bierstadt."[169] This education was rhetorical; it took the form of reading travel narratives and seeing visual representations of the landscape. This

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[166] Lafayette Houghton Bunnell, *Discovery of the Yosemite and the Indian War of 1851* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1880), 10-11.
[167] Ibid., 9.
[168] Ibid., 54-55.
[169] Ibid., 55.

rhetorical education was defined by wonder. Bunnell's foregrounding of wonder rhetoric in his narrative serves to legitimate his story to a public educated in the exceptional, wondrous nature of the scenery of the American West.

One could read Bunnell's insistent repetition of variations on a single word (wonderful, wonderland, etc.) as the marker of an uneducated vocabulary. But the recurrence of wonder discourse is not merely the result of a lack of knowledge or imagination. In Bunnell's text, wonder is magnified to the point of being an all-encompassing signifier, accounting for scenery, adventure, conflict: in short, the total experience. Bunnell's use of wonder discourse appeals to the mythical nature of his narrative. According to his account, when Bunnell first came upon Yosemite Valley, he was so transfixed by the views that a man in his battalion had to remind him that Indians might be lurking about, ready to scalp him, and he better not dawdle in awe for too long. To this, Bunnell answers "If my hair is now required, I can depart in peace, for I have here seen the power and glory of a Supreme being; the majesty of His handy-work."[170] Long after Bunnell had departed, the scene stayed in his mind. He and his comrades discuss the scenery around their campfire: "Many of us *felt* the mysterious grandeur of the scenery, as defined by our limited opportunity to study it…. It may appear *sentimental*, but the coarse jokes of the careless, and the indifference of the practical, sensibly jarred my more devout feelings [about the scenery]."[171] Wonder and the mysterious quality of the valley are functions of the unknown, the non-scientific apprehension of nature, yet they also seem to inhere in the spirit of the place.

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[170] Ibid., 56.
[171] Ibid., 60.

Bunnell's devout response to the Valley is not shared by all his fellow soldiers, but they nonetheless listen to him when discussion turns to naming the valley. He suggests that "an American name would be the most appropriate… I could not see any necessity for going to a foreign country for a name for American scenery—the grandest that had ever yet been looked upon. That it would be better to give it an Indian name than to import a strange and inexpressive one."[172] Thus, Bunnell puts forth "Yo-sem-i-ty, as it was suggestive, euphonious, and certainly *American*."[173] Although thus preserving "Indians and their names" is hotly contested by other members of the battalion, the Yosemite name is adopted by a near-unanimous vote.[174]

This segment of Bunnell's account is a near-perfect example of the interconnection between wonder and "the claim to possession." Stephen Greenblatt has shown that wonder has been a dominant framework for understanding and describing the Americas from the time of Christopher Columbus. Greenblatt argues that European wonder at the "New World" was at the heart of violent conquest: "The claim of possession is grounded in the power of wonder."[175] This is particularly borne out in acts of (re)naming land as a mode of claiming and taking possession of it. Although cities and towns throughout the New World were named after European cities—New York, New London, etc.—the Yosemite valley is so original, so unique, and so immediately "native" in both its association with the Native American tribes that inhabit the region and in its grandeur, that it must be given an "American" name. The names, aesthetic categories and language(s) inherited from Europe fail to capture the sense of wonder Bunnell has

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[172] Ibid., 61.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid., 62.
[175] Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*, 83.

experienced—and only a name like Yosemite could be adequate to the uniqueness of the scenery and its wild qualities.[176]

The ironies of the simultaneity of the act of memorializing and effacing Native American history and culture is lost on Bunnell,[177] but his wonder at the scenery does rest in part on the fact that the valley has been a Native American haven, a place whose history has remained hidden from Euro-Americans to that point, a fact that inflects the place with a kind of super-human aura. This mythologized, romanticized past was and remains part of what made and continues to make Yosemite such a powerful and successful wonderscape. Bunnell's act of naming the valley for the people his battalion was charged with defeating binds his sense of wonder to the historicity of Native American life in the area, all while erasing it. If wonder, as we saw with Tocqueville, emerges in relinquishing "home," here wonder emerges as implicated in the domestication of otherness and the removal of the perceived threat Native Americans posed to eager Euro-American settlers. The simultaneous need to erase and memorialize Native American life and history situate Bunnell's naming practices as part of a larger cultural tendency towards "imperialist nostalgia"[178] that participated in the codification of wonder in the late nineteenth century, as we will see in greater detail shortly. Over time, the production of Yosemite—and later Yellowstone—wonderscapes came to depend on

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[176] Ironically, as Alfred Runte elaborates, the name "Yosemite" may have actually had few of the characteristics Bunnell attributed to it. Much has been said about the name of "Yosemite" and its possible origins: "For well over a century, historians assumed the word *Yosemite* to be a corruption of *Uzumati*, meaning 'grizzly bear' in Miwok.... *Yosemite* is now believed to be a corruption of *Yo-che-ma-te*, literally meaning 'some among them are killers.'... What the soldiers may have mistaken as a comparison of themselves to the revered grizzly bear may in fact have been a warning among members of Tenaya's band to fear for their very lives." Runte, *Yosemite,* 11-12.

[177] For a more extensive discussion of Bunnell's simultaneous memorialization and effacements, see Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2000), 218-22.

[178] Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 107-22.

the removal and extermination of native peoples, as the wonders of Yosemite were consumable experiences only insofar as they were domesticated and "safe."

V.   Tourist Wonders

After the Mariposa Battalion in 1851, the next group of Euro-Americans to enter into the Yosemite Valley was led by the Englishman James Mason Hutchings. Having failed as a prospector in the Gold Rush, Hutchings sought fortune in publishing, through promoting California's natural wonders in an illustrated magazine (*California Magazine*). Hutchings eventually collected drawings and his own observations, which had been printed in the *California Magazine,* in *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California*, first published in 1860, and later expanded into a more comprehensive guidebook of Yosemite for tourists and reprinted in 1862, 1870, 1872, and 1875. As Margaret Sanborn notes, had it not been for Hutchings's widespread publicity for the region, the Yosemite Valley might have remained unknown to the general public for years.[179]

Hutchings's writings inspired visits by prominent easterners like Bowles and Greeley. They built up the sense of wonder as a total experience and were key to the process by which wonder became a codified experience, and wonderscapes, a consumable commodity. Hutchings situates the wonders of California as the greatest wonders of the world, beginning with its trees: "It is much to be questioned if the discovery of any wonder, in any part of the world, has ever elicited as much general interest, or created so strong a tax upon the credulity of mankind, as the discovery of the mammoth trees of California."[180] In recounting the "discoveries" of the state's many

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[179] Sanborn, *Yosemite*, 13.
[180] Hutchings, *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity*, 10.

wonders, he notes that almost everyone who first tried to account for these wonders was ridiculed, because, as Bunnell remarked of his own first impressions, people were unprepared for this kind of nature and had no reference point that could help substantiate initial explorers' claims.

Although Hutchings makes more concrete attempts to describe the scenery than Bunnell, he still appeals to the impossibility of capturing the scenery. Of the Yosemite Valley, he writes "It is impossible to portray the feeling of awe, wonder, and admiration—almost amounting to adoration—that thrills our very souls as we look upon this enchanting scene."[181] Nonetheless, Hutchings's writings were concerned with precision. As Sears notes, Hutchings was one of the major forces in shifting the terms by which Yosemite was described. By the 1860s, although "writers sometimes employed the rhetoric of the sublime to communicate Yosemite's scale, they seemed to recognize the inadequacy of the clichéd terms that had been so frequently applied to Niagara and to many sights of lesser size back in the East."[182] This led to the practice of citing measurements or comparing the scale of mountains to that of familiar architectural constructions. Hutchings' main point of reference was the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. He described the height of El Capitan as "thirty Palace Hotels stacked together."[183] Through Hutchings, measurement became foundational to the practices of guidebooks and to tourists' experience of place. As Sears remarks: "Measurement is their [tourists'] passport to wonder and to a sense of specialness for having been present at a one-of-a-kind place."[184]

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[181] Ibid., 125.
[182] Sears, *Sacred Places*, 137.
[183] Hutchings, *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity*, 125.
[184] Sears, *Sacred Places*, 137.

Following in the tradition of European picturesque guidebooks, Hutchings also gave recommendations about how to stand to find the best angle for viewing the wonders of Yosemite. Hutchings's concern was to create a specific kind of experience—one that could be (endlessly) replicated. In this sense, his writings served as a kind of early "Kodak Picture Spot" guide to the valley. Wonder, for Hutchings, is not just a state of suspension or awe, but a marketable experience. In 1864, Hutchings bought one of Yosemite Valley's two hotels and became a host for tourists, and as such, he became one of the biggest opponents to the 1864 bill that made Yosemite a public park.[185] His opposition rested in the fact that the bill would prohibit private ownership of the sixty square miles set aside for public use.

The well-known despoiling of Niagara Falls by private ownership and commercialization of the land had made Americans the butt of much international criticism. Although Americans were beginning to see their naturalistic landscapes as "superior," the perceived ruining of the falls was an indication to many Europeans that the U.S. was "still a backward, uncivilized nation."[186] The 1864 passage of the bill protecting Yosemite from the fate of Niagara Falls owed much to this kind of criticism.[187]

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[185] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 7.

[186] Ibid, 12.

[187] Sears argues that there were four main aspects of Yosemite that led to its success as a national shrine and its preservation: "its cosmic stature both as a natural work of art and the subject of widely admired paintings and photographs... the presence nearby of the Mariposa grove of Big Trees, whose own stupendous scale linked them closely to Yosemite; the attention given to Yosemite's geological origins by Josiah Whitney and John Muir; and Yosemite's sentimental association with the American Indian tribe." Sears, *Sacred Places*, 142. I have not focused here on John Muir, though he is a major figure in the history of Yosemite. Much of the scholarly work about Yosemite has, indeed, focused on Muir and his sense of spirituality. See, for example, Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: the Life of John Muir* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Muir's prolific writings were very much invested in discourses of wonder and the sublime. In one of his most often-cited passages from *The Yosemite* (1912), he famously called "our magnificent National parks—the Yellowstone, Yosemite, Sequoia, etc.—Nature's sublime wonderlands, the admiration and joy of the world." John Muir, *The Eight Wilderness Discovery Books* (London: Diadem Books, 1992), 714. Muir's wonder led him into scientific pursuits that changed established understandings of nature. In the late 1860s and 1870s, this lead to a conflict with the head of the California Geological

The bill's passage—which in retrospect has been framed as a momentous occasion—happened rather quietly. Senator John Conness of California proposed it, assuring Congress that the land was otherwise "worthless"—for public purposes of mining and agriculture in particular. As scholars have observed, the early parks movement was contingent upon the assurance that the lands to be preserved were otherwise worthless in utilitarian terms.[188]

Protecting the lands for their wonderful qualities produced a different kind of worth—aesthetic and cultural—that could be harnessed as a consumable experience. Soon after the designation of the land grant, California formed a board of commissioners to oversee the park. Hutchings and Galen Clarke were both members. The landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, by then well-recognized as one of the designers of Central Park (the building of which had begun in 1858), was also appointed and charged to report on the lands. Olmstead's 1865 report *Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove* made recommendations about how to best make the valley more readily accessible (and thus democratic). Olmstead's concern—as with Central Park—was that Yosemite not be solely a park for the elite. His report was not widely circulated, as the other park commissioners decided Olmstead's recommendations were too costly, but Olmstead's

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Survey. John Muir claimed that Yosemite had been created by a glacier gouging out the valley. This theory was met with ridicule. Josiah Whitney, California's state geologist and commissioner of the Yosemite Grant, was especially hostile, because this theory contested his own: "that Yosemite had been created by a cataclysmic collapse of the valley floor." Duncan, *The National Parks*, 19. Muir's scientific claims, which arose from his sense of wonder at the nature around him, provided the grounds, however, to suspend the established understanding and revise it in light of a later discovery of a glacier in the Sierras, which helped support Muir's claims. Although Muir's claims, like many early travelers' sense of wonder, were met at first with disbelief and sometimes ridicule, they did nonetheless lead to questioning established social and scientific explanations of the world. In Muir's case, in particular, wonder was the impetus for his development of what we would call an ecological perspective.

[188] For more on the "worthless lands" thesis of the national park movement, see Richard Sellars, "The National Parks: A Forum on the 'Worthless Lands' Thesis," *Journal of Forest History* 27, n.3 (1983): 130-4.

criteria for valuing land for city parks was used in assessing land for national park use as well. [189] The land needed to have few prospects for future development, to be officially uninhabited, and to provide no obvious use value. These criteria for the land came to participate in characterizing American wonders as uninhabited (and thus unthreatening), useless (and thus ideal for recreational use), and inherently valueless for mining and agriculture (and thus prime for being turned into touristic enterprises).

Around the time the 1864 Yosemite Land Grant bill was passed, the construction of the first transcontinental railroad—the Pacific railroad—began along the Overland route travelers had been using to cross the country for decades. Built between 1863 and 1869, the Overland line, as it became known, transformed westward travel and opened the West to a greater number of travelers and tourists, transforming the nation's sense of its own geography. The transcontinental railroad itself quickly became known as one of the great "wonders" of the modern world, and the first transcontinental rail line led to the development of other lines. Yosemite's popularity and the precedent of setting aside land for public use encouraged plans for a second transcontinental line, whose great champion was the bank financier Jay Cooke. Cooke had a vision of building a rail line that would follow the path Lewis & Clark took across the country —from Minnesota to Seattle, the "northern route."[190] To execute this plan, Cooke promoted the first land surveys of the Yellowstone region.[191]

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[189] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 15.

[190] M. John Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble* (Norman: Oklahoma University Press, 2006), xv-xvi.

[191] There is a growing body of literature on the relationship between Yellowstone and the railroad(s), as well as on the role of the railroads in the broader national park movement. See Thornton Waite, *Yellowstone by Train: A History of Rail Travel to America's First National Park* (Missoula, MT: Pictorial Histories Publishing, 2006); Phyllis Smith and William Hoy, *The Northern Pacific Railroad and Yellowstone National Park* (Gaithersburg, MD: Keystone Press, 2009); Alfred Runte, *Allies of the Earth: Railroads and the Soul of Preservation* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2006); and Alfred

In June 1869, Cooke sponsored an eastbound survey of the land from Seattle to Portland, through Idaho and Montana, arriving in Missoula, fairly unscathed. From there, however, the group encountered hostile Native Americans and stopped their journey at the Bozeman Pass on the shores of the Yellowstone River.[192] In July, Cooke organized a "reconnaissance" trip from St. Paul, MN, which included a number of newspapermen, as well as possible investors. Although the group accomplished little, it gained national publicity and increased attention to the region.[193]

The Yellowstone region had been known through trappers and mountain men's stories prior to the 1870s. John Colter, a member of the 1807 Lewis & Clarke expedition and a trapper, had been the first white man to see the Yellowstone region. [194] He had first described what became known as "Colter's Hell" as a mysterious place where "the earth was so hot that mud boiled and steam rose from the ground."[195] People ridiculed Colter and subsequent trappers, hunters, and Native Americans who similarly described strange stories of a fantastic landscape. The so-called "mountain man" Jim Bridger later regularly visited the area from the 1830s through the late 1860s and returned with tales of a bizarre, surreal landscape. Bridger is said to have given one of the first accounts of the Petrified Forest of the Yellowstone, although most people believed his accounts to be tall tales.[196] Even reports of the first organized expedition to explore the Yellowstone region, the Folsom-Cook expedition of 1869, were deemed too fantastic to be credible. Incredulous,

Runte, *Trains of Discovery: Railroads and the Legacy of our National Parks* (New York: Roberts Rinehart, 2011).

[192] Lubetkin, *Jay Cooke's Gamble*, 21-22

[193] Ibid., 23-24.

[194] Chris Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape, 1870-1903* (Albuquerque: New Mexico University Press, 1999), 5.

[195] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 24.

[196] Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story Volume One* (Niwot, CO: Colorado University Press and The Yellowstone Association for Natural Science, History, and Education, 1996), 57-59.

both *Scribner's Monthly* and the *New York Tribune* refused to publish David Folsom and Charles Cook's accounts of their journeys.[197] They were subsequently published—but only after the government sponsored Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition had confirmed the wonders of the region.

Wonder, in this sense, seems to be opposed to science and the practices of journalism. As in the medieval period, it structures definitions of nature and the possible. In the case of Yellowstone, cultural certainty about what defined and constituted nature produced a culture of systematic disbelief and discrediting of supposedly "non-scientific" apprehensions of the region by indigenous peoples, trappers, and hunters. Wonder in the very early accounts of Yosemite and Yellowstone was a function of natures so extraordinary they were literally unbelievable. Although the moment for that kind of systematic disbelieving of wonder did not last long, wonder continued and continues to be associated with a rhetoric of the incredible, unbelievable, and so forth, that stands in for rare experiences or phenomenon. The unbelievable, extraordinary nature of Yellowstone, however, eventually became incorporated into scientific practices and knowledge, altering understandings of nature to that point. In this way, the coexistence of wonder and science in the discovery and exploration of Yellowstone did much to alter the apparent opposition between wonder and science. Exploration of Yellowstone began to bring wonder-discourse and experience into scientific enterprises.

Nathaniel P. Langford, an associate of Cooke's, did for Yellowstone what Hutchings did for Yosemite. Although his report was not the first publication to emerge from the Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition, Langford's writings and his national

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[197] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 6.

speaking tour sponsored and run by Cooke were among the most widely disseminated accounts of the region. First published in the May and June 1871 issues of *Scribner's Monthly*, Langford's narrative explains his interest in the expedition: "I had indulged, for several years, a great curiosity to see the wonders of the Yellowstone. The stories told by trappers and mountaineers of the natural phenomena of that region were so strange and marvelous..." [198] Behind this curiosity lay Cooke's drive to build a second transcontinental railroad to ensure the growth and wealth of the Montana area where Yellowstone was eventually founded. Cooke had early anticipated the lucrative tourist industry that might emerge out of this hitherto mysterious region, and Langford had earlier that year been "quietly" put on Cooke's payroll. [199]

His later account of the expedition, *The Discovery of Yellowstone* (1905), collected his 1871 journal from the trip and other correspondence surrounding the "discovery" of Yellowstone. Langford may have done more than anyone else to frame the Yellowstone region as a "Wonderland." Gareth John's rhetorical analysis of the early (1869-1872) framing of Yellowstone argues that Langford and others' portrayals of the region using "descriptors such as 'picturesque,' 'beautiful,' 'sublime,' 'wonderful'; as well as allusions to emotional responses such as 'awe,' 'terror,' and 'wonder,'" were conventional Romantic depictions of scenery. [200] Collapsing all of these descriptors into a single category of description and response, however, misses the ways in which they operate differently as aesthetic and emotional categories in the texts. Langford does invoke a range of descriptors for and emotional responses to Yellowstone, but he

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[198] Nathaniel Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, n.1 (May 1871), PDF, 1.
[199] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 26.
[200] John, "Image/Text/Geography," 146.

consistently appeals to a codified discourse of wonder to account for the totality of what

he sees. Wonder in these texts emerges as distinct from the sublime, the picturesque and

other known conventions in order to prioritize and name a region of novelties and

surprises that are repeatedly and emphatically described as indescribable—and therefore

different from landscapes that fit established understandings of the picturesque, the

sublime, and the pastoral, for example.

Of the Montana Territory, Langford says "Nature displays her wonders there upon

the most magnificent scale. Lofty ranges of mountains, broad and fertile valleys, streams

broken into torrents are the scenery of every-day life."[201] Yellowstone is referred to as

"that region of wonders."[202] It is also, "The most extensive aggregation of wonders in the

world—wonders unexcelled because nowhere else existing."[203] In one of his most

wonder-filled passages, he also notes that:

> Astonishment and wonder become so firmly impressed upon the mind… that
> belief stands appalled, and incredulity is dumb. You can see Niagara, comprehend
> its beauties, and carry from it a memory ever ready to summon before you all its
> grandeur. You can stand in the valley of Yosemite, and look up its mile of vertical
> granite, and distinctly recall its minutest feature; but amid the can[y]on and falls,
> the boiling springs and sulphur mountain, and, above all, the mud volcano and the
> geysers of the Yellowstone, your memory becomes filled and clogged with
> objects new in experience, wonderful in extent, and possessing unlimited
> grandeur and beauty. It is a new phase in the natural world; a fresh exhibition of
> the handiwork of the Great Architect; and while you see and wonder, you seem to
> need an additional sense, fully to comprehend and believe.[204]

Like earlier writers, Langford appeals to "grandeur" and "beauty," but wonder is firmly

the dominant framework for talking about Yellowstone, which is distinguished from any

other place on earth. Langford furthermore plays up not only the difficulty of describing

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[201] Nathaniel Pitt Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone* (St. Paul, MN: J.E. Haynes, 1905), PDF e-book, 14.
[202] Ibid., 36.
[203] Ibid., 53.
[204] Ibid., 183-4.

the Yellowstone region, but also the difficulty of remembering its wide variety of wonders and the even greater difficulty of believing what one has seen there.

Although the Yosemite Valley arrested explorers and tourists, provoking an awe-inspiring wonder, for the most part, the valley conformed to expectations of a park setting. In people's earliest encounters with Yellowstone, by contrast, delight was almost always mixed with horror. Langford and his crew are aware that horror contains something of a non-modern sense of superstition—and thus Langford distances himself from it. But he repeatedly refers to "marvelous freak" elements[205] or "wonderful freaks of nature's handiwork"[206] all while invoking aesthetic beauty and the picturesque in describing the region. As in the pre-modern tradition Daston and Park describe, wonder here elicits horror as what Langford and others see bring them to the limits of their understandings of nature and the naturally possible. Yellowstone's nature emerges as a kind of monstrous birth, inexplicable through existing scientific knowledge. As a result, the region provokes a horrified wonder that visitors recognize as unsophisticated and unscientific.

This horror is not antithetical to wonder. It is a part of it. As a category of emotional and aesthetic experience, wonder becomes capacious enough to contain contradictory responses of horror and delight, fear and enchantment. With both the sights that horrify and the ones that delight, Langford is from the beginning crafting a wonderscape, thinking ahead to a time when tourists will stop to marvel at the unique features of the Yellowstone. By the time of Langford's exploration, after all, "freak shows," as I discussed in the introduction, were well-established sources of entertainment

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[205] Langford, "Wonders," 7.
[206] Ibid., 15.

in American culture, with P.T. Barnum having opened his doors in 1841. Yellowstone thus displays features that are suggestive of popular entertainment and touristic resorts.

In May of 1871, Langford writes of "future years, when the wonders of the Yellowstone are incorporated into the family of fashionable resorts."[207] By the June continuation of "The Wonders of the Yellowstone" in *Scribner's Monthly*, Langford further notes that: "By means of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which will doubtless be completed within the next three years, the traveler will be able to make the trip to Montana from the Atlantic seaboard in three days, and thousands of tourists will be attracted to both Montana and Wyoming in order to behold with their own eyes the wonders here described."[208] In this development-minded response to the landscape, we can see the difference of a decade between early responses to Yosemite and early responses to Yellowstone. Here Langford immediately looks at the landscape in terms of its worth as a tourist destination—its worth, in other words, as a wonder people would travel and pay to experience.

In anticipation of the rail line and its sponsorship of a new tourist industry, Langford consistently speaks of the "wonders" around him as displays, spectacles, and even exhibitions. In his article "The World as Exhibition," Mitchell examines the ways in which every-day life in late nineteenth-century Europe came to be structured as an exhibition space—particularly through the popularity of World's Fairs and the performances of culture they promoted.[209] Langford's language demonstrates a different way in which late nineteenth-century landscapes were apprehended as exhibits—and

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[207] Langford, "Wonders," 7.
[208] Nathaniel Pitt Langford, "The Wonders of the Yellowstone," *Scribner's Monthly* 2, n.2 (June 1871), 128.
[209] Timothy Mitchell, "The World as Exhibition," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31, n.2 (1989): 217-36.

even museums. Yellowstone, for Langford, is a walk-through, outdoor museum that takes him and the rest of the expedition by surprise at every turn. Perhaps in line with George Catlin's much earlier idea for a "nation's park," the national park idea consolidates around this notion of forming parks to protect the displays, spectacles, and exhibitions of nature—so that "the people" can continue to enjoy them.[210]

VI.   Wondering Science: Marking out Wonder-land

Langford publicized Yellowstone far and wide, not just through his widely-read writings, but in touring the country and speaking about the wonders of the Yellowstone on Cooke's urging and financial backing. The geologist Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden attended one of Langford's lectures in January of 1871 in Washington, D.C. Four years earlier, Hayden had been appointed head geologist of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories and had been surveying land in the Rocky Mountains. After hearing Langford's lecture, he sought Congressional funds to conduct a survey of the Yellowstone region, beginning in June of 1871. Hayden's expeditions, as Goetzmann advances, were a turning point in western exploration. The Geological Survey of the Territories became an agency of the Interior Department and the means by which army exploration "was gradually replaced and the civilian scientist assumed full control of Western exploration."[211] Goetzmann argues that the main difference between the civilian-scientist and the soldier-explorer expeditions was that the new scientific

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[210] In the late twentieth century, in particular, this notion has been severely critiqued in the recognition that the parks were not simply pristine tracts of "nature." Rather, the ecosystems they encompassed were sustained through complex relationships among species—including humans. Yosemite seemed park-like in part because it was, indeed, maintained and monitored by the native groups in the area.
[211] Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 489.

explorations and surveys went beyond aiding settlement and "conquering" wilderness. They "had a profound effect upon institutions" in the East, bringing about the "complete institutionalization of natural science in its approach to Western America."[212]

Hayden's survey of the Yellowstone region placed the scientific seal upon the idea for creating Yellowstone National Park. His explorations were also significant because of the two artists who accompanied him: the photographer William Henry Jackson and the painter Thomas Moran, whom Jay Cooke arranged to have join the party.[213] In the context of Yellowstone, Hayden's influence goes beyond the institutionalization of science. Although he was certainly not the originator of the idea or political movement to found the national park, the language of his survey defined some of the rhetorical framing of Yellowstone that remains a major framework for the National Park Service today.

Hayden's survey is noteworthy for its unambiguous use of wonder discourse in a context of serious, scientific observation. His writing bears none of Frémont's efforts to distance himself from hunters and trappers' wonder tales. Indeed, in his letter to the Secretary that begins his "Preliminary Report of the United States Geological Survey of Montana," he writes about earlier being guided through the Lower Yellowstone region by the famed Jim Bridger, who is said to have recounted "Wonderful tales that had sharpened the curiosity of the whole party."[214] Bridger's stories are wonderful, the ravines and canyons are wonderful, the variety of colors in Yellowstone's setting is wonderful, the transparency of the Yellowstone River is wonderful, as is the volcanic

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[212] Ibid., 490.
[213] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 14-15.
[214] F.V. Hayden, *Preliminary Report of the United States Geological Survey of Montana* (Washington: Government Printing Office. 1872), PDF e-book, 7.

activity. Hayden's survey is filled with wonder and wonders—including the trope of the

indescribability: "No language can do justice to the wonderful beauty and grandeur...."[215]

Hayden's main task was to "reveal the wonders of the West to the outside world."[216] In

this task, he placed wonder-discourse at the heart of the Department of the Interior's

mapping of the West, which would later inform the institutionalization of the National

Park Service.

Hayden's report is one of the first written texts to refer to Yellowstone as

"wonderland." Former Yellowstone Park Historian Aubrey Haines claims that a February

28, 1872 article "Our National Park" in the *Helena Herald* was the origin of the

nickname,[217] but Hayden's report, which was in circulation earlier, uses the term from the

beginning: "On the 15th of July we bade farewell... [and set out] toward the wonder-land

of the Yellowstone Valley."[218] He generally uses a hyphenated version of the term, at

times as a modifier, at others as a nickname for the park. For example, in describing the

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone he notes that it is "among the remarkable wonders of

this rare wonder-land."[219] The term derives from his claim that he "can conceive of no

more wonderful and attractive region for the explorer."[220]

Hayden's survey, like his more popular writings in *Scribner's*, went far beyond

description. Beyond ascertaining the use value of the land, his survey was the first official

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[215] Ibid., 83.
[216] Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire*, 521.
[217] The article is an announcement of the passage of the Yellowstone bill in the Senate. It celebrates the "untold good" the park will bring and notes that the park "will be the means of centering upon Montana the attention of thousands heretofore comparatively uninformed of a Territory abounding in such resources of mines and agriculture and of wonderland as we can boast, spread everywhere about us." Quoted in Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 172.
[218] Hayden, *Preliminary Report*, 49.
[219] Ibid., 74.
[220] Ibid., 133.

government document to explicitly work in the service of making a landscape into a wonderscape. As Magoc notes, his writing paired "scientific analysis with emotional euphoria, [and] functioned ultimately as a template for the volumes of popular Yellowstone travel literature that followed. Writing variously as a scientist, poet, and politician, Hayden's first priority was to make an unearthly landscape comprehensible."[221] The Hayden expedition was also the first to collect samples from the Yellowstone region for the Smithsonian, thus bringing the region into one of the nation's primary institutions of science.

In many ways, Hayden did not do anything other writers had not done before— but he did it within a scientific purview and with the government's stamp of approval. In reading Langford and Hayden, it is clear that Irving's reticence towards wonder-discourse had all but vanished in the context of Yellowstone and the Far West more broadly. Counter to the notion that wonder lost currency in the age of science, Hayden's report exemplifies a cultural moment when wonder was at the very heart of scientific exploration and institutionalization in the U.S. This fact alone went a long way towards further codifying wonder, and, indeed, writing it into the process of founding the first institutionalized national park.

Hayden's scientific survey was one of the final steps in creating the nationally managed wilderness. The survey validated the convergence of forces that helped create the cultural environment in which the federal government could set aside such a huge territory for "the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Although creation myths surrounding Yellowstone have largely followed the legacy of Langford's 1905

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[221] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 16.

reminiscing about a campfire conversation in which he and his fellow travelers devised

the idea for a park, it is likely that such a conversation never took place. Rather, as

Magoc and others have noted, the formation of Yellowstone lies firmly "within the

culture of capitalism" and visions of Manifest Destiny Hayden and the land surveys and

Cooke and the railroads espoused and promoted. These commercial forces prompted the

surveying and assessment of the land, and, as in Yosemite, Congress's decision to create

the park depended upon the ostensible "worthlessness" of the land for settlement,

agriculture, and mining.[222] That proof of worthlessness again served to value and

preserve "one of the most wonderful regions...which the globe exhibits anywhere."[223]

While Langford disseminated his experiences, spurring on Hayden's expedition,

Cooke's railroad lobbyists worked to ensure that the area would remain unsettled and ripe

for the development of a tourist industry. The formation of a national park in

Yellowstone, however, was somewhat incidental. It became a national park and not a

state park (like Yosemite), because neither Montana nor Wyoming was yet a state. The

land grant that protected Yosemite created a precedent for setting aside land for

recreational uses rather than settlement, but because neither territory in which the

proposed park rested was a state, Yellowstone remained in federal hands and set a model

that was not fully institutionalized until the 1916 creation of the National Park Service.

Without the driving interests of Cooke's vision for another transcontinental line, it

is likely that there would not have been a Yellowstone National Park. Indeed, as national

park historian Alfred Runte has noted, the railroads, beginning with Cooke and Northern

Pacific, formed the backbone of the drive to found national parks—and Congress would

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[222] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 18.
[223] Senate Debate, quoted in Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 18.

not have approved the parks simply on the conviction of preservationists.[224] When

Hayden was preparing his report for Congress, he received a letter from a Northern

Pacific lobbyist, asking him to write into his report the recommendation that Congress

make the Yellowstone region into a public park.[225] Hayden agreed with the

recommendation, and his report thus made clear that the primary value of the land would

be for scientific and touristic purposes and that this public use would be no loss to the

government or the people. As Hayden writes: "In a few years, this region will be a place

of resort for all classes of people from all portions of the world. The geysers of Iceland,

which have been objects of interest for the scientific men and travelers of the entire

world, sink into insignificance in comparison to the hot springs of the Yellowstone and

the Fire Hole Basins. As a place for resort for invalids, it will not be excelled by any

portion of the world."[226]

The bill that created Yellowstone National Park was introduced in Congress in

December 1871. Members of Congress were given copies of Langford's articles, as well

as copies of Jackson's photographs and Moran's drawings. Congress also subsequently

spent $10,000 to acquire Moran's "The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone."[227] Roughly

simultaneously, Hayden's report was published in early 1872, and it addressed very

clearly the cultural fears of those who promoted the park:

> Persons are now waiting for the spring to open to enter in and take possession of
> these remarkable curiosities, to make merchandise of these beautiful specimens,
> to fence in these rare wonders, so as to charge visitors a fee, as is now done at
> Niagara Falls, for the sight of that which ought to be, as free as the air or water....
> If this bill fails to become a law this session, the vandals who are now waiting to
> enter into this wonder-land will, in a single season, despoil, beyond recovery,

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[224] Runte, *Trains of Discovery*, 1.
[225] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 34.
[226] Hayden, *Preliminary Report*, 165.
[227] Duncan, *The National Parks* 34.

these remarkable curiosities, which have required all the calming skill of nature thousands of years to prepare.[228]

Hayden frames the designation of Yellowstone National Park as a protection against the commercialization of natural wonders. Wonder ought to be free and open to the public.[229] It is in part this refusal to do in Yellowstone what had been done in Niagara that allowed for the commodification and subsequent marketing of a much larger experience rather than of roadside curiosities or fenced-in wonders.

Although earlier travelers and writers had already been imagining and writing wonderscapes, Cooke, Langford, and Hayden went beyond imagining to effectively framing a wonderscape—both rhetorically and in lobbying for the foundation of Yellowstone National Park, which marked out the boundaries of wonder-land for preservation and further imagination and narration. Hayden's aim was to prevent the commercialization of the wonders of Yellowstone, but his very language became a kind of brand name for Yellowstone and later the National Parks on the whole.

VII.   From Wonder to Wonderland: Branding Yellowstone

Although the preservation of Yellowstone National Park maintained the area as a free resource open to the public, travelers still had to get to the park—a process which was not only costly but often laborious.[230] As a result, the experience that wound up being marketed to the public was not just that of touring the park, but that of getting to

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[228] Hayden, *Preliminary Report,* 163.
[229] This notion of a democratic space was part of Olmstead's aims with Central Park and other open spaces that were becoming increasingly popular and necessary in over-crowded and increasingly industrial urban areas.
[230] For more on the difficulties of early travel in the park, see Paul Schullery, "Privations and Inconveniences: Early Tourism in Yellowstone National Park," in *Seeing and Being Seen*, 227-47.

the park. Wonder discourse was as important in the process of narrating a long journey as it was in promoting the nationally-held natural wonders of the park. Hayden's use of the term "wonder-land" was appropriated by the earliest travelers to Yellowstone and later by Northern Pacific Railway. The title "Wonderland"—which became a proper noun—designated a wonderscape, but the designation "wonderland" also came to stand for the broader experience of traveling the "Wonderland route."

Although the "Wonderland" sobriquet became a pillar of subsequent Northern Pacific advertising campaigns, initially, in keeping with Hayden's desire to keep Yellowstone's wonders free, the term was not directly tied to commercial promotion of the area. By the time Langford was touring the country, wonder had become the clear principle paradigm for describing Yellowstone—to garner backing for the Northern Pacific, but also as part of a nationalist movement that was championing American landscapes as a claim to nationalistic greatness. Shaffer has documented this rise of landscape nationalism and "national tourism" (as opposed to regional and international tourism) particularly through the "See American First" campaign that began in the early twentieth century. She examines Northern Pacific's advertising campaign but focuses much more closely on the later campaigns to promote Glacier National Park.[231] For Shaffer, Glacier's advertisements were the epitome of national tourism (Northern Pacific's fell short in advertising Yellowstone as "other-worldly" and not exclusively "native"), but most early narratives of Yellowstone appeal to the importance of the formation of the park for the nation—as a symbol of the nation's maturity and as a claim to greatness.

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[231] For Shaffer's examination of Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon, see *See America First*, 43-59.

Magoc argues that Yellowstone's founding was "propelled forward by the twin engines of corporate capitalism and scientific rationalism, and softened by an antimodern desire for natural wonder and raw experience."[232] Yellowstone spoke to a fascination with spectacle and the exotic: "Entertainment, we now call it. Indeed, if such a place hadn't existed, spectacle-driven, nature-loving Americans of the twentieth century would have invented it."[233] Yellowstone, in effect, became discursively constructed as a kind of early national amusement park. In that framework, wonder was a narrative experience in which travel to western parts of the U.S. provided the space to experience a real "fairytale." Well before the national parks were hailed as conservation accomplishments, they were held as "pleasure grounds," and the guidebooks framed themselves as answers to questions like "Where can I have the most fun and pleasure?"[234]

In her essay "Landscape of Theme Park Rides," Brown traces a history of modern amusement park rides (namely roller coasters). She points to the development of the scenic railway in the late 1890s as a key precedent to modern amusement park rides. Designers of "rides" began to build them into existing landscapes to enhance dramatic effects. As Brown notes, "Rides offering unusual visual perspectives and rides combining kinesthetic thrills and scenic vistas predate amusement parks' century-spanning heyday."[235] So-called "pleasure railways" had by the 1890s become popular on the East Coast. The transcontinental railroads are rarely seen as participating in this history of theme parks and amusement, but more than any of the pleasure railways of the East,

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[232] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 20.
[233] Ibid.
[234] Olin Wheeler, *Sketches of Wonderland* (St. Paul, MN: Northern Pacific Railroad Company, 1895), 26.
[235] Brenda Brown, "Landscape of Theme Park Rides," in *Theme Park Landscapes: Antecedents and Variations*, eds., Terence Young and Robert Riley (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2002), 246.

Northern Pacific, among others, worked to create narrative experiences that drew visitors to Yellowstone. In this way, the "wonderlands" railroads framed in the national parks set the stage for that quintessentially American entertainment and experience economy mogul—Disney.[236] Walt Disney, as I will discuss in more depth in chapter three, studied railroads' displays at twentieth-century railroad fairs, displays that showcased the national parks and narrativized visitors' "journeys" through them.

"Wonderland" was the framework for that narrative. From the 1880s through the early twentieth century, Northern Pacific capitalized on the "Wonderland" moniker in promoting the park and its line—the Wonderland Route. But well before the completion of the "Wonderland Route," writers already relied on the Wonderland name in describing the region. To name just a few examples, in 1872, Harry Norton published *Wonderland Illustrated; or Horseback Rides through Yellowstone National Park*, and in 1878, Edwin Stanley published *Rambles in Wonderland*. Along with Hayden's survey, these book guides served as early templates for the Wonderland guidebooks Northern Pacific began publishing in the 1880s.

In the years before Northern Pacific reached the park, however, Yellowstone's wonderland was, perhaps, less wonderful in fact than it was in story. Tourists struggled with a lack of accommodations, difficult traveling conditions, and hostile Native Americans. It would take some twenty years before such challenges to visitor comfort were fully addressed. In some significant ways, the production of Yellowstone as "Wonderland" required not only the building of infrastructure and modern amenities, but

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[236] Marta Weigle writes, in particular, about the Fred Harvey Company in the Southwest as an early Disney precursor. Mara Weigle, "From Desert to Disney: The Santa Fe Railway and the Fred Harvey Company Display the Indian Southwest," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45, n.1 (1989): 115-137.

a taming of the wild and an emptying out of the land in such a way that travelers would no longer be threatened by the "wilderness" and its native inhabitants, and could therefore wonder at the wild.

Despite the emphasis on pleasure and amusement, into the 1890s, the journey west was still a hassle—full of discomforts, inconveniences, and sometimes conflict. In the first several years of its existence, Yellowstone attracted relatively few visitors. Despite Northern Pacific's fervent promotion of the park, the railroad did not reach the park for over a decade after the Congressional act of 1872 created Yellowstone National Park. Construction on the line had begun even before the park was officially designated, but the Panic of 1873—caused in part by Northern Pacific's financial troubles, Cooke's "gamble," as critics call it—delayed progress. In 1873, the construction of the line halted in Bismarck, North Dakota, five hundred miles from Yellowstone.[237] In the early years, many guidebooks, like the 1873 *Wonders of the Yellowstone*,[238] dwelled on the anticipation of the arrival of the Northern Pacific line.

When Yellowstone became a park, Langford was designated superintendent, but he only set foot in the park twice over his five-year tenure. In the tradition of collecting curios, tourists had no qualms about taking parts of geysers or trees as souvenirs. Hunters killed the park's elk by the thousands, despite regulations aimed to prevent destruction of both flora and fauna.[239] By 1877, the public and the press complained of Langford's

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[237] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 35.
[238] This book was in a series, the "Illustrated Library of Travel and Adventure" edited by Bayard Taylor and published by Scribner, Armstrong & Co. Most of the books in the series were about foreign travel (Japan, South Africa, Arabia, etc.), but Yellowstone had attracted enough attention to warrant its own volume. Scribner's also had a series on "The Illustrated Library of Wonders," which included volumes on nature, science, art, adventure and exploits, mountain adventures, electricity, water, and engraving. *Wonders of the Yellowstone* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Co., 1873), PDF e-book.
[239] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 37.

negligence and the Department of the Interior prepared to replace him. That summer, in the aftermath of George Armstrong Custer's 1876 "Last Stand" defeat by the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos in eastern Montana territory, an even more widely publicized set of events made increased regulations in and of the park seem urgent.[240] In August of 1877, a group of nine tourists, among them Mrs. Emma Cowan and her husband George, arrived in the park with a carriage, supply wagon, and some horses. Their quiet leisurely trip was interrupted by an encounter with a group of Nez Percé Indians, part of a larger band associated with Chief Joseph, who were being pursued by the U.S. government for their refusal to move onto a reservation. The Nez Percé were not from the Yellowstone region, but they were fleeing the Oregon, Washington, and Idaho lands from which they were being dispossessed as part of the effort to contain and subdue Native Americans by confining them to reservations in the aftermath of Custer's defeat. The Cowans' belongings were ransacked before the Indians left, but shortly thereafter, they met with a less peaceful group, and George wound up shot in the leg and the face. Emma, her brother, and sister were taken captive overnight and then released upon Chief Joseph's commands. When Chief Joseph and the Nez Percé surrendered in northern Montana several weeks later, Yellowstone's new superintendent decided that no Native Americans should live within the bounds of the park. The native so-called "Sheepeater" members of the Shoshone, who had not taken part in the conflict, were evicted from their homeland, so that the American public could be assured peaceful and conflict-free enjoyment of

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[240] There is a large body of scholarship on Custer, his defeat, and its legacies. See, for example, John S. Gray, *Custer's Last Campaign: Mitch Boyer and the Little Bighorn Reconstructed* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1991); Gregory F. Michno, *Lakota Noon: The Indian Narratives of Custer's Defeat* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press Publishing, 1997); M.A. Elliot, *Custerology: The Enduring Legacy of the Indian Wars and George Armstrong Custer* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Yellowstone's wonders.[241] The park further negotiated treaties that banned native tribes from entering the park at all.[242]

In the aftermath of these decisions, by the beginning of the 1880s, the potential threats to travelers to the park were diminished in a process that allowed for greater domestication of the landscape for Euro-American tourists. In 1880, in anticipation of Northern Pacific's arrival at or very near the park, Brockett's *Our Western Empire* declared that "The hardships of the journey will all be gone, and the time of reaching there will be reduced to about eight days, and the expense to about one half what it is at present. The Indians have gone for good, and the era of fast coaches, good hotels, restaurants, and bathing-houses is coming on."[243] For decades Yellowstone was mythologized as a place where no native peoples lived, because of their superstitions about the geysers in particular. The "myth of a virgin Yellowstone," as Magoc suggests, helped in the early years of the park's existence to form Wonderland's allure.[244]

Later, Northern Pacific shifted the terms of representation to deliberately include a range of romanticized imagery of Native Americans in their guidebooks. The 1894 guidebook to the park entitled *Indianland and Wonderland* played up the juxtaposition between a past in which Yellowstone was "once roamed by the savage Indian and the shaggy buffalo" and the present in which the land was "dotted by ranches, towns, and cities."[245] Images of industrial Minneapolis adorn the pages next to majestic looking Native Americans on horseback in the Yellowstone Valley. A progressive modern

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[241] Duncan, *The National Parks*, 37-38.
[242] Magoc, *Yellowstone,* 141.
[243] Linus Pierpoint Brockett, *Our Western Empire; or the New West Beyond the Mississippi* (Philadelphia: Bradley, Garretson, and Co., 1882), PDF e-book, 1263.
[244] Magoc, *Yellowstone*, 140.
[245] Olin Wheeler, *Indianland and Wonderland* (St. Paul, MN: Northern Pacific Railroad Company, 1894), 13.

industrialization thus went hand in hand with an imperialist nostalgia that sought to imbue the park with a "native" status. Later guidebooks (1900 and 1903) also pictured Indians on their covers, in full headdress, scantily dressed, carrying bows and arrows and gesturing out towards a distant landscape. In these poses, Indians were figured as narrator-guides to the pages in which Wonderland would be presented to the reader (Figure 1.1.).
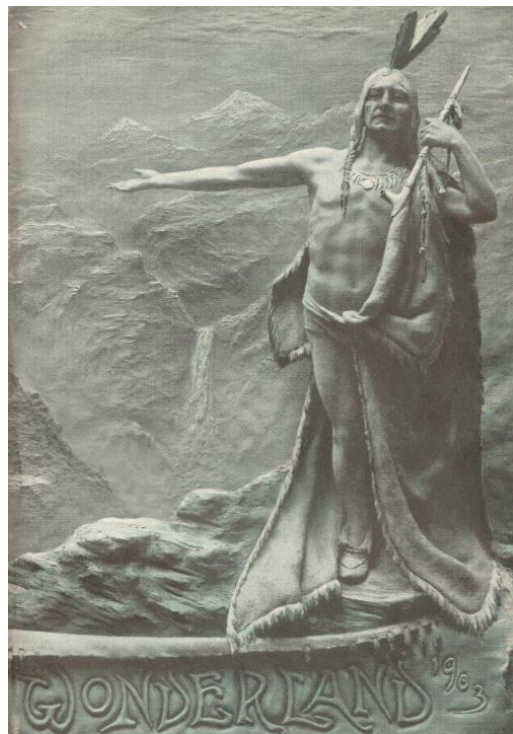
Figure 1.1. Northern Pacific's *Wonderland 1903*.

This textual and visual rhetorical performance of indigenous presence and identity can be read as a rhetorical "playing Indian," in the tradition Philip Deloria articulates in *Playing Indian*.[246] As Deloria argues, white American practices of playing Indian and performing ideas of Indianness have shaped American identities in a plethora of different historically-defined ways over the course of the past 250 years. These performances

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[246] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

allowed Americans to lay "claim, not to real Indian practices, of course, but to the idea of native custom."[247] In the late nineteenth century, these claims were laced with the complex forces at work in the simultaneous efforts to subdue native peoples and paint a nostalgic past. Deloria notes that beginning in the 1830s, "In conjunction with Indian removal, popular American imagery began to play on earlier symbolic linkages between Indians and the past, and these images eventually produced the full-blown ideology of the vanishing Indian, which proclaimed it foreordained that less advanced societies should disappear in the presence of those more advanced."[248] By the end of the century, the force of this ideology was complicated by pressures placed on Americans and American identities by an urbanizing industrialism—that railroads played a major part in defining and producing. The "uncertainty about identity"[249] that corporations, cities, and industrial production created made the figure of the Indian in the wilderness into a site of "authenticity."[250] Railroads like Northern Pacific capitalized on this iconography, making Yellowstone and the "nature" of the West into an authentic, native "elsewhere" that countered the anxieties and uncertainties of the urban East, in particular.

When Northern Pacific reached Yellowstone in the early 1880s, the geography encompassed by the name "Wonderland" expanded. Wonderland became more than just the park; it became a region, as seen by the shifting focus of Northern Pacific's guidebooks—a region defined by the territory traversed by the railroad. In 1884, the guidebook focused on Yellowstone alone as *The Wonder of the World*. In 1885, the guidebook focused more broadly on *The Wonderland Route to the Pacific Coast*. By

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[247] Ibid., 25.
[248] Ibid., 64.
[249] Ibid., 99.
[250] Ibid., 101.

1886, the guidebooks included Alaska and the Inland Passage. Until 1893, with the

publication of *Indianland and Wonderland*, the guidebooks all focused on *Wonderland,*

or, The Pacific Northwest and Alaska: with a description of the country traversed by the

Northern Pacific Railroad. There were some variations in titles, with *A Ramble in*

Wonderland being a description of the marvelous region traversed by the Northern

Pacific Railroad in 1891 and 1892 and *6,000 miles through Wonderland* in 1893.

The shift in 1893 coincided with Olin Dunbar Wheeler becoming editor of the

guidebooks. He produced the books from 1894 through 1907 and standardized them with

the *Wonderland* title. At first, the guidebooks focused on providing descriptions and

background for the stops on the route. They effectively produced the "storied northwest"

of the 1906 guidebook's title—*Eastward through the Storied Northwest or Homeward*

from California Over The Shasta-Northern Pacific Route via Portland, Puget Sound,

Yellowstone Park, Minneapolis and St. Paul. As the public grew familiar with the stops,

the guidebooks began publishing other kinds of essays and stories—all about the

Wonderland region, but with more historical or local points of focus. In 1893, *Sketches of*

Wonderland showcases different places along the Wonderland Route, but the 1900

Wonderland, for example, opens with a 77-page account and history "On the Trail of

Lewis & Clarke." The remaining pages are devoted to an essay on the history of Northern

Pacific, a fourteen-page description of the park itself, a brief meditation on two Montana

Inns, and a final three-page discussion of "Golden Alaska." By then, the stops were well-

known, and there was no need to describe them individually.

By the end of the nineteenth century, wonder discourse became harnessed as a

branding force for the Northern Pacific Railway. The guides refer to a seemingly stable

understanding of "natural wonders" that bear little of the earlier ambivalence about the emotion of wonder and the rhetoric of inexpressibility that travelers had experienced. Wonder had become a marketable experience of a domesticated landscape. This is particularly visible in the 1884 brochure "Alice's Adventures in the New Wonderland," which made explicit the connection between Yellowstone's nickname and the popularity of Lewis Carroll's 1865 *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*. The brochure features a travel narrative by Alice—the girl for whom Carroll wrote his children's tale—who visits Yellowstone as an adult and tells of her enchantment at seeing a "real" Wonderland, after having been so defined by Carroll's fictive one.

Figure 1.2. "Alice's Adventures in the New Wonderland" (1884). *Courtesy of the Yellowstone National Park Research Library.*

By the time this brochure was published, Yellowstone was no longer perceived as a dangerous wilderness. It had become safe for women travelers as a space that had the charm of a child's wonder. Northern Pacific marketed an experience that took travelers away from their lives in the east and immersed them in a world of wonder, from which they would then safely return to their lives. They returned, however, changed by

Wonderland, marked by an experience that allowed them to participate in a "wonder" that signified something larger than themselves. This promotional narrative put Yellowstone National Park—and Northern Pacific Railway—at the center of producing not just wonderscapes, but what has become known as an *experience economy*.

Market researchers Gilmore and Pine identify the experience economy as an "emerging" tier in the "progression of economic value" that has moved from an agrarian economy to a goods-based industrial economy to a service economy to—finally, in the 1990s—an economy based on consumers' desire for staged experiences:

> An experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event. Commodities are fungible, goods tangible, services intangible, and experiences memorable...Buyers of experiences...value what the company reveals over a duration of time. While prior economic offerings -- commodities, goods, and services -- are external to the buyer, experiences are inherently personal, existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level.[251]

Gilmore and Pine note that experience-based economies have long existed in the entertainment industry, most notably in the context of Disney's theme parks. For scholars, the emergence of the experience economy, however, coincides with the selling of experiences in contexts far removed from entertainment.

It is not within the scope of this project to more thoroughly critique the teleological modernizing narrative of Gilmore and Pine's "progression," but it is clear that long before the contemporary emergence of experience economies in malls, restaurants and so on, railroads engaged in selling experiences that went beyond simply riding on a train. Langford and Cooke and Northern Pacific promoters perhaps knew that

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[251] Gilmore and Pine, "Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review* 76, n.4 (July-August 1998), http://hbr.org/1998/07/welcome-to-the-experience-economy/ar/1.

engaging to build a second transcontinental railroad would require that this second line offer a different kind of experience—a narrative experience of landscape that transformed a train ride into an imaginative adventure, whose multi-faceted experiences were held together by a single discursive construct: "wonder."

In retrospect, it is clear that wonder became the dominant rhetoric for Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the American West more broadly, in part because none of the other contenders—the picturesque, the sublime, grandeur, vastness, etc.—could single-handedly and succinctly capture and brand the whole of this economy of experiences. Unlike the picturesque and the sublime, wonder was not part of an existing European-defined landscape and aesthetic tradition. Furthermore, its capacious and wide-ranging definitions and associations made it a more all-encompassing term than "grandeur," "vastness," and other descriptors used to describe American landscapes. Although wonder had, as we have seen, long circulated as an emotion and a natural concept, the fact that it was not associated with any particular national and aesthetic tradition made it a more desirable and available master-category for the range and variety of landscapes that Americans sought to characterize and understand as specifically *American*, and not derivative of Europe or European traditions.

If the currency of wonder itself in the realm of travel and travel writing was not new, what was new in this modern American nineteenth-century context was the use of transportation technology in the transformation of travel into a narrative experience—not just an experience that travelers could narrate, but an experience that was presented in the form of a narrative in which travelers participated as characters. In this sense, the Wonderland campaign served as an early staging of a kind of "make your own fantasy."

The trajectory of the storyline—its beginning, end, and stops along the way—was predetermined, but there was nonetheless room for significant variation and personalization. Although this experience was scripted, part of the effectiveness of wonder-discourse remained in its lack of clear definition and its traveling, malleable nature. Wonder could remain a personally-defined experience within a national narrative.

The power, ultimately, of wonder-discourse in this context is that it serves as a form of experiential legitimation. To take up wonder in one's own narrative of travel was to make a claim to authenticity and first-hand experience not only of the nation, but indeed, the "native" nation that had not been remade in Europe's image. Wonder rhetoric performed as a "souvenir" from the experience, writ in a public performance of first-hand participation. In this way, Wonderland and the experience economy it created continually perpetuated wonder discourse in a self-propelling way. To this day, the National Park Service continues to identify Yellowstone with the Wonderland nickname and all the parks with the discourse of wonder inherited from the late 1800s.

VIII.   Wonder Nation: Experiential Capital and Citizenship

Railroad advertising framed the national park experience as a performance of citizenship, as Shaffer argues about Glacier National Park. She claims that this was much less the case in Yellowstone, because of the "Wonderland" campaign and Yellowstone's "other-worldly" qualities that were advertised as constituting an exotic fantasy space. However, I contend that this otherworldly, exotic fantasy that wonder-discourse promoted and branded is precisely what allowed Yellowstone to provide a real and imagined space through which a complex, sometimes ambivalent citizenship could be

performed and negotiated. Yellowstone's status as a strange and wonderful elsewhere is, in effect, what made it emblematic of a late-nineteenth-century post-Civil War American industrial identity. It is what differentiates Yellowstone from the advertising and institutionalization of many other later national parks. In the narrative Northern Pacific wove, Wonderland was a fantastical microcosm for the nation; it represented the nation as a quasi-supernatural fantasyland in which anything was possible. Wonderland engaged in what Lauren Berlant has called the "fantasy-work of national identity."[252]

As Shaffer suggests about early twentieth-century travelers in Glacier National Park, I argue here that late nineteenth-century travelers to Wonderland performed a form of American identity and citizenship by participating in and perpetuating an explicitly imaginative, narrative act. Many of the Wonderland guidebooks—as would be the case later with the "See America First" campaign—began with an appeal to the patriotic duty and citizen's right to travel. *6,000 Miles Through Wonderland* (1893) opens with the claim that: "The American people are reputed a nation of travelers.... Rich and poor, high official and private citizen, the aristocrat and the tramp, each and all exercise the 'inalienable right' of an American citizen—and travel."[253] This statement leads to a critique of the expenditure of American dollars in Europe, rather than at home. *A Ramble in Wonderland* (1891) begins its description of Yellowstone with the lament that "a region of so much interest and so readily accessible should have had for its astonished visitors only the red man and the wandering trapper for so many years, while Atlantic steamers are almost daily thronged with allegedly patriotic Americans eager to undertake

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[252] Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1991), 2.
[253] Olin Wheeler, *6,000 Miles through Wonderland* (St. Paul, MN: Northern Pacific Railroad Company, 1893), 9.

long and discomforting ocean voyages to visit scenes less worthy of their appreciation."[254] Travel to Yellowstone and the Wonderland route thus became markers of patriotism in such a way that produced a nationalist value of the experience.

The experience of going west, in this sense, became a form of cultural capital, that I call experiential capital. In "The Forms of Capital," Bourdieu delineates three types of capital—economic (financial assets), social ("connections"), and cultural (knowledge, skills, education, etc.).[255] His discussion of cultural capital further breaks down along categories of "embodied" (learned and internalized skills or forms of socialization) "objectified" (goods—art, instruments, etc.) and "institutionalized" (academic/ professional credentials). Experiences would seem likely to fall into the category of embodied cultural capital. Bourdieu's model, however, does not quite allow for the kind of commodified experience that "Wonderland" came to stand for. Experiential capital, as I am defining it, is a form of cultural value that derives from its power to symbolize participation in a group or collectivity.[256] This form of capital emerges out of experience economies in which, as Gilmore and Pine describe, consumers purchase not just goods but full experiences. Experiential capital in experience economies differs from Bourdieu's forms of capital in that it does not necessarily participate in social mobility so much as it participates in the production of a collective imaginary or "imagined

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[254] Albert B. Guptill, *A Ramble in Wonderland* (St. Paul: Northern Pacific Railroad, 1891), 46.
[255] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," *Handbook of Theory of Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. E. Richardson, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Greenword Press, 1986), 247.
[256] I distinguish this from Bourdieu's notion of "social capital," because experiential capital does not take the form of actual membership in a group or organization—and it is not about connections to other people, so much as it is about an imaginary.

communities," to invoke Benedict Anderson—be they nations, cities, clubs, or other forms of collectivities.[257]

Experiential capital thus defines a form of belonging—in this case, a belonging to the late nineteenth-century U.S. nation through the experience of Wonderland. Wonder discourse came to define a nation of wonders—and the experience of wonder and of seeking out wonder was a performance of belonging. Although nationalist narratives in the national parks and in travel narratives have long been recognized by scholars, my aim here is to highlight the role wonder discourse played in narrating and thematizing American landscapes and identities. The idea of a "Wonderland" became very portable in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as a kind of quintessentially American title. By the 1890s, other parts of the U.S. were referred to as wonderlands. In 1892, Charles Lummis published *Some Strange Corners of Our Country: The Wonderland of the Southwest*. In the same year, the western territories as a whole were chronicled as wonders in *The Wonderland of the West*. By the early 1900s, writers addressed *Our American Wonderlands* (1915) more broadly—the cliff dwellings of Colorado and Arizona, the natural bridges of Utah, the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky, Yosemite, and Yellowstone. Many of these wonderlands were, like Yellowstone, specific areas of the country that became accessible through rail travel—and many of them subsequently became national parks.

Before the 1916 foundation of the National Park Service, as Runte suggests in *Trains of Discovery*, railroads promoted the foundation of national parks and subsequently controlled much of the development around them. It is no accident that the

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[257] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*: *Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Revised and extended edition (London: Verso, 1992).

first national parks were located in areas made accessible by the first transcontinental

railroads. The Union Pacific Line to California brought tourists to Yosemite, King's

Canyon, and Sequoia National Parks (all founded in 1890). Northern Pacific and the

Great Northern line (completed in 1893) serviced Mount Rainier in Washington (1899)

and Crater Lake in Oregon (1902). Great Northern also ran to South Dakota, where Wind

Cave was established in 1903, and northern Montana, where Glacier National Park was

founded in 1910. In Colorado, the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe railroad brought

tourists to the Mesa Verde (1906) and Rocky Mountain National Parks (1915).

"Wonderland" as a term came to refer to all of these lands—and more generally to the

"representative" landscapes that formed the focus of the National Park Service.

Lauren Berlant's theorization of the "National Symbolic" provides a framework

for understanding this kind of experiential capital. Berlant focuses on the mid-nineteenth

century work of Nathaniel Hawthorne:

> The order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces,
> and also refers to, the 'law' in which the accident of birth within a
> geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a
> collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals,
> and its narratives provide an alphabet for a collective consciousness or national
> subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to
> achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright.[258]

Yellowstone National Park, as a political, territorial, and cultural entity, is an example of

this "tangled cluster"[259] of forces. The experiential capital travelers gained by visiting the

park was an individual experience with national import. It continually constituted and re-

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[258]Lauren Berlant, *Anatomy*, 20.
[259] Ibid., 5.

constituted the nation in "ongoing collective practices" that defined "a set of forms and the affect that makes these forms meaningful."[260]

In the case of Yellowstone, one of the shared forms of the "National Symbolic" was the trajectory through the park on the path that defined the "Grand Tour"—beginning at Mammoth Hot Springs, proceeding to the Norris Geyser Basin, followed by the Lower, Midway and Upper Geyser Basins. From there, travelers proceeded to the Yellowstone Lake, and the tour ended with the culminating wonder: the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. The guidebooks consistently frame this journey as one of increasing wonder whose "final act of scenic drama"[261] is the Grand Canyon. Completing this loop landed travelers back at Mammoth and then out of the park. This "Grand Tour" was the standard route through the park until Union Pacific Railroad reached the western boundary of the park in West Yellowstone in 1907, opening up other possible trajectories through Wonderland.[262]

The process of following the same trajectory, seeing the same sites in the same order—albeit potentially for different durations and certainly with different perspectives—allowed travelers to participate in a narrative of place and a trajectory of travel that consistently reproduced greater and greater wonders. This was a trajectory of surprise that lent coherence to a range of unfamiliar, strange, and unusual phenomena. The Wonderland guidebooks and the Grand Tour narrative sought to dramatize nature's strangeness in Yellowstone by turning it into a fantastical spectacle through which exotic

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[260] Ibid., 4.
[261] *Through Wonderland* (St. Paul: Northern Pacific, 1910), 62.
[262] For a history of the different railroads that serviced the park, see Waite's *Yellowstone by Train*. Chicago, Burlington & Pacific Railroad started offering service to the East Entrance of the park in 1912, and Chicago & North Western Railway opened the South Entrance in 1922. Waite, *Yellowstone by Train*, iv.

natures were integrated into a narrative trajectory defined by wonder and Wonderland, following Lewis Carroll's fantasy.

This integration of the other-worldliness of Yellowstone into a narrative framework is also symbolic of a much broader process at work in the negotiation of identity and citizenship in the nation. As Deloria notes, in the U.S. of the late nineteenth century identity formation was becoming less and less concerned with Europe and more and more concerned with internal Others—namely, Native Americans. Berlant further discusses the tensions at work in the negotiation of ideas of both legal and cultural citizenship and national belonging in the Reconstruction era, in which former slaves were becoming citizens, the relationship between state identity and national identity was being fiercely negotiated, and immigration was booming, bringing more and more Others into the country as industrialization grew American cities and their populations.[263] In this context of change, growth, and increasing tensions between modernism and anti-modernism, American identities could only be "contradictory,"[264] provisional, and, indeed, dramatically performative.

As a "National Symbolic," Wonderland created the narrative framework for the production of "a fantasy of national integration"[265] of exotic, strange, and unknown natures and bodies. Northern Pacific's branding of "Wonderland" created the possibility of integration and national belonging through which a visit to Yellowstone performed a fantasy of experience-based citizenship, rather than the race- and class-based ones of the past. This is not to say that that citizenship was not still in practice structured around

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[263] Berlant, *Anatomy*, 14-17.
[264] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 105.
[265] Berlant, *Anatomy*, 22.

social inequalities and violence. Rather, Yellowstone's Wonderland participated in a fantasy of an integrated nation defined by a common geography and the theoretically democratic access to the experience of that geography. In practice, of course, the ability to travel on the transcontinental railroads was (and remains) prohibitive for the vast majority of people. Thus, the experiential capital gained in participating in the Wonderland narrative—in seeing and being marked by Yellowstone's wonders—served as a privileged marker of American identity and citizenship in a time when there was confusion over precisely what defined that identity and citizenship.

The experiential capital gained in traversing the country catalyzed a form of "wonder citizenship" that was not about the unambiguously coherent and patriotic nation of the later, more formal promotions of national parks. I propose the idea of "wonder citizenship" based in part on Berlant's "Diva Citizenship" in *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City*, which in turn draws from Donna Haraway's project of fostering a form of cyborg citizenship in her famous "A Manifesto for Cyborgs.[266] I mean for wonder citizenship to be descriptive of the function and collective national value of the experiential capital gained in traveling to Yellowstone. Wonder citizenship marks a particular kind of experience of American environments that were themselves in the process of being incorporated into the nation's sense of itself and its geography. Wonder citizenship is experiential. It happens in movement, in a process of defamiliarization and displacement of a traveling subject. It presupposes that, as Berlant suggests, there is no such thing as a "national totality...and that the struggle to control the dominant meanings

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[266] Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of American Goes to Washington City*: *Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 220-46; and Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," *Socialist Review* 80, n. 15, 2 (1985): 65-108.

of America" is ongoing and always-emergent in individual and collective experiences.[267]

And it presupposes that there are no fixed identities, but rather identities based in the

particularities of experience.

Wonder citizenship holds within it the potential for arresting delight,

destabilization, and horror that wonder in the nineteenth-century U.S. encompassed. It is

a citizenship of experience-seeking and making, shaped by travel, spectacle, narrative and

visuality. Although it is an experience-based citizenship, it contains within it the markers

of race, class, and gender in its simultaneous desire for and erasure of radical difference

and otherness. Wonder citizenship—like "Wonderland"—captures a late nineteenth-

century idea of the nation: one that is upper class,[268] white, usually male, but

domesticated to allow for white women. It has nearly erased Native Americans, yet

remains defined by its fascination with exotic otherness and practices of defamiliarizing

the self and place. At its heart is a need for otherness that defines the very possibility of

wonder and the nation of immigrants. Indeed, in keeping with the "imperialist nostalgia"

of the era—and of the guidebooks—wonder citizenship rests on the "Indian's storyland"

that structures "the white man's wonderland."[269]

This form of citizenship describes an experiential desire and value that was a

function of American identity being "intense, complex, and conceptually incoherent."[270]

It describes a concept and experience of nation that is a collaborative enterprise in the

making by diverse participants: the land and "nature," railroads and industry, the national

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[267] Berlant, *Anatomy*, 16.
[268] A trip to Yellowstone cost $110 in 1888, which translates into roughly $3,000 today. Morgan Friedman, "The Inflation Calculator," *Westegg.com*, http://www.westegg.com/inflation/.
[269] *6,000 Miles*, 10.
[270] Berlant, *Anatomy*, 5.

government and the army, Native Americans, African Americans, immigrants and individual travelers. Drawing on the transnational histories of wonder, it also suggests an idea of America that is defined by forces beyond national boundaries, beyond continental definitions through trans-Atlantic as well as trans-Pacific exchanges and identities.

Northern Pacific Railway gestures in this direction in a multiplicity of ways, but one of its more striking iterations comes in the railroad's inclusion of itself and its own symbology in the aggregate of Wonderland wonders. In the early years of the twentieth century, the guidebooks turned to historicizing and narrating the railroad, painting it not just as a technological wonder but also as a cultural and even philosophical one. The 1901 guidebook, for example, features a twenty-page history and feature on the Northern Pacific "trademark"—a red and black yin and yang symbol. The guidebook answers its audience's "wondering" about the history of the symbol, drawing a lineage from the "Great Chinese Monad" of the eleventh century. Ideas about the symbol, the guidebook claims can be traced back 5,200 years (!).[271] Northern Pacific's adoption of it was inspired by the 1893 World's Fair display of the Korean flag, which featured a blue and red adaptation of the Chinese symbol. The symbol is based on ancient Chinese philosophical principles of the duality of "Nature"—invoking male and female, light and darkness as well as motion and rest. The feature goes on to explain that the symbol is one that stands for the "creative principle in every sense of the word." [272] The guidebook compares the symbol to Native American beadwork and designs and shows that the Chinese cosmology from which it draws resembles contemporary astronomy.

Figure 1.3. The Northern Pacific Trademark.

[271] Olin Wheeler, *Wonderland 1901* (St. Paul: Northern Pacific, 1901), 1.
[272] Ibid., 9-10.

The symbol effectively takes on a cosmology of its own—that seems to account for a whole world: "Day and night the great freight and palatial passenger trains...through the agency of fire and water, are now in rapid motion and again at rest throughout the mid-continent region of the great republic of the Occident."[273] But Northern Pacific gets even greater, international stature and credit through the adoption of this symbol:

> It would thus appear that one of the great transcontinental railway companies of the United States has...linked closer together the old Chinese and Korean civilizations with the newer one of America; that the steel rails of the Northern Pacific, in connection with the steamships of its copartner in commerce, the Northern Pacific Steamship Company, have established a new bond between the young republic and the old empire, the Occident and the Orient.[274]

The wonder of Northern Pacific, here, becomes one of cultural exchange and hybridity. The black and red of the Northern Pacific's Monad encompass both self and other in forging a combined entity. One could go so far as to read the Asian-inspired Monad as a four-part symbol of American identity: the yin-yang design referring to Asian identity, the red and black at the center standing for Native Americans and African Americans, and the larger white circle standing for Euro-America.

The guidebooks push this conception further. The cover of the 1901 guidebook (Figure 1.4.) features an Asian woman in an elaborate, silk-like garment enveloped in flower petals below a radiating yin-yang symbol, which is superimposed on an image of a train traversing the page from right to left. In making the woman appear as if she is part, or indeed the heart, of a flower, the image naturalizes her body and foreignness in the foreground. The yin-yang symbol appears to stand in for a halo-like sun that sits on a horizon-line defined by the train and its tracks. In this way, it is not just Yellowstone and

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[273] Ibid., 18.
[274] Ibid.

its wonders that embody the exotic and the foreign, but Northern Pacific and its trans-

continental reach as a whole.

Figure 1.4. Northern Pacific's
Wonderland 1901.

The greatness and wonder of this American company become defined by its

connections to a trans-Pacific history and philosophic tradition that gets explicitly

naturalized as part of the body of nature that Northern Pacific traverses: the U.S.-

American continent. Without ever having to mention it, this imagery acknowledges the

role of Chinese immigrants in the construction of the transcontinental railroads and

performs a visual, rhetorical assimilation of the Chinese—who were at the time explicitly

denied citizenship—into the American landscape, if not American culture and identity.[275]

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[275] Their offspring born in the U.S. would gain citizenship, but the first generation was to remain de-
naturalized. For more on the Chinese in nineteenth century U.S. culture, see Charles J. McClain, *In Search
of Equality: The Chinese Struggle against Discrimination in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of
California Press, 1996).

This imagery exemplifies Berlant's point that in the second half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. had a "shaky state apparatus, which as yet had no cultural referent whose expression it could authentically say it was."[276] Through the Wonderland campaign, Northern Pacific and its annual guidebooks provided provisional, grounded iterations of Americanness defined by otherness, exoticism, and wonder. Wonder citizenship arises from the shakiness of a newly accessible, transcontinental nation, struggling with a transcontinental range of identities, which create an openness and multiplicity of possibilities available to ground American identity and citizenship. That openness is, of course, not unqualified, nor is it categorically positive, as we well know. Six pages after "The History of a Trademark" in *Wonderland 1901*, the guidebook features a commemoration of "The Custer Battlefield," which the article suggests "stands now for Indian warfare" as a whole and thus is a must-see spot.[277] In a settler colonialist mindset, this reframing focuses on victories against Indians, rather than losses.

Wonder citizenship, in this sense, seeks to maintain an aestheticized difference that at times also facilitates the maintenance of social, racial, and class-based hierarchies. Yellowstone's framing through wonder-discourse thus allowed some U.S. citizens to perform their participation in the nation through living—and consuming—a variety of "Wonderland" experiences. That performance shaped an experiential capital that structured a form of experience-based citizenship and perpetuated a discourse that defined the nation as a fantasy-scape of unlimited possibilities for beauty and awe as well as for horror and destruction. In the framework of the history of wonder, beauty and awe and horror and destruction are two sides of the same coin. Indeed, as we have seen, the

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[276] Berlant, *Anatomy*, 21.
[277] *Wonderland 1901*, 40.

beauty of Wonderland was historically contingent upon mass removal and extermination of Native Americans. As in the pre-modern tradition, it seems, the difference between a positive wonder and threatening horror has in part to do with distance. The Wonderland route and its associated narratives and images produced the distance through which strangeness, exoticism, and otherness could be desirable and fascinating in a space that could always remain defined as "elsewhere." These same qualities were not generally valued in the same ways in more populated, urban centers. Native Americans had already been pushed onto reservations for this reason. The 1870s saw the advent of Jim Crow and widespread racially-defined xenophobic "yellow peril" scares.[278]

Wonder citizenship, experience economies, and experiential capital emerged at a particular moment of urban industrialism in the late nineteenth century. They were functions of increasingly aestheticized ideas of nature and experiences of landscape, facilitated by corporate entities and institutions—especially the railroads and the Department of the Interior. Wonder's rhetorical rise to the foreground as a major paradigm for thinking about the environment had to do with its open, expansive, malleable, and traveling nature and the fact that, unlike the picturesque and the sublime, it was *not* clearly associated with European aesthetic traditions. By the late nineteenth century, the national parks movement—and the Wonderland campaign, in particular— used wonder as a codified environmental discourse that participated in a broader process of negotiating identity and citizenship in an era when the meaning of "America" and the definitions of United States identities were changing. Although Yellowstone and the

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[278] For more on urbanism, industry, and racism, see Dorceta Taylor, *The Environment and the People in American Cities, 1600s-1900s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009). For more on the so-called "yellow peril," see William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1982).

national parks on the whole still participate in processes of narrating the nation and

identity, they do so differently now than they once did, from different socio-cultural

positions and with different narratives.[279] Nonetheless, as I will demonstrate in the next

two chapters, the legacies of wonder-discourse and experiential wonder citizenship that

took shape in Yellowstone continue to define institutions of travel, leisure, and

conservation in the U.S. through the twenty-first century.

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[279] Anthropologist Sally Ann Ness, for example, studies climbers in Yosemite. Her aim is to show visitors "translate into personal terms" the "sanctioned discourse of Yosemite National Park" (84). Even the "over-determined" space of Yosemite allows for a "diversity of experience" (73). Ness concludes her analysis of a particular climb by Alan Moore with the point that although the groundwork to experience Yosemite as a nation-space is there, through Moore's experience, "The national soil—or rock, as it were—was reconfigured through climbing practice as the ground of the climbing community" (81). In this context, I would suggest that Moore's experience still produces a form of experiential capital, but this time it is one that is aimed at confirming/producing his belonging in the climbing community. Sally Ann Ness, "Bouldering in Yosemite: Emergent Signs of Place and Landscape," *American Anthropologist* 113, n.1 (March 2011): 71-87.

Chapter Two

Pedestrian Wonders: Zoos' Affective Collections

> "When I left home, I left family pets behind…. Without my realizing it, though, a vacancy had opened up in my life where these animals had been, and it was one that wasn't filled until I arrived at the zoo."[1]

From the distant wonderlands of the national parks, we move now to a closer world of urban and regional zoological parks. Although getting to these parks requires less extensive travel, they are equally, if not more, invested in transporting visitors physically and imaginatively to different, often exotic, global landscapes. In chapter one, my analysis focused largely on the rhetoric of wonder, and the ways in which that rhetoric became codified over the course of the nineteenth century and through the early movement to found national parks. This chapter treats wonder in both its rhetorical and affective dimensions in contemporary zoos, engaging with scholarship in affect studies, animal studies, and zoo history.

As my epigraph from John Sedgwick's account of the Philadelphia Zoo suggests, zoos are places that can facilitate connections with animals that are potentially fulfilling in ways that differ from connections with other humans. Sedgwick's statement suggests that being in zoos and encountering animals there fills a void produced by the absence of companion animals and daily interactions with non-humans. Although zoo animals are

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[1] John Sedgwick, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1988), 9-10.

not companion animals (even if they do sometimes act in ways that are reminiscent of companion animals, as we will see), feeling close to animals at the zoo can foster a sense of broader global ecological connection not just to individual animals, but whole species and ecosystems.

These connections participate in positive forms of "feeling ecological" in Stephanie LeManger's articulation of the term that I discussed in the introduction. I will suggest, however, that zoos also frequently participate in the less pleasant forms of "feeling ecological" that gesture the co-dependency of human and non-human, as in the case of human oil dependency, as well as in the contexts of habitat destruction and species extinction. In this negative sense, "feeling ecological" is associated with disaster narratives and what LeManger calls "environmental melancholia."[2] Zoos in the era of conservation are often engaged in promoting both positive and negative versions of "feeling ecological"—and wonder is part of that dynamic, aiming to inspire connection and responsibility in light of global ecological crisis.

Zoos are historical outgrowths of the collecting practices of "cabinets of wonder" that took shape in the medieval and early modern periods and persisted as integral parts of elite European cultures into the nineteenth century. Private collections of artifacts, books, art, natural specimens amounted to symbols of cultural prestige and power; as public "zoological gardens" emerged in Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century, these animal collections also came to be symbols of national and civic pride.[3] Much

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[2] LeManger, *Living Oil*, 105-6.

[3] For the British context, see Harriet Ritvo's *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987). For the German context, see Lynn Nyhart's *Modern Nature: The Rise of the Biological Perspective in Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). For a broad discussion of "The Cultural Status of the Zoo," see Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin's *Zoo Culture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 116-36.

scholarship has studied cabinets of wonder, their histories, and evolutions,[4] but zoos have

received relatively little critical attention, especially in the humanities. John Berger's

1977 essay "Why Look at Animals?" is still considered an authoritative reading of zoos.[5]

Berger argues that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, animals became

marginalized through industrialization and modernization processes, and that zoos

emerged during this time period as funerary monuments to the historical (more intimate)

relationship between humans and animals. As such, "the zoo cannot but disappoint"[6]

visitors, because the zoo's ideology carves out a space in which the animals barely exist

in themselves: "animals are always observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost

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[4] See, for example, *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

[5] John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage International, 1991). Scholarly treatments of zoos in the humanities have followed two main pathways: the historical and the animal rights-based critique. The historical perspectives situate zoos within a history of wild animal keeping from the ancient civilizations of the Chinese, Greeks, Egyptians, Romans to the "modern" zoo. They tie zoos to histories of colonialism and colonial power, and put critical pressure on zoos' claims to "modernity" and to their roles as centers of conservation. Such histories include: Elizabeth Hanson's *Animal Attractions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), Nigel Rothfels's *Savages and Beasts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), R.J Hoage and William Deiss's *New Worlds, New Animals* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996). In additions to these, there are a number of useful, popular histories of zoos, including Viki Croke's *The Modern Ark* (New York: Scribner, 1997), Eric Baratay and Elisabeth Hardouin-Fugier's *Zoos* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998), David Hancocks's *A Different Nature* (Berkeley: California University Press, 2001). The animal-rights based critiques focus on contesting the status of zoo animals as "natural." Some of them, like Randy Malamud's *Reading Zoos* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), are vehemently anti-zoo, ideology critiques of representations of animals in captivity, especially in literary texts. Malamud's premise is not just that zoos change wild animals, but that animals in zoos are no longer animals at all; they are mere representations. Keekok Lee's *Zoos: a Philosophical Tour* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) presents an ontological study of zoo animals that argues that zoo animals are "ontological foils" to wild animals; they are a form of domesticated animal, different from other kinds of domesticated animals, but nonetheless not wild. Stephen Spotte's *Zoos in Postmodernism* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson, 2006), 17, similarly concludes that zoo animals have "relinquished their ontological status as part of the natural world.... they can only simulate their wild conspecifics." Mullan and Marvin's arguments in the classic anthropological study *Zoo Culture* treat zoos as cultural spaces, and although they do not pose ontological questions, they conclude that animals don't need zoos. Only people do. Thus, the vast majority of zoo history and critique assumes or concludes that zoos' main purposes of science/conservation, education, and recreation are reducible to recreation. The scholarly insistence that zoos are fundamentally about recreation has been a crucial critical position aimed at debunking the popular narrative about the radical shift in animal keeping in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, under the guise of science.

[6] Berger, *About Looking*, 24.

all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge."[7] Zoo visits are "sentimental occasions" and produce emotional responses in visitors—but they are, for Berger, necessarily negative responses: nostalgia, loss, disappointment, as "animals seldom live up to adults' memories, whilst to children they appear, for the most part, unexpectedly lethargic and dull."[8]

In categorizing the zoo experience as disappointing, Berger's argument points to the fact that visiting zoos comes with expectations of something else: delight, wonder, and amusement. Berger, however, does not address these expectations or the ways in which they are and must be reproduced in order to keep visitors returning to zoos. Rather, Berger's approach is a predecessor to animal rights-based ideology critiques of zoos. In many ways, his analysis (re)produces the "invisibility" of animals in modernity that he argues zoos emblematize, because his analysis treats animals as generic, symbolic, and non-specific.[9] The scholarly tendency to (re)produce this kind of invisibility has been one of the leading critiques coming out of the interdisciplinary field of animal studies over the past several decades. Scholars like Donna Haraway, Cary Wolfe, Susan McHugh, among others have brought a more materialist[10] approach to thinking about and "with" animals, an approach that has focused scholarly lenses on actual, living animals, as much as on the ideological, economic, and political systems in which they live.[11]

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[7] Ibid., 14

[8] Ibid., 21.

[9] This critique of Berger applies just as well to Malamud, Lee, and Spotte.

[10] Berger's analysis is materialist in its consideration of the practices of industrial capitalism and its implications for animals. It is, however, deeply anti-materialist in its treatment of "animals" as a general category of industrial quasi-waste. Even when he brings photographs of specific animals into his text, the animals themselves are never the focus, even when they are, in fact, very central to the photographs. His analysis thus, in some significant ways, produces the very marginalization he critiques.

[11] See, especially, Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), Cary Wolfe, Stanley Cavell, Cora Diamond, John McDowell, and Ian Hacking, *Philosophy and Animal Life*

This chapter approaches zoos with an eye, conditioned by animal studies-based work, to understand, however partially, the cultural and personal functions of zoo experiences and their wide appeal.[12] I consider animals themselves to be active participants in the production of zoos. Zoo animals are a different kind of animal from "wild" animals in "nature," but they are also not, on the whole, "domesticated" animals. The binarism between "wild" and domesticated has conditioned the ways in which it has been possible to examine zoos and their animals. Since most critics agree that zoo animals are not purely "wild," their status as domesticated allows many scholars to approach them as merely symbolic. Although they are called upon to play symbolic roles at the zoo, they are also, as I argue, "actants," in Bruno Latour's terminology, who participate, along with the exhibits, the zoo's pathways, the zoo keepers, and the visitors (among other actants) in making up zoo experiences.

Building off Berger's point that the zoo is a "sentimental occasion," I approach the zoo as an affective space and ask how zoos produce affective geographies and what role animals, humans, rhetoric, and landscape play in the making of zoo experiences. Visitors experience all of the elements that make up a zoo through the basic fact that zoos are pedestrian—in both the literal and figurative senses of that word. Visitors walk through them, and in many cases, they do so relatively habitually. The experience of going to the zoo, in that sense, can be unexceptional and even underwhelming, as Berger insists. One of the most common complaints at zoos is that the animals are "boring" or

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(New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), and Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[12] In 1977, when Berger was writing, he notes that "millions visited the zoos each year.... Today in France 22 million people visit the 200 zoos each year." Berger, *About Looking*, 20. Today, according to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, over 175 million people visit 222 Association of Zoos and Aquariums-accredited institutions (there are, however, nearly 400 operating zoos in the U.S.). See: http://www.aza.org/zoo-aquarium-statistics/.

uninteresting, because they don't move very much. But it is, I argue, in part this very

pedestrian-ness of zoos that makes wonder experiences possible. To this point, I have

examined wonder in tandem with such aesthetic cousins as the sublime and the

picturesque, as a relative to curiosity. Here, we might begin to think of wonder as bonded

to very different affective experiences: boredom and disappointment. Wonder is, of

course, not synonymous with either affect, but it may depend on their pedestrian qualities

to emerge as a sudden surprise.

Wonder is not a singularly defined experience at the zoo, nor is it a guaranteed

one, but its possibility is often a driving hope behind zoo outings. The kinds of pedestrian

wonder people experience at zoos are tied to a number of different kinds of affects,

among them: nostalgia, fascination, horror, envy, expectation, awe, engagement. Wonder

thus bridges the theoretical gap that has emerged in studies and theories of affect between

the so-called "positive affects" and "negative affects."[13] Pedestrian wonders have both

positive and negative associations but may not land on either "side" of the affective

spectrum. They are temporary and changing emotions that come and go with the

movement of walking through a zoo. I consider pedestrian wonders to share some

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[13] Affect Theory is often traced back to psychologist Silvan Thomkins's analysis of affects, which entered humanities-based scholarship through Eve Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). Some of the major theorists of the "affective" turn include Lauren Berlant, Kathleen Stewart, Sianne Ngai, Sara Ahmed. For a solid introduction to some of the major players in affect studies, see the 2010 *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010). Many of the scholarly works in this vein have focused on "negative" affects like envy, irritation, loss, paranoia. See, for example, Lee Edelman's *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), Ngai's *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), Heather Love's *Feeling Backwards: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), and Ann Cvetkovich's *Depression: A Public Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012). On the "positive" affective end, see Jose Esteban Munoz's *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), Sara Ahmed's *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), and Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

similarities with the "ordinary affects" Kathleen Stewart identifies in her study of the

materiality and particularity of the everyday:

> The ordinary is a shifting assemblage of practices and practical knowledges, a
> scene of both liveness and exhaustion, a dream of escape or of the simple life.
> Ordinary affects are the varied, surging capacities to affect and to be affected that
> give everyday life the quality of a continual motion of relations, scenes,
> contingencies, and emergences. They're things that happen. They happen in
> impulses, sensations, expectations, daydreams, encounters, and habits of
> relating.... Ordinary affects are public feelings that begin and end in broad
> circulation, but they're also the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of.[14]

Stewart's approach to ordinary affects suggests that ideology critique cannot fully

account for the practices and experiences of daily life.[15]

Similarly, the wide reach of wonder discourse in the U.S. is not reducible to the

commercialization of experience. Wonder, I showed in chapter one, is a function of

systems of capitalism and corporate interests. Wonder's entanglements with those

systems remains a basic premise at corporate-funded zoos that now mostly function as

non-profit organizations rather than city parks.[16] The transition to non-profit

administration, which has entailed a private-public partnership model in zoo

administration, is in part a consequence of the vast resources needed to make the

landscape and exhibit renovations that came with the so-called "Wild Revolution"[17] of

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[14] Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 1-2.

[15] "...the terms neoliberalism, advanced capitalism, and globalization that index this emergent present...do not in themselves begin to describe the situation we find ourselves in [in the contemporary U.S.]. The notion of a totalized system of which everything is always already somehow a part, is not helpful (to say the least) in the effort to approach a weighted and reeling present." Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*, 1.

[16] For a good discussion of the processes by which zoos went from being largely city-run operations to becoming corporate non-profits, see William Fox's *In the Desert of Desire: Las Vegas and the Spectacle of Desire* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2005). Hanson's *Animal Attractions* also discusses the shift briefly (162-65).

[17] For a good overview of the changes involved in this "revolution," see Vicki Croke's *The Modern Ark* (71-94) and Hancock's *A Different Nature* (111-48). The "Wild Revolution" was not just about a change in animal exhibition practices. It came along with major administrative changes that largely remain unexamined, but that are often considered to have fostered the "corporatization" of zoos. Hancocks discusses this corporatization and its associated commodification at the end of *A Different Nature* (215-31).

the 1980s and 1990s, which "naturalized" zoos and sought to showcase and value the

"wonders of the wild." This chapter examines the "pedestrian wonders" that have

emerged both because and in spite of the hybrid corporate, educational, conservationist

institutions that zoos[18] have become in the post-Wild Revolution era.

The incidental nature of zoo wonders, this chapter shows, highlights the ways in

which wonder is not just an emotion experienced by visitor-subjects. It is a "collective"

in Bruno Latour's sense of the term, produced by a plethora of localized "actants,"

including the animals, the exhibits or environments, the zoo keepers, the zoo as

institution, as well as the pedestrian-visitor, that come together in one moment and may

dissociate in the next. If zoos have emerged from practices of collecting objects, animals,

and artifacts as institutionalized animal parks, we might now more fruitfully approach

them as collectives of human and non-human actants. These wonder collectives, I argue,

are engaged in producing experiences of global nature and fostering eco-conscious global

citizens.

In winding through zoo worlds, this chapter is structured around an imagined

pedestrian journey through different exhibits visitors find in zoos. It is an "imagined"

journey, because it is not based on any single zoo, and it is often narrated in the first

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His discussion—like many others'—is tied to Disney's foray into the zoo genre with the Animal Kingdom theme park (opened in 1998 in Florida), and its subsequent status a standard-bearer in the zoo world.

[18] My analysis focuses exclusively on zoos accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. Although there are at least as many non-accredited zoos in the country as there are accredited ones, the AZA's accreditation has become a form of legitimation and authority. Non-AZA accredited zoos tend to be smaller, less organized, and have a much smaller presence in their communities than AZA-accredited institutions. Former Atlanta Zoo director Terry Maple's *Zoo Man* (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1993) attests to the civic pride attached to accreditation in recounting the city crisis surrounding the zoo's failure to meet AZA standards in 1984. Maple was hired by the zoo to turn it around. One of the first steps in this revitalization entailed founding "Zoo Atlanta"—a now nationally-recognized zoo—a non-profit corporation to manage the zoo. Along with former director of Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, David Hancocks, Maple became one of the major figures of the "Wild Revolution."

person, as it is based on my on-site research and emotional experiences in a collection of over thirty zoos around the country over the past three years. First-person narration, appears to posit a "subjective" experience, but it also disrupts the notion of an "objective" observation. The "I" of this narration is very much part of the zoo "collectives" this chapter identifies. In writing this chapter, I have selectively assembled zoo experiences and exhibits that exemplify different forms of "pedestrian wonder." Most zoos contain some of these kinds of exhibits and potentially foster some version of the experiences I describe herein, although there is significant variation between zoos, between the hours and days one visits a zoo, between individual animals and individual people. I thus offer this chapter as an effort to think both about the "public feelings" zoos foster, the cultural value of these feelings and of zoos, and the role that living animals play in producing that value.

I.   Heading Out

Although visiting zoos requires pedestrianism,[19] most zoos—even those in cities—are accessible only through other forms of transportation: trains, subways, automobiles. As I alluded to in the introduction, one of this project's beginnings was a car trip in the spring of 2010. I had seen colorful billboard advertisements in Kalamazoo, MI for the Binder Park Zoo (located twenty-five miles away in Battle Creek). I was attending a large academic conference, and the zoo seemed like an attractive escape from

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[19] Focusing on pedestrianism may seem to exclude a disability studies perspective on moving through zoos. I use pedestrianism in part to stress the movement and ordinariness of zoo-going experiences. "Pedestrian wonders," as I use the term, are themselves accessible to a wide and diverse public—so long as exhibits themselves are. Most zoos do make all or most of their exhibits wheelchair accessible, and zoos are, indeed, often frequented by a wide range of differently-abled bodies. As a result, they provide resting spots, alternate means of moving through the zoo (bus, train, trolley, stroller, wheelchair), as well as a range of activities for different ages and abilities.

the windowless conference rooms of academia. I had not been to a zoo in decades, and one morning, I headed east on I-94 towards Battle Creek, driving for miles alongside flat, green farmlands. After exiting, I passed cornfields, tractors, an old dilapidated barn. I followed small signs that displayed the outline of a giraffe and the words "Zoo" on them, and eventually I turned into a tree-lined driveway that took me to a large parking lot lined with picnic tables. There, amid a tangle of trees, was the zoo.

I got out of my car in the parking lot of a sizeable city park, paid admission, and walked through a small collection of animals in mostly small enclosures: pacing gray wolves, a sleeping snow leopard, some kangaroos. It was a pretty, pedestrian as well as a pretty pedestrian experience. I was neither disappointed nor enthralled. I enjoyed the newly flowering trees and bushes, and I was prepared to call it a day, when I noticed a group of visitors under a collection of African flags. Soon, a covered tram arrived, and after a ten minute drive on a paved path through the woods, we arrived by some wooden huts. The words "Welcome to Africa" resounded over the loud-speakers. Without setting foot outside of Michigan, I was suddenly on a different continent.

This voyage to Africa clearly was and is a fiction, yet as I stepped off the tram and walked towards a lookout point that showcased a large multispecies "Savanna" exhibit where giraffes, zebras, ostriches, stork, and antelope appeared to roam freely for miles, I felt what can only be described as wonder.[20] It was not an uncomplicated sense of wonder. I stood at the lookout point for a long time watching the zebras and antelope

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[20] More than any other single part of zoos, exhibits of Africa have been studied for their colonialist underpinnings. See, for example, Lise Camilla Ruud's "A Zoo-logical Nature," *Tidsskrift for kulturforskning* 7, n.3 (2008), 54-65. For a discussion of Disney's Africa-themed lodge at Animal Kingdom, see Carole Magee, *Africa in the American Imagination: Popular Culture, Racialized Identities, and African Visual Culture* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 139-72.

graze. The openness of the landscape rendered the view spectacular, especially after the small enclosures in the non-African part of the zoo. Here, children squealed with delight as giraffes came up to the railing for food. I followed the children, as they walked through "native" huts where signs instructed us to feel free to look around. The "natives" must be out hunting.

The fiction of a generic "Wild Africa" in the Midwest—or anywhere in the U.S., for that matter—is one that zoo visitors across the country delight in and seek to return to over and over. And, indeed, most prominent zoos partake in perpetuating this fiction, this wonderscape that allows visitors to experience a trip to the zoo as a form of imaginative travel to exotic places. The pathway through Binder Park's African Safari or "Zuri National Park" takes visitors to a "Field Research Camp" where they learn about the zoo's scientific research and the need for conservation. Imaginative travel thus becomes scientific education and environmental consciousness. The scene of "Africa" brings together a plethora of histories and stories—about science, colonialism, fantasy, animals, conservation. Whereas in chapter one, I argued that the wonderscapes produced in the American West by narratives of travel forged a relationship between landscape and imagination that helped commercialize the land for tourism and the foundation of the national parks, in zoos wonderscapes are created at an enormous cost to support recreational, scientific, educational, and conservation-based aims that seek to cultivate global-minded citizens with "worldly" experiences in local zoos.

The narratives of exploration, education, and conservation that zoo visitors experience as they walk through themed exhibits like Binder Park's "Wild Africa" are unquestionably colonialist and often over-simplified. My reactions on that first zoo visit

were divided among uneasiness, fascination, and pleasure. One of the most compelling things about the zoo was its irreducibility to the poles of "good" and "bad." In *Zoo Story*, a journalistic account of Tampa's Lowry Park, Thomas French writes that:

> All zoos, even the most enlightened, are built upon an idea both beguiling and repellent—the notion that we can seek out the wildness of the world and behold its beauty, but that we must first contain that wildness. Zoos argue that they are fighting for the conservation of the Earth, that they educate the public and provide refuge and support for vanishing species. And they are right. Animal-rights groups argue that zoos traffic in living creatures, exploiting them for financial gain and amusement. And they are right.[21]

As I walked through "Wild Africa," there was no question that my fellow zoo-goers and I were enjoying watching both the animals and their beautifully landscaped surroundings, even as we walked through exhibitions whose histories and narrative devices have contributed to the systematic subjugation and at times extermination of both animals and non-European people around the globe.[22]

These narratives, born out of travel, conquest, exploration, and science, structured visitor's experiences of "Wild Africa" in a seemingly "natural" way. No one paused or

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[21] Thomas French, *Zoo Story* (New York: Hyperion Books, 2010), 40.

[22] Exhibits like Binder Park's "Wild Africa" build off colonialist exhibition practices that have often exhibited native people in terrible conditions. As recently as the early twentieth century, Africans like Ota Benga were exhibited in "anthropological" exhibits at World's Fairs and zoos. Benga was put in a monkey cage at the Bronx Zoo in 1906. There is a vast literature in French on "human zoos." See, for example, Emmanuel Garrigues's special issue of *L'Ethnographie* entitled "Villages noirs, zoos humains" (#2, summer 2003). In the American context, see Phillips Bradford, *Ota Benga: The Pygmy in the Zoo* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); *Human Zoos: From the Hottentot Venus to Reality Shows* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Pascal Blanchard, *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage* (Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2012). The display of animals in zoos was well into the twentieth century also deeply tied to colonial practices—and mass hunting that often killed thousands of individual animals in order to capture a handful of baby or relatively tame animals for display. Hanson gives one of the most extensive descriptions of the wild animal trade and the popular "zoo expeditions" of the twentieth century and their costs. See Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 71-129. Since the passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, zoos no longer get their animals from the "wild." Rather the AZA has coordinated breeding programs around the country and the world. Zoo breeding practices are occasionally under fire as well for over-breeding and disposing of animals by selling them to game parks, private owners, etc., or sometimes practicing euthanasia. Former Detroit Zoo director Steven Graham came under widespread attack for euthanizing animals, but he, in turn, attacked other zoos for their "unethical" practices. See Andrew Cassel, "Nature Can Be Cruel," *The Seattle Times* (May 13, 1990), http://community.seattletimes.nwsource.com/archive/?date=19900513&slug=1071434.

hesitated as we passed through huts or were asked to be on the lookout for poachers. I watched people's reactions; the animals and vistas were the only parts of the exhibits that garnered their attention. I spent half an hour at the Mangabey monkey exhibit, where the animals groomed each other meticulously. I watched others watch the animals. As the monkeys picked and bit at each other, visitors expressed fascination, disgust, puzzlement, joy. There were those who stopped and wondered, those who exclaimed "gross!" and moved on, those who explained to their children what was going on. As I watched this range of reactions, I began what has turned into a years-long process of seeking to account for zoo-goers' experiences and emotional responses and the cultural discourses that help shape them.

II.   Parking, or Getting Situated

A zoo experience begins in the parking lot—a liminal zone from which one can generally see both the zoo's entrance and the "outside world," whether it is defined by highways, a residential neighborhood, or a broader city or county park. Every zoo's location is a consequence of its history and its city's history, but those histories—like zoos' histories—are mostly invisible to the pedestrian visitor.[23] The country's first zoo, the Philadelphia Zoo (chartered in 1859 but not opened until 1874) was planned as part of the historic Fairmount Park, which the zoo's website boasts is "the world's largest landscaped city park."[24] The Philadelphia Zoo, the Lincoln Park Zoo (opened in 1874),

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[23] Historical displays are few and far between in zoos. The Detroit Zoo is the only one I have been to that has several history "boards" that sketch the zoo's history. At times, anniversaries are occasions for historical exhibits. For instance, on its centennial in 1989, the National Zoo organized a major retrospective historical exhibit. It remains one of its kind, and was possible in part because of the zoo's affiliation with the Smithsonian. By and large most zoos' archives lie in disorganized filing cabinets and in city archives.
[24] The Philadelphia Zoo, "Directions and Parking," http://www.philadelphiazoo.org/zoo/Visit-The-Zoo/Directions---Zoo-Map/Parking.htm.

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the Central Park Zoo (opened as a small, unplanned menagerie in 1864), the Bronx Zoo

(1899), Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo (1903), the St. Louis Zoo (1904), and later the San

Diego Zoo (1916) are examples of zoos that were founded in tandem with the broader

parks movement, and they are situated within larger city parks. [25]

But the parks movement was only one force that brought about zoos in the U.S.

The St. Louis and San Diego Zoos were also founded after the St. Louis World's Fair

(1904) and the Panama-California Exposition (1915) left dozens of abandoned animals

behind. The first Detroit Zoo (1883) was founded after a circus went broke in the city.

The foundings of the earliest U.S. zoos in the late nineteenth century—in Philadelphia,

Cincinnati (opened in 1875), Cleveland (1882), Maryland (1876)—were also part of a

larger movement to found cultural institutions in the U.S. that could rival Europe's. The

late nineteenth century in the U.S., as scholars have well documented, was the era of

"incorporation" spurred on by the "reorganization of perceptions as well as of enterprise

and institutions"[26] in the aftermath of the civil war. Zoos are outgrowths of the early

modern traditions of wonder cabinets or cabinets of curiosity, known as Wunderkammer.

The creation of zoos—like that of museums—marked the institutionalization of long-

standing collection practices that served both scientific and recreational purposes.

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[25] Some scholars, like Elizabeth Hanson, believe that American zoos were primarily founded as part of the larger parks movement. She claims that: "The creation of zoos as part of… public park systems in the United States helps justify their consideration separately from European zoos, which had largely private origins." Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 9. Although Hanson recognizes other influences in the founding of zoos, namely that European zoos provided models for American zoos, she does not acknowledge that especially prior to 1900, the vast majority of zoos were not founded as part of the parks movement. Where the parks movement emerged out of a fear that all of American nature would be ruined, as well as a call in U.S. cities for open space, early U.S. zoos were founded as a movement to create American cultural institutions that could rival Europe's. For more on this early history of U.S. zoos, see Kisling's "The Origin and Development of American Zoological Parks to 1899," in *New World, New Animals: Zoos in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. R.J. Hoage and William A. Deiss (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).
[26] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 3.

The histories of what the "modern era" has called zoological parks reach back to antiquity, at least, and take a number of different forms over the course of the past two millennia: animal spectacles/circuses, collections or "cabinets of wonder," recreational parks, scientific institutions, and most recently conservation centers.[27] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, zoos began to sprout up around the U.S., following the development of so-called "modern scientific zoos" in London, Paris, and various cities in Germany. Zoos were considered to be major cultural assets in a city. Like recreational parks, they provided space for public gathering, in addition to showcasing animals from all over the world. The more exotic animals a zoo had, the greater its cultural stature. Thus, many zoos, like Cincinnati's, were founded around other elite historical and cultural assets and institutions. The zoo in Cincinnati was installed next to the University of Cincinnati, for example.[28]

The Cincinnati Zoo, often considered the country's second oldest zoo,[29] started as a society for the acclimatization of birds aimed at controlling a caterpillar outbreak in 1872. A zoological society was subsequently founded and the zoo was shaped by a predominantly German immigrant community (all the early guidebooks are in German)

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[27] For broad histories of zoos, see Jones & Wills's "Trapping Nature in the Animal Park," in *The Invention of the Park* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 127-44; Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier's *Zoos: Histoire Des Jardins Zoologiques En Occident*; Hoage, Roskell, and Mansour's "Menageries and Zoos to 1900," in *New World, New Animals*, 8-18; Croke, *The Modern Ark,* 127-64.

[28] The proximity between the zoo and the university in Cincinnati is actually atypical of zoos in the U.S., which on the whole have had little to do with universities. Unlike botanical gardens and museums, zoos are rarely affiliated with universities. The University of Michigan, which had its own small zoo until the 1960s, is an exception. Zoos have come to have more formal associations with universities over the course of the past several decades, particularly in the case of zoo management and veterinary science degree-granting institutions. Michigan State University, for example, has a formalized relationship with the Potter Park Zoo in Lansing, MI. Under the leadership of Terry Maple, Zoo Atlanta developed a relationship with the Yerkes Primate Research Center at Emory University. The St. Louis Zoo in Forest Park was built right next to the World's Fair Pavilion (1904), which itself was built on land that was at the time part of the campus of Washington University. The Missouri History Museum (opened in 1866) is also a neighbor.

[29] Central Park and Lincoln Park both had small animal collections before the Cincinnati Zoo opened its doors, but they were disorganized and lacked institutional standing.

on the outskirts of the city. Built in the "hills" above the city, the zoo was meant to provide a respite from an increasingly overcrowded downtown. The zoo's location, in effect, maps the city's population and planning history.

Prior to the early twentieth century, Cincinnati made virtually no efforts at zoning or restricting land uses. From the time the city was founded, it grew up around the public landing with early slums developing in pockets around the city's industries; none of the city was preserved exclusively for residential purposes. The result, by the late nineteenth century, was a seriously polluted and congested city: "On most days, heavy coal smoke shrouded the city, and on the worst days one could not see [across several blocks]."[30] This state of affairs was in large part the result of planners' initial failure to consider the area's topography in designing the city, which was planned on Philadelphia's model, despite its vastly different topography.

Because the city is surrounded by hills, as Cincinnati expanded and grew in population, its reach was limited until better transportation systems became available. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the wealthy began to leave the city to found suburban communities in the hills.[31] From the 1870s onwards, the exodus of the wealthy was widespread, and as a middle class began to emerge, it also followed.[32] In many other cities, when the upper and middle classes fled to seek out private green space on the outskirts, they still held property in the city, forming exclusive neighborhoods around parks.[33] In Cincinnati, when the wealthy fled the city, they made their permanent homes

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[30] David Stradling, *Cincinnati: From River City to Highway Metropolis* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 78.
[31] The suburban hill communities were later annexed by the city in the twentieth century, when advances in transportation made them more accessible.
[32] Stradling, *Cincinnati*, 78.
[33] For more on this, see Taylor, *The Environment and the People in American Cities*.

in the hills, where they were able to maintain exclusive cultures at once removed from the

chaos of the city, but still within easy reach of it. They used carriages to travel back and

forth to the city, until the city's trolley system was expanded by the 1880s and 1890s to

go up and down several of the hills with exclusive restaurants and clubs serving

customers at the top.[34]

The Cincinnati zoo was one of those "clubs" at the top when it was founded. With

the advent of roads and the gradual expansion of the city, it is no longer as separated from

downtown as it once was, but it remains on the outskirts, in the hills, next to the

University of Cincinnati and many of the historic homes built in the Cincinnati hills, a

testament to the zoo's history as an elite cultural institution. From the parking lot today,

one can see the university nearby, and the bridges crossing the Ohio River in the distance,

where the historic slums along the river once sat.

Walking towards the entrance, it is that mundane world of local history, class

structures, and city planning that one seemingly leaves behind to enter a different world.

As John Sedgwick writes in his 1988 *The Peaceable Kingdom*, an account of his year at

the Philadelphia Zoo:

> When you pass through the wrought-iron gates of the Garden of the Zoological
> Society of Philadelphia, you enter another world. The street noise fades, the city
> skyline drops away, and an extraordinary landscape stretches out before you. Tall
> trees sway, flowers blossom, and bright high-Victorian buildings loom. And
> everywhere there are animals—wild, uproarious, colorful animals. Llamas,
> camels, gibbons, polar bears, eagles, zebras, aardvarks, giraffes, rhinos, hippos,
> gorillas, peacocks… It is a kind of paradise, this place.[35]

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[34] Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., "City Building, Public Policy, the Rise of the Industrial City, and Black Ghetto-Slum Formation in Cincinnati, 1850-1940," in *Race and the City: Work Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, Henry Louis Taylor, Jr., ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 159-61.
[35] Sedgwick, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, 9.

There is no doubt that this description is dramatized and romanticized, but it exemplifies the ways in which zoos and their animals occupy an other-worldly space of wonder and extraordinary experiences that makes the quotidian "fade." Today, as zoos have exhibits like Binder Park's "Wild Africa," the sense of entering another world is magnified. Going to the zoo means leaving behind a local, everyday world to enter a world of global landscapes and animals, a world of "More Animals, More Fun," as the Cincinnati Zoo motto goes.[36] On the one hand, the motto reflects the zoo's stature as one of the premier U.S. zoos with a large, well-regarded collection of animals. On the other hand, it also points to zoos' history as institutions of collecting, a history in which the successful amassing of collections of live animals from the wild was very difficult. "More animals, More fun," suggests a direct correlation between the size and extent of the collection and visitors' enjoyment.

Although Cincinnati's zoo is quick to claim its 2010 designation (by Ohio Governor Ted Strickland) as the "Greenest Zoo in America"[37] and its efforts in conservation, "More Animals, More Fun" is a motto that is clearly about the "recreational" aspects of zoos. Wonder is tied to recreational as well as conservational aims, even though scholars and animal rights activists consider "recreation" and "conservation" to be conflicting and contradictory aspects of zoos. If a zoo is focused on

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[36] "More Animals, More Fun" was the zoo's 2009 theme. The motto has stuck, however, and continues to be used on billboards and promotional material. Executive Director, Thane Maynard's, foreword to the 2010 *The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden*, calls "More Animals, More Fun," "our motto today...[which] is a reflection of our commitment to our vision to 'inspire every visitor with wildlife every day.'" Thane Maynard, "Foreword," *The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden*, by Joy W. Kraft (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2010), 6.

[37] Chris Kaeff, "The Greenest Zoo in America Is in Cincinnati," *Examiner.com*, July 6, 2011, http://www.examiner.com/article/the-greenest-zoo-america-is-cincinnati.

"More Animals, More Fun," that is, on selling a particular kind of experience to visitors, can it really be concerned with the well-being of the animals in its care and in the "wild"?

This dilemma is a relatively recent one. It is one of the challenges facing so-called "modern zoos," particularly since the second half of the twentieth century. The "modern history" of zoos has been defined by zoos themselves as well as recent historians of zoos, who trace the advent of "modern" zoos—usually defined in terms of their scientific objectives and concerns—to the nineteenth century.[38] The "modernity" of zoological gardens is defined against "menageries," drawing distinctions based on size, organization, and purpose. [39] Menageries were small compared to even the smallest subsequent zoos. Perhaps, in part, because of their small size, many menageries were also disordered collections compared to modern zoos, whose aim has been in part to display animals according to some form of scientific organizational principle—taxonomy, zoogeography, etc. Many zoos were and continue to be organized according to Linnaean taxonomic systems, although the current trend is towards zoogeographical organization, which makes zoos into microcosms of global "natures" and zoo visitors into pseudo-cosmopolitan citizens, a point to which I will return.

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[38] Most scholars look to the post-French Revolution Jardin des Plantes in Paris and the London Zoo (founded in1828) as the "birth" of the modern, scientific zoo.

[39] According to Thomas Veltre's "Menageries, Metaphors, and Meanings," the term "menagerie" is: "commonly thought to be an old French word for 'farmyard,' [but] is actually derived from the French root *ménage*, which means to manage, or management, and the suffix *rie,* which is used to indicate a place, as in *boulangerie* (bakery). In the literal sense, therefore, a menagerie is a place for the management of animals, a word that implies not only containment but, in a sense, domination and control as well." This sense of control is a large part of the distinction between menageries and zoological gardens or zoos. Veltre goes on to say that: "animals in a menagerie have been singled out to be unique representatives of their species. As such, all menagerie animals, from the freakish specimens of a circus menagerie to a royal menagerie's heraldic lions and eagles, evoke an emotional response different from any other encounter humans have with other creatures. A menagerie, whatever its physical form, is primarily concerned with the symbolic role of animals within a culture." Thomas Veltre, "Menageries, Metaphors, and Meanings," in *New Worlds, New Animals*, 19-20.

The major distinction between zoos and menageries has to do with purpose. Menagerie are considered to have no greater, "scientific" aim; they are generally private collections for recreational uses, even though some were frequented and used by scientists for observation and educational purposes. Zoos, on the other hand, are geared towards the public and foreground their scientific purposes in both the study of animals and the pursuit of conservation, in addition to the recreational and educational values they serve. Their explicit aims are about the natural role of animals within an ecosystem.

The move from taxonomy to zoogeography has happened alongside a growing presence of wonder-rhetoric at the zoo. Zoogeography is not just an organizational principle; it is also an aesthetic one. The scientist and zoo director Terry Maple, indeed, writes that the "naturalization" of zoos, the shift to zoogeographical organization, the use of appropriately themed "tribal architecture" to designate different world regions, and the use of "tribal animal stories" all help to "illustrate the wisdom and wonder of animals." Although these elements all help make zoos into more aesthetically-pleasing places, Maple notes that they don't directly tie in to conservation—and for that zoos need "to create new stories, tales that tout conservation" through holding competitions that draw on zoo visitors and the broader local community, as well as through bringing scientific knowledge and programs to zoos.[40]

Although zoos and scholars of zoo history have focused on the distinction between the nineteenth-century zoo and earlier menageries, much of the recent criticism hinges on casting doubt on the "modern" narrative about zoos and their connection to science. Some zoos—the prime example is the Bronx Zoo—have renamed themselves as

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[40] Maple, *Zoo Man*, 59.

Conservation Centers in order to distance themselves from the potentially negative connotations of zoos.[41] Scholars like zoo historian Nigel Rothfels caution contemporary readers and zoo-goers against buying the emphasis on conservation and the distinction between "modern" scientific zoos and earlier menageries and recreational collections:

> ...while they often appeared quite different from the earlier collections, and while they looked quite different, as well, from our most popular collections today, nineteen-century zoos shared one quality with all other collections: more than anything else, and despite the rhetoric about scientific research, education, and, more recently, conservation, all these places have been built for recreation.[42]

Rothfels's argues that zoos' tripartite mission—of science, education, and recreation[43]—is reducible to recreation, and the scientific, conservationist, and educational aspects are after-the-fact justifications that are more or less effective and important to zoos.

Certainly, the primacy of a motto like "More Animals, More Fun," would seem to point to the importance of recreation at institutions like the Cincinnati Zoo. But, scholarship that stops there also fails to take into account the more complicated histories of interactions among the supposedly separable aims of science, conservation, education, and recreation. Zoos are by definition cultural and therefore recreational, but even those

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[41] In some genealogies of animal parks, the "progression" goes from menagerie to nineteenth-century zoological garden to twentieth-century zoo, to late twentieth- and early twenty-first century conservation center. Bill Conway, the former director of the New York Zoological Society, which he renamed the Wildlife Conservation Society, was another major player in the "Wild Revolution," which triggered the transition from "zoo" to conservation center. The shift has not been decisive, as other major figures in the zoo world, among them Terry Maple, remain committed to the word "zoo." Maple notes "The reason that I am comfortable with the word 'zoo' in our name is my belief that 'zoo' is synonymous with 'fun.' Because of this, kids do not fall asleep in our classrooms. Learning will always be fun at Zoo Atlanta." Maple, *Zoo Man*, 159. Maple thus positions the zoo as a form of what some have called "edutainment."

[42] Nigel Rothfels, "Zoos, the Academy, and Captivity" *PMLA* 124, n.2 (2009), 282.

[43] Scholars traditionally speak of a tripartite mission of zoos. However, in recent years zoos and the AZA has delineated five primary aims of zoos: "animal welfare, conservation, education of the public, research, and entertainment." Eduardo J. Fernandez, Michael A. Tamborski, Sarah R. Pickens, and William Timberlake, "Animal–visitor interactions in the modern zoo: Conflicts and interventions," *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 120, n.1 (2009), 1. The AZA's mission statement articulates its five main focus points as: "animal care, wildlife conservation and science, conservation education, the guest experience, and community engagement." Association of Zoos and Aquariums, "Strategic Plan," *Aza.org,* www.aza.org/StrategicPlan/.

recreational aspects can have other aims, motives, and values. Moving through different

U.S. zoos and the multiple histories of zoos around the world, as we will see, makes it

difficult to distinguish the recreational from the scientific and educational.

Although "recreation" and "science" are considered separable "modern"

categories of experience, zoos, I argue, foster "wonder collectives," defined by the zoo,

visitors, animals, and a range of other participants, that participate in recreational,

scientific, and educational outcomes. Through discourses of wonder, zoos constitute

visitors' experiences of animals and their exhibits as affectively valuable sensory

processes that highlight the non-subjective nature of emotional experience. These wonder

collectives depend on zoos' roles as both scientific/natural parks and sites of

extraordinary, recreational spectacles. The organization of zoos zoogeophraphically

further writes visitors into the roles of global, eco-conscious citizens. The convergence of

the "recreational" and the "scientific" is not only crucial to the production of wonder

collectives; it is at the heart of zoos' political mission in an age of environmental crisis.

Although it is important to observe continuities across time in the operations and aims of

menageries, zoological gardens and conservation centers, those continuities can be

defined in a range of ways, including, through affect, collection, and collectivity.

III.   Entering the Park

Today, entering a zoo means paying admission[44] or flashing a membership card

and walking through a turnstile, reminiscent of amusement parks, museums, theaters, and

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[44] The vast majority of zoos in the U.S. today charge admission and are run as non-profit organizations that rely on donations. A few notable exceptions are Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo, the St. Louis Zoo, and the National Zoo, which remain free.

subway systems. A 2010 survey conducted by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) found that on average a zoo visit costs a family of four around $50. Some of the bigger name zoos like Bronx, Zoo Atlanta, Philadelphia, and San Diego command significantly more. [45] Memberships are far more reasonable for repeat visitors—and, in many cases, they are considered tax deductible donations. Even so, the cost of zoos means that they are primarily serving middle and upper class visitors. According to AZA statistics, the majority of visitors are "women/mothers," aged 25-35 with a household income of $50-75,000 per year.[46] Based on my zoo visits, I would add that there is relatively little racial diversity among zoo visitors, even in urban areas; most visitors are white. Zoos' "wonder collectives" are not free—and, as in the case of Cincinnati, they are often located in areas that have been historically most easily accessible to white middle class families. The Detroit Zoo, for example, is in Royal Oak, a suburb of the city, whose median household income is $55,000 and whose population is 90% white.[47]

Zoos do become more broadly accessible through their educational programs and partnerships with schools. The vast majority of U.S. grade school students will visit the zoo at least once before reaching middle school. All AZA-accredited zoos offer special programs to schools with discounted or free admission. The San Diego Zoo, for example, the most expensive zoo in the country, offers free tours to second grade classes in San Diego County—and the tours are available in Spanish as well as English. Zoos also run nature-focused summer programs and camps for kids, which are not free.

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[45] $63, $78, $83, and $166, respectively. See: "Zoo Survey," *U-T San Diego*, 2010, http://web.utsandiego.com/documents/2013/may/20/zoos-ranked-expense/.

[46] Two thirds of adult visitors come with children. See: Association of Zoos and Aquariums, "Visitor Demographics," http://www.aza.org/visitor-demographics/.

[47] "Royal Oak, MI," *City-Data.com*, 2010, http://www.city-data.com/income/income-Royal-Oak-Michigan.html.

In addition to being educational spaces, zoos are part amusement park, part museum, part theater, and part portal to imaginative travel. Since the opening of Disney's Animal Kingdom at Disney World in Florida in 1998, the zoo world has moved towards creating "attractions": from the more traditional carousels to 4D movies and rides. The Columbus Zoo, for example, features a full water park. Many zoos also contain museum-like exhibits that represent scientific research stations, historical displays, practices of veterinary care and conservation work, and memorials to extinct species; others showcase art and poetry. The Cincinnati Zoo has an indoor exhibit on Passenger Pigeons (the last individual of the species, Martha, died there in 1914). The Detroit Zoo has a "Wildlife Interpretive Gallery," displaying the zoo's art collections and rotating guest exhibits. In several zoos around the country—Central Park, Brookfield (Chicago), Audubon (New Orleans), Little Rock (Arkansas), and Jacksonville (Florida)—"The Language of Conservation" has added poetry to zoos to help raise awareness about conservation (see figures 2.1. and 2.2.). Still other zoos, like the Okinawa Zoo and Wonder Museum play up their ties to the history of wonder cabinets and collections of curiosities.
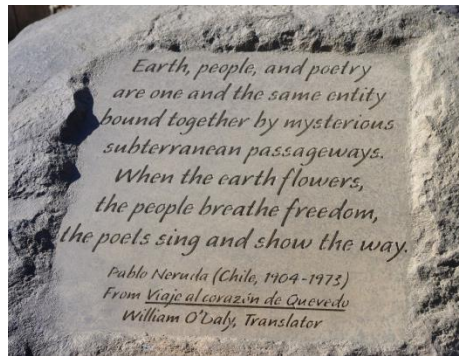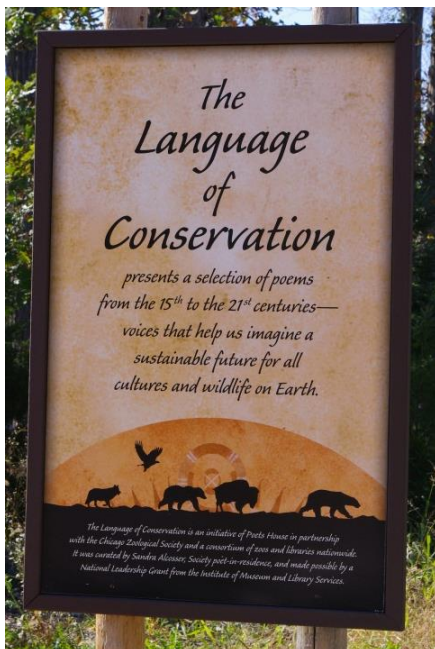
Figure 2.1. Pablo Neruda, Brookfield Zoo, "The Language of Conservation." *Personal photograph*.

Figure 2.2. Brookfield Zoo, "The Language of Conservation." *Personal photograph*.

These exhibits are often complemented by theatrical performances. At a zoo's

entrance one might see—along with maps—a schedule of performances or special events.

Many zoos have bird shows, like Cincinnati's "Wings of Wonder" and Disney's Animal

Kingdom's "Flights of Wonder." Others—the Pittsburgh Zoo, for example—have sea

lion or seal performances. In addition, zoos also often showcase staged animal

"enrichment" activity times or feedings[48] and/or have outdoor theaters where animals and

their keepers perform for visitors. Most zoos also have specific children's zoos or

playgrounds, where kids can interact directly with farm animals and/or pretend to be

animals—become a bee by sitting in a honeycomb play set, or play a duck by sitting in a

cracked egg shell. These are all structures and events that perform the wonderful

differences of animals and seek to allow visitors to feel that difference.

Depending on the season and time of day of a zoo visit, one of the first "exhibits"

one might encounter is a "hands on" pedestrian attraction. During summer months, in

particular, zoo keepers often carry snakes, turtles, and other animals that can safely

interact with the public on pathways by the entrance. These function as "enrichment"

activities for visitors, who can pet the animals and hear more about their histories,

geographies, and so forth. These kinds of activities have become a major focus for zoos,

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[48] "Enrichment" is one of the major buzz words of contemporary zoos since the move towards greater naturalism. It is, in effect, a philosophy aimed at stomping out certain stereotypical animal behaviors that became associated with captivity (incessant pacing, head-bobbing, self-mutilation, and in the case of primates, feces throwing). Enrichment can mean making sure animals have "toys" in their enclosures, for example. In some zoos, enrichment practices can include having different animals and species rotate into a shared an exhibit space, which changes the smells in a way that can keep animals more alert and interested in their surroundings. Croke's discussion of enrichment defines it as "making life more interesting" for zoo animals in a way that increases "psychological space" for animals who have limited physical space. Croke, *The Modern Ark*, 27-28. Importantly, enrichment often breaks down dichotomies between "natural" and "unnatural" through an emphasis on positive stimulation. For instance, a number of elephants in Atlanta paint on canvas with paintbrushes. This is clearly not "natural" behavior, but it provides important enrichment for the elephants. Other enrichment activities are more natural, such as setting up exhibits so that animals forage for food. For more, see Croke, *The Modern Ark*, 21-73.

as they engage visitors directly with animals and zoo keepers and aim to shape the zoo experience in such a way that it is both more interactive and less defined by a dynamic of human subjects staring at animal objects.

Moving past these opening acts, you arrive in the exhibit landscapes. Over the past thirty years, the mapping of zoos has changed radically from being organized taxonomically to being organized zoogeographically. The mapping of zoos through geographic region (Africa, Asia, South America, North America, Australia) is now the dominant organizational principle for contemporary zoos. Few major zoos remain that do not follow this logic of geographic reproduction. Some smaller zoos—like Binder Park—might only have one or two major regions. But of the major urban zoos in the U.S., Detroit is one of the few that is not yet geographically organized, and it will soon be undergoing major renovations to re-map its layout and bring it in line with the now well-established "world in microcosm" ethos. Mapping the zoo through foreign countries makes zoos into imaginative travel portals that function as narrative wonderscapes. Many zoos even have transportation systems—trains, trolleys, buses—that help facilitate the imaginative journey. The "wonder" of zoos is thus organized as a function of travel and mobility, both physical and imaginative. In most cases, the animals at zoos are "from" the zoo and have been born and reared locally in the U.S. Sometimes an animal might be on loan from a near-by zoo for mating purposes. Very occasionally animals do come from abroad.[49] Nonetheless, zoos depend on the trope and narrative structure of travel to frame their landscapes as wonderscapes and to promote the zoo experience as one that is

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[49] Most famously, Chinese panda bears go on loan to zoos around the word in what is known as "Panda diplomacy." China "rents" out pandas for a loan-period of ten years and charges $1,000,000 per year.

extraordinary, potentially wonderful and transformative: making visitors into worldly, eco-conscious citizens.

When embarking on a zoo journey, the first decision a visitor faces is which direction to take. There are usually multiple pathways into zoo exhibits. It might be possible to pass from the zoo entrance to the African Savannah or to the Tropical Rainforest. Many zoos—among them Cincinnati, Columbus, and Albuquerque—have large ponds or lakes that act as roundabouts to direct visitors to the continent of their choosing. The Columbus Zoo's "Conservation Lake," for example, directs visitors to one of five possible lands—"North America" with its "Polar Frontier," "Asia Quest," the "Shores" (which includes an aquarium), "Voyage to Australia and the islands," and the "African Forest."[50] Each one has its own characteristic architecture, signage, and character, replete with sound tracks, themed gift shops, and food stations.

IV.   Habitats, or the Wild Revolution

Barring lines of visitors waiting to pay or collect a map, entering a park does not usually take very long. Past the entrance area, the "main attractions" lie in what are now often called "habitats" or "immersion" exhibits, designed to minimize the objectification of the animals. The vast difference between Binder Park's "Wild Africa" and the rest of its modest zoo highlights the gap between "immersion" exhibits and traditional enclosures: the one is oriented towards creating a complete, narrative experience that places the visitor inside the exhibit as a participant in a particular geographic, "wild" landscape; in the other, visitors move on a path from one animal enclosure to the next in a

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[50] A number of zoos have their own aquariums. Aquariums and zoos both fall under the purview of the AZA.

largely unconnected experience in which the visitor is clearly separated from the exhibit and exhibited animal.[51]

Immersion exhibits have been the trend since the "Wild Revolution" and its shift towards naturalism, which had begun much earlier, in both Europe and the U.S. The movement "beyond the bars" began in the late nineteenth century across the Atlantic, but the "Zoo Revolution" of the 1980s and '90s, following the passage of the Endangered Species Act, was the context in which both science and wonder became much more central to discourses surrounding U.S. zoos.

Vicki Croke notes that "The Wild Revolution" was spurred by economic prosperity that translated into new exhibits aiming to recreate the natural habitats of the animals they housed and immersing visitors in a "wild" they had to walk through in order to see animals.[52] The Seattle Zoo's naturalistic gorilla exhibit, first built in the late 1970s under the direction of the landscape architect turned zoo director, David Hancocks, was a pioneering exhibit that subsequently led Atlanta to build a rain forest, the Bronx to build Jungleworld, and so on. Seattle later opened a Thai logging camp for elephants, followed by a Tropical Rain Forest in the early '90s. The movement took hold across the country in response to more widespread critiques of zoos and a rising public engagement with ecology and conservation. Hancocks, who became one of the movement's forerunners as director of Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo, describes an immersion "revolution," in which

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[51] The massive—and expensive—renovations that these immersion exhibits required were based on a number of studies that suggest that visitors' perceptions of animals are shaped significantly by the animal's environment. The first, most widely influential study to report such findings was Rhoads and Goldsworthy's "The effects of zoo environments on public attitudes toward endangered wildlife," *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 13 (May 1979): 283–87. For a solid review of other such studies, See Fernandez, et al., "Animal-Visitor Interactions."

[52] Some of the most influential early exhibits included Seattle's $9.2 million tropical rain forest, Atlanta's $4.5 million rain forest, Bronx's $9.5 million Jungleworld. Croke, *The Modern Ark*, 73-74.

many zoos, beginning with the Seattle Zoo in the late 1970s, were redesigned into "bioclimatic zones," instead of the traditional taxonomic organizations.[53] This meant reorienting the focus, so that animals were not the only spotlight of exhibits. Representative vegetation producing the feeling of whole ecosystems became important in creating immersion spaces that allowed people to be less separated from exhibits. Instead of walking by them, they walked through them. The "Zoo Revolution" thus altered the ways in which pedestrian visitors view animals and the space in which animals live. Zoos built naturalistic exhibits for animals who had been housed in small, tiled, easy-to-clean, and cramped facilities. These changes transformed walking into more than just the means for arriving at exhibits. It made pedestrian locomotion into a part of the exhibit experience.

The exhibits, in turn, were vastly enlarged—and many new "actants" were involved in making up the exhibit's collective, from the vegetation to obscured pathways to the animals and their enrichment toys and activities. In some of the more successful exhibits like Seattle's Rainforest, as I walked through, I sometimes couldn't see where I was going or where the next stop on the pathway was. This kind of landscape design makes visitors more aware of their own bodies moving through space. Even, in fact, when I had walked through the "jungle" to find an empty exhibit or a sleeping animal, I still had the sense of having gotten somewhere and experienced something as I moved through the trees and foliage.

The first "immersion exhibits," of sorts, date back to the zoo designs of Carl Hagenbeck, the popularly recognized "originator" of modern zoos, who set up the most

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[53] Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 114.

successful global animal trade in history. Although the first organized European zoos

opened in Paris, London, and a few other cities, in the second half of the nineteenth

century, Germany quickly became the country with the most zoos in the world.[54] This

rapid growth was undoubtedly due to Hagenbeck's success and legacy as an animal

trader and zoo designer. The Hagenbeck name is usually synonymous with German zoos

and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century animal trade.[55] By the late 1860s and

early 1870s, the Hagenbecks had built up the biggest animal dealership in the world,

facilitating the zoo movement in Germany through the animal trade and their ability to

bring "exotic" animals from German colonies to Germany and the rest of Europe and

later the United States.

     Hagenbeck's early form of naturalism was not motivated by conservation so

much as by spectacle. Carl Hagenbeck's *Beasts and Men: My Life in the Animal Trade*

(1912) acknowledges that Hagenbeck shipments of animals were often met with "great

excitement….[and] wonder."[56] The animals he seeks on expeditions are "wonderful."[57]

The process of developing successful training methods is called a "real wonder,"[58] and

seals and sea lions perform "wonderful tricks."[59] By the mid twentieth century, the

Hagenbeck name evoked a world of wonder:

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[54] The Berlin Zoo was the first to open its doors (1844). It was situated on the royal hunting grounds and drew from the much older royal menagerie. Next, the Frankfurt Zoo opened in 1858, and it was followed by a slew of zoos in Cologne (1860), Dresden (1861), Hamburg (1863), Hannover (1865), Breslau (1865), and Karlsruhe (1865), Munster (1873), Dusseldorf (1876), Leipzig (1878), Crefeld (1877), Elberfeld (1881), and Aachen (1882). Nyhart, *Modern Nature*, 83.

[55] For an extensive study of Hagenbeck and the Hagenbeck family's influence on the "modern zoo," see zoo historian Nigel Rothfels's *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*.

[56] Carl Hagenbeck, *Beasts and Men: My Life in the Animal Trade* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), PDF e-book, 14.

[57] Ibid., 47.

[58] Ibid., 144.

[59] Ibid., 145.

> When a child of the South of Germany thinks of Hamburg, he paints a picture in his mind of a small town of red-brick buildings directly on the open sea, and encircled on all other sides by a huge and magic kingdom, Hagenbeck. Hagenbeck is not a proper name, but rather, like Alaska or the Wild West, the expression of a mysterious, unexplored land, where one yearns for adventure.[60]

The association between Hagenbeck and a "magic kingdom" was established through Carl Hagenbeck's founding of his Tierpark, the first naturalistic, cage-less zoo.

The Tierpark (Hagenbeck's word that is now the German term for zoo) opened in 1874, and it showcased animals in unprecedented openness. Part of Hagenbeck's success included the "innovation" of displaying animals geographically, alongside native peoples from their regions, beginning with a reindeer exhibit that featured a family of Norwegian Sami performing every-day tasks.[61] This kind of display occurred elsewhere in Europe prior to and during the nineteenth century, and were also later featured in American zoos.[62] Hagenbeck's claim was that his displays showed "the real thing," that is, authentic native people and fauna free of the signs of civilization.[63] The discourse of authenticity, which we also saw operating in Northern Pacific's guidebooks, infused Hagenbeck's most lasting innovation in the zoo world: the naturalistic zoo exhibit. In 1907, when he opened a new Tierpark, the animals roamed freely in naturalistic displays that visitors walked through, separated from the animals by moats. Hagenbeck aimed to show

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[60] Carl Zuckmayer, "Haburg, Hafen, Hagenbeck," *Arche Noah* 1 1949, 3, as quoted in Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, 45.

[61] Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, 82-83.

[62] In 1896, for example, the Cincinnati Zoo invited a hundred Sioux Native Americans to establish a village at the zoo, in order to increase attendance. They lived there for three months. With its strong German ties, Cincinnati became Hagenbeck's American hub. Sol Stephan, who began as an elephant keeper at the zoo and went on to become director, became Hagenbeck's North American agent in 1902. Relatively little has been written about Stephan, though he was a major player in the zoo world. David Ehrlinger's *The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden: From Past to Present* (Cincinnati: The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden, 1993) is currently the best source. For more on the Sioux at the Cincinnati Zoo, see S.L. Meyn, "Who's Who : The 1896 Sicangu Sioux Visit to the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens," *Museum Anthropology* 16:2 (1992), 21–26.

[63] Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, 89.

scientists and the public that tropical animals could acclimate to temperate climates and living outdoors in natural settings would make the animals healthier.[64] Many other zoo professionals ridiculed these ideas, but when Hagenbeck completed his moated exhibits that formed panoramas of "Africa" and the "Arctic," they were such an immediate success that zoos around the world eventually sought to replicate them. These regional displays, in effect, set a standard that was later picked up in the U.S. through the "Wild Revolution."

The cage-less exhibits, which Hagenbeck patented in 1896, were stunning to visitors, because they were the first occasions for most zoo-goers to see animals in a naturalistic setting. The moats separating visitors from animals put some distance between them (more distance than was required for animals in cages), but it also created the illusion of danger through the absence of bars. As Rothfels notes, the Tierpark became sensationalized by the public as the "Seventh Wonder of the World" and "The Zoological Garden of the Future."[65] Here, visitors became wanderers through an orchestrated wilderness that seemed to efface the institutional nature of the zoo by removing its cages and bars. The wonder and amazement visitors experienced in this "new" wilderness were at once deeply pedestrian and extraordinary. The zoo experience now resembled a leisurely stroll through town or the countryside, but this stroll was populated by exotic views, peoples, and animals.

By the early twenty-first century, the "amazement" of seeing animals in an open-air setting is undoubtedly less striking, since bar-less exhibits have become the norm—and many of them, made of cement poured with more or less artistry, are unexceptional.

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[64] Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 64.
[65] Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts*, 172.

Many immersion exhibits are now designed not just to display an animal in a habitat that approximates "wild nature," but also to allow animals to take cover from view, as they might be inclined to do in a more "natural" setting. This design element also means that it is theoretically possible for visitors to go to the zoo and see very few animals. Where is the wonder in that?

V.   Discovery Outpost: Zoos as (Affective) Collectives

Although zoos are generally organized geographically, many zoos have regions named somewhat more generically for travel and discovery. Such is the case for the San Diego Zoo's "Discovery Outpost."[66] The "Outpost" was the first zone of the San Diego Zoo I wandered into, and it holds a variety of animals, including small cats, a porcupine, the insect house, reptiles, turtles, birds, and some monkeys, in addition to the petting zoo. It is, in short, a mish-mash of things, compared to the zoo's other seemingly more coherent zones: "Lost Forest," "Panda Canyon," "Northern Frontier," "Elephant Odyssey," "Africa Rocks," "Outback, or "Urban Jungle."

I happened into the Discovery Outpost, because I was following the suspended "Skyfari" aerial tram, which traverses the zoo from above the tree-line. When I had ascertained that the tram would cost more than I was willing to spend—both financially and in waiting time—I kept walking, right into the Discovery Outpost. In less famous zoos, I might have skipped this section altogether, because it seemed unexceptional, not particularly well themed, and because the San Diego Zoo is huge, and I knew it would

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[66] Another, less poetic, example is Cleveland's "Primate, Cats, and Aquatics" region.

take me at least four hours to see most of it. But, I had paid $79 for a two-day pass to the Zoo and Safari Park in near-by Escondido, and I intended to get the full experience.

Wonder is possible at the zoo, because it is a rarity; in many instances, the animals one sees are sleeping, out of sight, or simply not doing anything. A friend of mine insists that she has never seen a giraffe on the move at a zoo. I have never seen more than a speck of a sleeping snow leopard's coat, despite having visited over thirty zoos in the past three years. Imagine, then, how great it would be for my friend to see a galloping giraffe? Or how much delight I would feel in witnessing a leaping snow leopard? Whereas the wonder experiences and discourses chapter one examined were based on collective narratives and national experiences, at zoos, wonder experiences are often personal, idiosyncratic, and circumstantial: they are about being in a given place at a given time.

People wander into zoos in a number of ways—with or without an agenda. Families frequently go through the gates with children screaming "I want to see the lions" and "I want to see the penguins" as their parents (most often their mothers) scour the map to figure out which way to go. Just as often, however, I have seen individuals and couples wander into the zoo without a map and take off to whatever they might encounter. My own zoo visits have taken both approaches, depending on how much time I have, whether I'm with other people, etc. Either way, zoo experiences are about movement—planned and unplanned—on both the parts of human visitors and the parts of animals and zoo keepers.

In his book *A Different Nature*, David Hancocks bemoans the "clumsy monuments to mediocrity" that many zoos have become.[67] Nonetheless, Hancocks claims that the value of zoos rests in their potential for being "places of wonder" and delight:

> The delight and astonishment of being close enough to hear the soft whiffling of a snow leopard, to watch the shuffling bulk of elephants rolling in a mud wallow, study a weaverbird busily interlacing grasses into his spherical nest, marvel at the crazy mating dance of cranes…. I recall the delight in watching rehabilitated golden eagles soaring back into the skies after months of careful nursing by zookeepers and veterinarians. The surprisingly delicate slow-motion movements of hippos underwater, the deep whirring of a hummingbird's wings, the mesmerizing ballet of jellyfish, the flash of iridescent blue from the wings of a tropical butterfly that sat on my arm—these are personal experiences I would never have enjoyed without visits to the zoo…. These glimpses of evidence that zoos can truly be places of wonder, bridges to paradise, sustain my often sinking opinion and soften my ambivalence.[68]

Implicit in this passage is Hancocks' acknowledgment that "wonder" and "delight" at the zoo have to do with movement—and the sounds, smells, and gestures that animals' movements in their habitats produce: whiffling snow leopards, shuffling, rolling elephants, working weaverbirds, dancing cranes, soaring eagles, swimming hippos, whirring hummingbird wings, dancing jellyfish, and flapping butterflies. The movement Hancocks describes is animal movement, but visitors' movement and stillness—in walking to and through an exhibit, in observing the surroundings—is also part of the experience.

Hancocks frames these instances of animal wonder as a matter of "personal experiences," but these experiences are nonetheless potentially accessible to the broader public. What Hancocks here calls wonder may be akin to what Barbara Hernstein Smith

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[67] Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, xvi.
[68] Ibid., xvi-xvii.

terms "the ontological thrill" of human-animal encounters. In *Scandalous Knowledge*, she

writes that this thrill of encounter is defined by:

> …the sense of a sudden intensification—quickening or thickening—of Being, as experienced, for example, at the sighting of a large bird or animal (hawk, deer, bear, or snake) in the wild. Comparable sensations attend the hunting and, indeed (or especially), the killing of animals, as well as riding them, wearing their skins or consuming them as food, and are also involved in fantasies of coupling with, being or becoming them.[69]

For Hernstein Smith, encountering animals is, in this frame, very much about the thrill of

radical difference that seems to be marked by a rush of adrenalin. For Hancocks, the

wonder of seeing and feeling the proximity of animals is perhaps a little less existentially-

and ontologically-charged. And it is not just about showing up at the zoo. Rather, it is

about discovery, about pedestrian movement, chance, and sometimes persistence. Of the

nine wonder experiences Hancocks names in the passage above, I have experienced five

(elephants, hippos, hummingbirds, jellyfish, and butterfly)—and only two were on the

same zoo visit to the St. Louis Zoo (elephants and hippos). I have also been on zoo visits

in which there is not only little wonder, but little enjoyment. Quasi-boredom, aching feet,

and fatigue are potentially a central to zoo experiences as wonder is, particularly when

one visits zoos frequently.

   Most zoo visitors do not go from zoo to zoo around the country in the way I have

done while conducting research. But the AZA's most recent survey of visitors suggests

that over 3.6 million zoo visitors go to the zoo more than once a year.[70] Although families

that visit the Toledo Zoo may not entirely be aware of the fact that across the country,

geographically-organized exhibits look very similar to one another, when they go to the

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[69] Barbara Hernstein Smith, *Scandalous Knowledge*: *Science, Truth, and the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 157.
[70] AZA, "Visitor Demographics," http://www.aza.org/visitor-demographics/.

Toledo zoo, they do have a familiarity with exhibits. I have only visited a handful of zoos more than once—Bronx, Cincinnati, Seattle, and Detroit—but I have often had the sense of déja vu in a zoo I am visiting for the first time, a sensation, which ultimately makes the occurrence of the unexpected all the more wonderful and memorable if it happens. It is certainly the case that I—like most zoo visitors—have experienced far more boredom or fatigue than wonder at zoos, but the experiences I remember are those of wonder—the grooming Mangabeys at Binder Park, a playfully splashing polar bear in Columbus, waddling, wrestling elephants and swimming hippos in St. Louis, jostling lion cubs in the Bronx, a stubbornly chewing giraffe at Disney's Animal Kingdom.

The San Diego Zoo is known for its size, extensive collection of animals, and its path-breaking Safari Park, but my most memorable experience there happened in the relatively inglorious "Discovery Outpost." The animal who struck me and a small crowd of visitors was a fennec fox (*Vulpes zerda*), the national animal of Algeria, whose species inhabits Northern Africa. Her enclosure at the San Diego Zoo is small and netted. As I was walking by this exhibit, the fox started to prance around, and it soon became clear that her keeper was behind me. The fox wanted attention from him, and he obliged. As soon as he entered the fox's enclosure, Akela rolled over and waited to be stroked. A crowd gathered as the keeper talked about the animal's habitat, history, and personal idiosyncrasies. When the keeper got up to leave, Akela stood to block the exit.

Figure 2.3. Fennec Fox,
San Diego Zoo.
Personal photograph.

This set of interactions alone was worth the price of admission to the zoo. Although the San Diego houses many more exotic and ostensibly more exciting animals (including pandas), these ten or so minutes at the fennec fox exhibit were by far the most wonderful and enjoyable. They brought together simultaneous movement and interactions among the animal, the keeper, and a crowd of visitors, who happened to be there at the moment the fox noticed her keeper. The fox's behavior was especially surprising and pleasurable, because it was a display of a "wild" animal acting in a recognizable way: any visitor would recognize the fox's asking for attention as a marker of a "companion species"-type relationship.[71] This recognition, in turn, highlights some of the ways in which different species are, perhaps, more alike than we might think. To return to this chapter's epigraph and Sedgwick's contention that going to the zoo filled the "vacancy" created by not having a "family pet," witnessing Akela's interaction with her keeper was not just about participating in their intimacy for a moment; it was also about seeing the wonder of inter-species connection, evolution, and biology. In the fox, we recognize our own animal companions and ourselves. I do not mean this as a form of anthropomorphism, so much as a recognition of biological and behavioral interconnection.

This kind of experience lays bare an important and often overlooked discovery: that wonder, delight, enjoyment, even envy of the keeper's proximity to Akela—emotional, affective experiences—are not just "subjective" emotions, but the outcomes of "collectives" made up of many "individuals," movements and forms of life. Bruno Latour

[71] See Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).

describes his notion of the "collective" in *Pandora's Hope* as part of his endeavor to recognize nonhuman entities as "full-fledged actors"[72] and not "objects" in a "subject-object" dichotomy. Latour's notion of "collectives" is thus a paradigm of multispecies entanglement. One of Latour's primary illustrations of "collectives" involves the relationship constituted by "the hybrid actor comprising gun and gunman. We must learn to attribute—redistribute—actions to many more agents.... Agents can be human or (like the gun) nonhuman, and each can have goals (or functions, as engineers prefer to say). Since the word 'agent' in the case of nonhumans is uncommon, a better term... is actant."[73] For Latour, there is "actor-actant symmetry [that] force[s] us to abandon the subject-object dichotomy, a distinction that prevents the understanding of collectives. It is neither people nor guns that kill. Responsibility for action must be shared among the various actants."[74] The implications of this rethinking of action are not about relinquishing human responsibility, but about recognizing the inevitability of constant mediation and production of the "human" by nonhuman—animal, technological, material and immaterial—actants: "Action is simply not a property of humans *but of an association of actants*."[75] In the way that it is neither gunman nor gun that kills, but a collective of both—and other actants and forces—Latour writes that airplanes do not fly, and nor do people. It is the "collective" institution that constitutes an airline that flies.[76]

Latour's project in *Pandora's Hope*, as in *We Have Never Been Modern*, is to critique and lay bare the over-simplifications and fictions of the "modernist settlement

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[72] Bruno Latour, *Pandora's Hope* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 174.
[73] Ibid., 180.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid., 182.
[76] Ibid.

[by which] objects were housed within nature and subjects within society."[77] The notion of "collectives" aims to bring together the binaristic nature/culture or nature/society terms of modernity. Thus, Latour substitutes "the notion of collective—defined as an exchange of human and nonhuman properties inside a corporate body—for the tainted word 'society.'"[78] In short, Latour's major theoretical intervention is the point that "we live in collectives, not in societies."[79] The point, however, is not just to "throw everything into the same pot" and thus collapse all difference into collectives. Rather the point is to rework the terms of analysis to "*avoid using* the subject-object distinction *at all* in order to talk about the folding of humans and nonhumans. What the new picture seeks to capture are the moves by which any given collective *extends* its social fabric to *other* entities."[80]

Latour here seeks to move away from critical theory's notion of the "socially constructed"—a notion that runs rampant in the study of zoos as "socially constructed" forms of nature/animals, opposed to "real" nature or "wild" animals. The notion of "collectives" is one that recognizes the instability and constant provisionality of "the social."[81] As Latour notes:

> Society is not stable enough to inscribe itself in anything. On the contrary, most of the features of what we mean by social order—scale, asymmetry, durability, power, hierarchy, the distribution of roles—are impossible even to define without recruiting socialized nonhumans. Yes, *society is constructed, but not socially constructed*. Humans, for millions of years, have extended their social relations to other actants with which, with whom, they have swapped many properties, and

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[77] Ibid., 193.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., 194.
[81] For more on Latour's rethinking of "the social" in the context of Actor-Network Theory, see Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

with which, with whom, they form collectives that have, in turn, shaped and defined this thing we have called "society."[82]

Zoos are "collectives" in the Latourian sense: as corporate entities constituted by humans, animals, landscapes, technologies, and the other material and immaterial actants that operate within and constitute zoos' institutional spaces. As the fennec fox, her zookeeper, and visitor-onlookers shared a temporal-material set of interactions, other actants were also involved: the fox's exhibit (which is not an immersive habitat), the zoo's paved pathways, the weather, the San Diego zoo's entire institutional apparatus, the fox's personal history, the keeper's personal history, my personal history, all of our goals, and so forth. But, it is not just the zoo that is a collective in the Latourian sense. Indeed, the seemingly very "subjective" affective experience of wonder, delight, and pleasure I experienced at Akela's exhibit and the other emotional experiences the zoo fosters—both positive and negative—are themselves collectives.

Most of the major studies of zoos and zoo animals begin from the assumption that zoos are "socially constructed"—and in some cases that zoo animals are, therefore, merely representations of animals.[83] Underlying these critiques is a binaristic nature/culture opposition that seeks a purity of categories and makes it impossible to even think the possibility of nonhuman action. But zoos are increasingly representative of the

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[82] Latour, *Pandora's Hope,* 197-8. Latour's point here has been pursued in the context of Animal Studies as well in the context of the work of people like Donna Haraway. Haraway's work on dogs and companion species, in particular, serves to highlight the ways in which humans and dogs essentially form a "collective"—as companion species. Haraway's work further aims to complicate the traditional notion of "domestication," which attributes primary agency to humans in the companion species relationship, in tracing a history of canines initiating contact with humans. See Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto.*

[83] See, especially, Malamud, *Reading Zoos.*

forms "nature" takes in an era of global ecological management.[84] Conventional

treatments of zoos approach them as emblems of human "dominion" over animals.

Animals are in cages, rolling over for humans, completely dependent on humans, etc. It is

easy to see that image and story in zoos—but only if one is not also paying attention to

everything else going on: "There are always more things going on than you thought."[85]

The critical efforts to examine zoos as "socially constructed" fails to see the complex

ways in which zoos are constituted not just by humans but by equally important non-

human actants without whom zoos could not exist. If zoo animals were merely

"representations" of animals—like those we see in movies and photographs—no one

would go to the zoo. People go to the zoo to experience animals first-hand and participate

in the affective collectives they open up to us.

The collectivity of wonder and of affect more broadly is not the same as

attributing affect to Akela or animals. It is, however, close to Teresa Brennan's notion of

"the transmission of affect": "The 'atmosphere' or the environment literally gets into the

individual. Physically and biologically, something is present that was not there before,

but it did not originate sui generis."[86] Brennan's project theorizes "socially induced

affect" primarily in human-centered contexts like walking into a room and "feeling the

atmosphere." Her work critiques the notion of a self-contained "subject" in ways that

overlap with Latour's work: "There is no secure distinction between 'the individual' and

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[84] As Croke and many others have noted, the "wilderness" exists only in "fractured and fragmented pockets" that are closely managed: "The wild world is becoming a series of megazoos." Croke, *The Modern Ark*, 241.

[85] Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 335.

[86] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1.

'the environment.'"[87] She gets the notion of "transmission" from epidemiology, but aims to use it to bring together a social process that has biological effect.[88]

Zoos are spaces in which affects of all kinds are transmitted—and visitors may feel that the animals they see are transmitting affects to them. The transformations of the "Wild Revolution," indeed, are based on research that suggests that unhappy zoo animals (who display stereotypical, often self-mutilating behaviors) make for unhappy zoo visitors. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what an animal feels, but anyone who lives with domesticated animals knows how to "read" certain kinds of behaviors as "positive" or "negative," and those behaviors affect the other animals/people around them. Nonetheless, the notion of transmission may not be entirely appropriate for thinking through the ways in which affects emerge between humans and nonhumans, particularly when animals are brought into the room, so to speak. The presence of animals participates in the blossoming of affect, but in the case of zoos, Brennan's terms might be adapted to a notion of emergence or assemblage, rather than transmission. Affects emerge in interactions or are assembled among actant-participants, some of whom may not "feel" them.

V.   The Great Bear Wilderness, or Nostalgic Wonder

Walking into a room and "feeling" the atmosphere is not terribly different from walking into an exhibit and feeling its affective structures—intended and incidental.

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[87] Ibid., 6.

[88] Brennan, in fact, discusses the role of negative affects as being a "partial root of...the new diagnostic disorders: attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), and the disease of painful muscles, fibromyalgia (FMS)." *The Transmission of Affect*, 45. For Brennan, it is inevitable that the growth of "the force of the negative affects—the hate, envy, and aggression that inform violence" have biological effects. *The Transmission of Affect*, 46.

Relatively few zoos represent the "American" landscape in their microcosmic geographies,[89] but as we leave the Discovery Outpost, our journey heads north to perhaps the most pedestrian of pedestrian landscapes: a "North American" habitat. In walking into such a habitat, one might expect to feel a collection of atmospheric affects: patriotism, majesty, reverence—and these are all present. But the most overwhelming affect in North American-themed exhibits is a nostalgia-inflected wonder that draws on the "frontier" imagery and mythologies discussed in chapter one.

Among the most successful of these American landscapes are the Columbus Zoo's "North America" exhibit, which showcases the "the wild wonders of the wetlands, prairies and forests found in the wilderness,"[90] and the Brookfield Zoo's newest and most substantial "naturalistic" exhibit, "The Great Bear Wilderness," which "showcase[s] iconic North American animals: Grizzly Bears, Polar Bears, Bison, Eagles, and Mexican Gray Wolves.... [and] their cultural significance."[91] Although there are overlaps between these exhibits, I focus on "The Great Bear Wilderness," because it is the newest and most elaborate of the North American exhibits. The animals visitors encounter in many other habitats are "foreign," exotic, and sometimes unfamiliar, but the animals and scenes from North American exhibits are animals that many zoo visitors have grown up with as national symbols, characters in songs, books, and so forth. They conjure cultural mythologies that permeate American culture. Walking through an immersion exhibit

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[89] One of the major critiques of zoos is, indeed, that they perpetuate the notion of a "distant" wilderness without focusing on local environmental resources and cultivating concern for regionally-appropriate ecosystems. The one major notable exception is the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson, which focuses exclusively on local flora and fauna.

[90] Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, "North America," www.colszoo.org/explore_your_zoo/zoo_regions/north_america.aspx.

[91] Chicago Zoological Society, "Great Bear Wilderness," www.czs.org/CZS/Brookfield/Exhibit-and-Animal-Guide/Great-Bear-Wilderness.

populated by these animals positions visitors in an idyllic version of American nature in which people and animals walk side-by-side. This ideal draws from wonderful, nostalgic images, which stand as visions of potential futures should the zoo's conservation projects succeed.

Brookfield's "The Great Bear Wilderness" has two possible entrances (Figures 2.4. and 2.5.), the "main" entrance that sends you through a tunnel and a "trail" entrance through a portal-like pathway. Both entrances reference a nostalgic frontier-era America, the one with its mural of a herd of buffalo that surrounds you as you walk through the tunnel, as if to recreate a nineteenth-century experience of a prairie, and the other with its faux-log structure and Native American-inspired artistic design. This exhibit is the only one at Brookfield that participates in "The Language of Conservation" poetry project mentioned earlier. Walking through the "Wilderness Trail," thus becomes a poetic pedestrian experience, inflected by Native American folklore, ancient historical sayings, and select lines from contemporary poets like Pablo Neruda, Mary Oliver, and Gary Snyder.

Figure 2.4. "Great Bear Wilderness,"
Entrance 1, Brookfield Zoo.
Personal Photograph.

Figure 2.5. "Great Bear Wilderness,"
Entrance 2, Brookfield Zoo.
Personal Photograph.

If you come through the main tunnel entrance (Figure 2.4.), even before you walk through the tunnel, the bison exhibit appears on a hill. One of the first signs marking the exhibit explains the bison's role in "Shaping the American Past." Another sign cites the bison's role in "showing" surveyors a transcontinental path that railroads could follow. Quoting Martin S. Garreston of the American Bison Society, the sign notes that "The Union Pacific follows Bison trails practically all the way from Omaha into the Rockies."[92] The bison emerge as wonderful sources of information and leaders for human technological achievement and progress.

The next sign highlights the bison's status as symbols of cultural heritage by invoking the opening lines of "Home on the Range"—"Oh, give me a home, where the buffalo roam..."—a song first penned in 1870s in Kansas and later adopted by settlers moving west. The sign at once nostalgically appeals to a mid-nineteenth-century era of "roaming" bison and then notes that "The Great Plains changed when bison disappeared—and not for the better." A series of other boards showcase the on-going conservation efforts aimed at creating open ranges for large herds of buffalo. These also inform visitors that they can help by buying prairie-fed free-range bison, a potentially counter-intuitive correlation that highlights the ways in which human demand for meat is connected to the possibility of sustainable and profitable conservation efforts.[93]

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[92] The American Bison Society was originally founded at the Bronx Zoo under the leadership of William Hornaday. It worked towards some of the earliest breeding programs that reintroduced Bison to the Great Plains in the early twentieth century. The Society disbanded in 1935, but it was revived by the Wildlife Conservation Society in 2005. Wildlife Conservation Society, "The American Bison Society," www.wcs.org/saving-wildlife/hoofed-mammals/bison/the-american-bison-society.aspx.

[93] Donna Haraway has made this claim more controversially, opposing veganism as an "exterminist" position that because of market capitalism and the structures of agri-business discourages biodiversity in animals raised for consumption. See Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 285-301.

The main entrance to "Great Bear Wilderness" thus emphasizes a historic

yearning for the symbolism and cultural import of the bison, who are framed as crucial to

the American technological advancements that fulfilled Manifest Destiny's aim to create

a transcontinental nation, while also claiming the bison's importance in restoring the

Great Plains as an ecosystem and maintaining a sustainable "America." Bison emerge as

"wonders" of the past and potential wonders of the future. In *The Future of Nostalgia*,

Svetlana Boym treats nostalgia as "off-modern" because it is an affect that rebels "against

the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress."[94] Nostalgia's off-modernity

"confuses our sense of direction.... Off-modernism offered a critique of both the modern

fascination with newness and no less modern reinvention of tradition."[95] As institutions,

zoos also participate in forms of "off-modern" affect and trajectories, as defined by

Boym. Zoos have often been treated as quintessentially "modern" institutions, but

increasingly, their simultaneous appeals to nostalgic devices in framing future-oriented

conservation projects situate them as off-modern spaces.[96]

If the bison exhibit locates itself in both the past and the future, what is the

present? Boym does not talk about living animals, but she does talk about dinosaurs and

what she calls the "Jurassic Park syndrome": the use of the most advanced scientific

practices "for the recovery of the prehistoric world."[97] The dinosaur, Boym notes, is fair

game for multifaceted representations, because "Nobody will be offended by improper

portrayal of the dinosaur, not even animal rights activists.... The dinosaur is America's

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[94] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xv-xvi.
[95] Ibid., xvii.
[96] For more recent scholarship on nostalgia in literature and urban planning, see Tammy Clewell, ed., *Modernism and Nostalgia: Bodies, Locations, Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013) and Wim Denslagen, *Romantic Modernism: Nostalgia in the World of Conservation*, trans. Donald Gardner (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).
[97] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia,* 33.

unicorn, the mythical animal of Nature's Nation."[98] The vast majority of zoos have

exhibits or full "lands" about dinosaurs. Bison came close to extinction, but dinosaurs

became extinct. As a result, they provide an even clearer source of nostalgic wonder. For

Boym, dinosaurs' consistent presence in American culture is about the persistence of

"scientific fairy tales."[99] The coupling of past and future in the conservation aims of the

bison exhibit also participates in a form of scientific fairy tale—one that uses the past as

its image for a "happy ending."

Nostalgic futurism defines the wonder collective framed by this entrance/exit to

the exhibit that opens or closes visitors' experiences of American animals and

landscapes. The Wilderness Trail entrance on the other end of the "Great Bear

Wilderness" exhibit, however, conjures a more symbolic animal: the bald eagle. The

exhibit frames it as "a symbol for all" of "freedom, strength, and courage," and as an

exemplary conservation "success story." In addition, the exhibit stresses the bird's status

as a heritage animal: "As a spiritual messenger or symbol of the sun, bald eagles play

crucial roles in many Native American cultures. Their feathers are often used in healing

rituals and other ceremonies." This native framing extends to the common raven, who is

considered in Native American mythology to be a "resourceful trickster."

Each animal exhibit in "Great Bear Wilderness" contains references to Native

American cultural practices and names, as well as to animals' position as spiritual beings.

As the pathway moves toward the wolf exhibit, the signposted poetic sayings emphasize

a spiritual experience of the wonders of wilderness. The ostensible native status of the

Bald Eagle and raven become inflected with a nationalist spirituality. Maria Melendez is

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

quoted saying: "a wolf's spirit never disappears from the forest." The statement is both a romantic notion that the animal lives on and that the past itself sustains the present. By the time the trail reaches the Grizzly Bears, the exhibit signposts make clear that conservation efforts are explicitly nostalgic and, in fact, modeled on the past. Quoting a conservationist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Grizzly Bear exhibit announces: "What we're trying to do is reconnect the multiple blocks of public land in the northern Rockies so that multiple species can cross the landscape as they did before Europeans came to North America." Conservation here becomes about turning back the clock and recreating a landscape that pre-existed not only "us" in the twenty-first century, but the process of colonization in the Americas. This claim is accompanied by haunting words from contemporary Maine poet, Gary Lawless's *First Sight of Land*: "

> Treat each bear as the last bear
> Each wolf as the last, each caribou.
> Each track as the last track,
> Gone spoor. Gone scat.
> There are no more deertrails,
> no flyways.
> Treat each animal as sacred,
> Each minute our last.
> Ghost hooves. Ghost sculls.
> Death rattles and
> dry bones.
> Each bear walking alone
> In warm night air.

In very different registers, Lawless and the conservationist attest to the persistence of the connection among nostalgia, wonder, and a concern for wildlife. Conservation's goal is described as a return to an era that preceded human domination of the American landscape, an era nostalgically and romantically associated with Native Americans and a wondrous wildlife that was attributed spiritual and sometimes super-human powers.

Wonder-discourse itself is absent, but the terrain of nostalgia and national fantasy invoke the "structures of feeling"[100] and histories (of exploration, of pioneers and transcontinental travel, and of pre-European Native America) we have seen to be associated with wonder.

Nostalgia, according to Boym, comes in two "kinds": "restorative" and "reflective." Neither is an "absolute type"; rather, they are "tendencies, ways of giving shape and meaning to longing. Restorative nostalgia puts emphasis on *nostos* and proposes to rebuild the lost home and patch up the memory gaps. Reflective nostalgia dwells in *algia,* in longing and loss, the imperfect process of remembering."[101] Boym discusses these forms of nostalgia in the context of national experience, and for her, "restorative" forms of nostalgia are about collective pasts and futures, whereas "reflective" forms are "more about individual and cultural memory."[102] The nostalgia of zoo experience through conservation is firmly a "restorative" project, though it is not at times—as with dinosaur displays and other memorials to extinct species—without its "reflective" moments. On the whole, those "reflective" instances are in the service of a broader "restorative" project. Regardless of the form, however, Boym notes that "nostalgia remains an intermediary between collective and individual memory."[103] In the zoo, this dynamic is particularly important, as a zoo visitor's present experience of animals who embody a particular past is always already framed nostalgically in order to instill a desire to ensure that that visitor's present experience will be reproducible for

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[100] Williams, *Marxism and Literature*.
[101] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.
[102] Ibid., 49.
[103] Ibid., 54.

future generations. The individual nostalgic experience thus becomes about the

reproduction or perpetuation of collective wonder practices and wonder collectives.

VI.   Before Brookfield: Bison, the Bronx, and Technologies of Wonder

The Brookfield Zoo's "American" exhibit is a particularly well-crafted version of

a conservation project grounded in the wonder of nostalgia. The Columbus Zoo also has a

successful "North America" habitat, and the Bronx Zoo has its historic "Bison Range,"

which is not the oldest Bison exhibit in the country, but perhaps the most important to the

history of U.S. zoos. As you walk through the Bison Range at the Bronx, you walk by

several historical panels that describe the history of that particular exhibit and of exhibits

of American animals more broadly. These panels and popular histories of zoos in the

U.S. trace their origins to the founding of the National Zoo and an exhibit of bison at the

Bronx Zoo in the early twentieth century—both of which are tied to one of the major

historical figures of U.S. Zoo history, the first director of the Bronx Zoo, William

Hornaday. Hornaday is considered to be the initiator of "conservation-oriented" projects

in zoos. He first helped found the National Zoo in 1889 and went on to lead the Bronx

Zoo, when it was founded in 1899.

He had been a young taxidermist when he was hired by the Smithsonian

Institution in 1882. Not long after he began working at the Smithsonian, he:

> began planning a diorama of large native animals and in 1886 set off on an
> expedition to the West in search of bison…. The expedition spent five hard
> months to obtain just twenty-five bison, on plains where fewer than ten years
> earlier countless millions of bison, reputedly the most numerous quadruped the
> world had ever seen, roamed as they had for hundreds of thousands of years.[104]

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[104] Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 91.

Hornaday notes that the 1878 opening of the Northern Pacific railroad contributed to the

mass slaughter of the bison, but their extermination was evident long before, as even

George Catlin feared it in 1830s. Upon his return, Hornaday published a book-length

study, *The Extermination of the American Bison* (1889), which I briefly discussed in

chapter one, and proposed a plan to create a refuge for the quickly vanishing species.[105]

Hornaday's account of the disappearance of the bison aimed to convince people

of the need for conservation,[106] and it led to the founding of the National Zoo. While this

step towards the movement of conservation and towards making zoos more conservation-

focused is often celebrated, the conservation impulse in this case emerged more from a

sense of nostalgia and national pride than from an ecological argument. As I discuss in

chapter one, wonder-discourse was a major framework for American "wilderness," and it

became increasingly so as that wilderness became more densely inhabited and

industrialized. Even before railroads like Northern Pacific traversed the country, George

Catlin, as I described, envisioned a nostalgically-inflected "nation's park" to preserve

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[105] Prior to Hornaday's account, zoos like Cincinnati had displayed bison, but seemed indifferent to their disappearance. The 1876 Cincinnati guidebook, for example, notes that: "Since the arrival of the white men, the Bison with the Indians are retreating to the West to an unstoppable destruction. There have been several attempts to tame and domesticate these animals used for their fur and meat, and they have been somewhat successful in some cases, but… [it is] not profitable. If the domestic cattle weren't available, it might be a different story…. The number of Old World cattle is by now larger than that of the Bison, just as the number of white people is larger than the native Indians." This is the bulk of the guidebook's entry on the bison. Hence although zoos were "scientific" institutions, that science was expressed as objective study that sought to represent what was, and not interfere in it, even if that meant the extermination of a major American species. Zoological Society of Cincinnati, *Guide Through the Zoological Garden in Cincinnati*, trans. Unknown (Cincinnati: James Barclay, 1876), MS, 69.

[106] Although history has been kind in its portrayal of Hornaday, he, in fact, had very little regard or respect for the animals he sought to preserve. For example, in a section of his book entitled "Mental Capacity and Disposition," as I mentioned in chapter one, Hornaday explains that the bison are "of a rather low order of intelligence," one of the reasons for which they face extinction: "He [the bison] was provokingly slow in comprehending the existence and nature of the dangers that threatened his life, and, like the stupid brute that he was, would very often stand quietly and see two or three score, or even a hundred, of his relatives and companions shot down before his eyes, with no other feeling than one of stupid wonder and curiosity." Hornaday, *The Extermination of the Bison*, 429-30. As I noted in Chapter 1, wonder is attributed to the bison as an unsophisticated emotion that marks the animals' stupidity.

both bison and native people. Nearly fifty years later, Hornaday envisioned a more

contained diorama of live animals, which would become a zoo exhibit and impetus for

the preservation of an animal who forms the basis of American frontier mythologies.

Hornaday's goals, however, took over a decade to come to fruition. After a year,

Hornaday left the National Zoo, frustrated at the lack of political support the zoo was

getting.[107] He was hired almost immediately by the newly formed New York Zoological

Society to become director and design coordinator for the zoo that opened in 1899. When

it opened, the 264-acre Bronx Zoo was the largest zoo ever attempted.[108] There,

Hornaday implemented the first program for captive breeding of the bison, with the aims

of re-introducing them to the Great Plains. It was and remains one of the most successful

captive breeding programs in the world, and became the model for the "species survival

plan" of the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums.[109]

Hornaday's intervention in the history of American zoos defined the zoo as a

remediation for—or restoration of—the hunting practices that were decimating American

wild animal populations.[110] His influence and relative fame as director of the Bronx Zoo

emerged in a context of a slowly growing concern for American wildlife. Hornaday was

active in a broad range of conservation projects—including the movement against the

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[107] Hancocks, *A Different Nature*, 95.

[108] Ibid., 97-8.

[109] As the Bronx Zoo's website notes, "In 1907, 15 Bronx Zoo bison boarded railway cars and wagon trains headed for Oklahoma's Wichita Mountain Preserve. These early pioneers were charged with an historic mission: to help the American bison recover on the Western Plains. The founders of WCS created the American Bison Society (ABS) to restore this national icon, and they did: today, 20,000 wild bison roam the Western Plains. The herds of Yellowstone and other national parks still share a family tree with those at the Bronx and Queens Zoos." Bronx Zoo, "Bison," http://www.bronxzoo.com/animals-and-exhibits/animals/mammals/bison.aspx.

[110] Thomas Dunlap, *Saving America's Wildlife* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 6. For more on the history of conservation and hunting, see John Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2001) and Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth Century America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

women's fashion of decorating hats with birds and bird feathers.[111] He was part of the movement that blamed immigrants for the decimation of bird populations, and was one of the leading voices, indeed, to blame immigrants, Native Americans, and African Americans for wasteful hunting practices, even when the major culprits for the disappearance of wildlife were excessive commercial hunting, habitat loss, and, in the case of the bison, an exterminist ideology aimed at Native Americans.[112] In his book *Our Vanishing Wildlife*, Hornaday writes, "Let every state and province in America look out sharply for the bird-killing foreigner; for sooner or later, he will surely attack your wildlife. The Italians are spreading, spreading, spreading. If you are without them to-day, to-morrow they will be around you."[113] Nonetheless, in *The Extermination of the American Bison*, Hornaday identifies the "descent of civilization" as the main cause for the extermination of the bison. Secondary causes include greed, the absence of protective measures, the preference for female meat, modern gun technology, and the stupidity of the animals.[114]

Hornaday frames the animals as quintessentially American and worth preserving, because they capture the American spirit. They happen to have great economic value, as well, and they are a unique species, a "true bison," not merely a buffalo, as popularly assumed.[115] Although the bison faced no "foreign" threat against which they needed to be

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[111] For more on this, see Frank Graham, *The Audubon Ark* (New York: Knopf, 1990).

[112] Warren, *The Hunter's Game*, 26.

[113] William Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), 102.

[114] Hornaday, *The Extermination of the Bison,* 464-5.

[115] Ibid. Hornaday's distinction here has scientific basis. As the Brookfield Zoo notes website notes, "While true buffalo are the Cape buffalo of Africa or the water buffalo of Asia, the American Bison has been called "Buffalo" for so long that we now use the names interchangeably. The bison's only relative are remnants of another bison species called the wisent, which survive in small numbers on reserves in Europe." Chicago Zoological Society, "American Bison," http://www.czs.org/CZS/Brookfield/Exhibit-and-Animal-Guide/Great-Bear-Wilderness/American-Bison.

protected, Hornaday considers the bison to be an emblem of America itself, and their disappearance seems to threaten the very fibers of the nation.

Hornaday's promotion of naturalist displays thus emerged out of a different set of motives from those of the animal trader, Carl Hagenbeck's; indeed, Hornaday opposed Hagenbeck's ideas for exhibiting animals. In 1904, Hagenbeck created one of his hallmark panoramas for the St. Louis World's Fair, and it impressed many American zoo directors. Hornaday believed, however, that the panoramas created too much distance between zoo-goers and animals, and this distance compromised the zoo's educational value.[116] Another of Hornaday's objections arose out of the space necessary for Hagenbeck's expansive exhibits. In Hornaday's opinion, larger exhibits would have to mean fewer animals, even though Hagenbeck's exhibits were among the first to place several species in the same enclosure.[117]

Despite Hornaday's objections, many American zoos did implement Hagenbeck's ideas in a drive to create more naturalistic environments for their animals. The movement towards greater naturalism was, however, one that Hornaday favored. He developed a naturalistic exhibit for the bison at the Bronx Zoo, in an attempt to re-create an American landscape. For Hornaday, as a former taxidermist, the display was about creating a particular image of America. Indeed, in designing his first bison exhibit, he invited artists, not scientists to help; when the exhibit opened at the Bronx Zoo, all the bison developed intestinal disease and died, because Hornaday had not thought to ensure that Bronx vegetation would be adequate for the bison. Because of his attention to

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[116] Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 142-3.
[117] It is difficult at this point in history not to read Hornaday's objections to Hagenbeck's designs as mere xenophobic anti-German sentiment, especially in the years leading up to and following World War I.

acclimatization, Hagenbeck's designs were far more attuned to the needs of the animals (though that is not necessarily true of all his emulators). In the end, Hornaday's model of naturalism did not differ significantly from Hagenbeck's. It simply took as a model for that naturalism a nostalgic American landscape that helped frame American zoos in nostalgic, nativist terms.

In his account of the Cincinnati zoo, Ehrlinger notes that the foundings of the National Zoo and the Bronx Zoo ushered in a "general mood of patriotic nationalism" in animal keeping. In Cincinnati, in the early twentieth century, that meant claiming the grizzly bear as the "King of Beasts" instead of the lion, since the grizzly bear is American.[118] These nationalistic reframings also inspired attempts to make whole exhibits more "American." By the early twentieth century, zoos that followed both Hagenbeck and Hornaday began re-creating particular American natural landscapes that elicited national pride as backdrops for their exhibits, building on the wonder-discourse that had already long surrounded the national parks. Unlike current-day zoogeographical exhibits that seek to place animals in re-creations of their "native" habitats, as Hanson notes, "These natural settings bore no relation to the habitat of the animals eventually displayed in them. But they conformed to American pride in natural wonders, and an interpretation of the meaning of the zoo as a local achievement."[119] This nationalist trend in zoo design, as well as common cages, form the backdrop against which contemporary "naturalist" zoogeographical designs have emerged.

In 1912, the Denver Zoo began building moated exhibits after the Hagenbeck model. The backdrop for the exhibits was planned as a reproduction of the Colorado

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[118] Ehrlinger, *the Cincinnati Zoo*, 32.
[119] Hanson, *Animal Attractions,* 144.

Rockies.[120] In 1919, the St. Louis Zoo followed that lead, but instead of using the Rocky

Mountains as a backdrop, it re-created a section of limestone palisades along the

Mississippi River.[121] Finding these natural wonders to be a success, the zoo continued to

build new exhibits in the 1920s, replicating a site near Graniteville, Missouri. A 1922

book of *Official Illustrations of the St. Louis Zoological Park* notes that the new displays

would better draw out the features of the animals within them; "Furthermore…the

duplication of the granite…will further the scientific interest of the wonders found in our

own state. Thus the cat tribe will be located in naturalistic surroundings and when housed

in their new homes, they will no longer be pitied for their imprisonment, but will be

admired by the public in their natural environment."[122] The reproduction of scenic

wonders in this way aimed not only to recreate monuments of local pride, but also to

push back against potential critics of zoos.

Placing animals in natural wonders enhanced the beauty of the animals, turning

them into wonders, too. Because Americans felt as though they did not have long-

standing cultural monuments and achievements to point to, Hanson notes that they looked

for monuments in nature on both the national and local scales. Zoos, in turn, sought to

create displays that "symbolized on a local scale what monuments like the Yosemite

Valley stood for on a national scale. Meticulous copies of local natural wonders in zoos

heightened the appeal of zoos as tourist attractions."[123] Hornaday used his opposition to

Hagenbeck as a means of promoting a specific American agenda, even when that agenda,

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[120] Ibid., 145.
[121] Ibid., 149.
[122] Henry C. Muskopf, *Official Illustrations of the St. Louis Zoological Park* (St Louis: Zoological Society of St. Louis, 1922), 41.
[123] Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 144.

in fact, followed many Hagenbeck principles. Hornaday's influence turned zoos into institutions with both regional and national allegiances that came through in their displays. That is, perhaps, one of the reasons for which there are relatively few North America-themed exhibits in zoos today, as compared to Asian and African-themed displays. "North America" is not an exoticized, distant and "untouched" nature that elicits wonder and nostalgia for the past and defines an off-modern futurity.

That off-modernity nonetheless depends on the technological sophistication required to reproduce nature's wonders and to recreate "wilderness" as it was supposed to have been. In *American Technological Sublime*, David Nye argues that in American culture, the experience of the sublime moves "from awed contemplation of natural scenery to the rapt enthusiasm for technological display."[124] Hanson remarks that through the advent of naturalism in zoos, "The technical skill and the faithfulness to reality with which the illusions were constructed heightened the awe and amazement of viewing wild animals not confined by bars."[125] Michael Nichols' introduction to *Keepers of the Kingdom*, indeed, notes that "The extraordinary technological achievement that zookeeping today represents is one of its least understood, and therefore unheralded, accomplishments."[126] Zoos are not often considered to be technological spaces, since they are ostensibly nature parks, but their exhibits are technologies of wonder.

Exhibits like "Great Bear Wilderness" at Brookfield are still invoking this awe of viewing animals in naturalistic environments in creating themed environments that aim to recreate an American past through narrative and aesthetic devices. In Brookfield, as

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[124] David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 27.
[125] Hanson, *Animal Attractions*, 152.
[126] Michael Nichols, *Keepers of the Kingdom: The New American Zoo* (New York: Thomasson-Grant & Lickle, 1996), 12.

elsewhere, although the North American exhibits do have patriotic resonances, they are far more concerned with scientific accuracy in representing the land and the animals and working towards a restoration of a pre-American past. The causes of conservation and habitat restoration have supplanted the centrality of the nation in zoo design and mission, and many zoo exhibits are now more interested in promoting a kind of global cosmopolitan citizenry, rather than a nationalist one. When conservation becomes tied to nostalgic wonder, zoos are tied to the futurity and persistence of the nation, but the nation is also tied to global environmental concerns. Eating bison meat, for example, is about the restoration of the Great Plains in the U.S. and Canada, which is about maintaining a national mythology, as well as promoting the survival of not just an entire species, but trans-national ecosystems.

While these aims ostensibly support remediating historically violent practices, in promoting a fantasy of "returning" to an ecological state that facilitates animal migration as it once was before Europeans arrived in North America, they also gloss over the real and irreversible costs of the ideology of Manifest Destiny that wiped out bison and native populations in the first place. Zoos are not Native American reservations—nor would we want them to be—but these exhibits lay bare the ways in which discourses of "restoration" and repatriation are more readily adopted in contexts of "nature" or "wilderness" conservation than they are in the politics of Native American land-use and ownership. A patriotic, wonderful and nostalgic brand of natural conservation becomes a form of historical amnesia, facilitated by the cooptation of Native American spirituality and symbologies, which make nature conservation seem unambiguously both eco-conscious and politically progressive.

VII. Paver Pathway: the Delight of Mnemonic Wonders

Leaving "The Great Bear Wilderness" at Brookfield, I felt saturated by the perhaps over-written quality of the exhibit space. There was a lot of writing to walk through—on boards, on sidewalks, etc. The animals seemed over-narrated by signage that was hard to ignore. Confronted with the choice between moving on to "Africa" and returning to the central pathway, I chose the pathway for a break. In many zoos, as one moves from one exhibit/immersion zone to the next, there are open landscaped areas with few animal exhibits. Instead, there might be picnic tables or monuments. At Brookfield there were such spaces, and I sat at a picnic table to take notes and refuge in a less scripted space. At both the Seattle and San Diego zoos, during these kinds of in-between moments, I found myself sitting at a picnic table near some ducklings scavenging for food. These animals were not on exhibit, but they provided a counterpoint to the symbolism of the bison and bears. I watched them with delight and pleasure, feeling a light playfulness about them. Even breaks from the exhibits offer additional affective collectives and experiences.

The Detroit Zoo has one of the most extensive open areas of any of the zoos I have visited. The "Paver Pathway" is an extended walking path surrounded by green spaces that connect the two major exhibit zones of the zoo. It acts as an interlude between some of the smaller animals on exhibit near the entrance—butterflies, river otter, amphibians—and the larger, more popular tigers, gorillas, giraffes, lions, rhinos, and so forth. At different seasons, the pathway is decorated for the holidays. For example,

leading up to Halloween and the zoo's popular "Boo at the Zoo" event, the pathway

features beautifully sculpted pumpkins.

The pathway gives visitors occasion to ponder what they have seen as they

wander into what lies ahead at a leisurely pace. Since most zoo visits last approximately

four hours, such "pauses" are integral parts of the zoo experience. In Detroit, the pathway

has little signage, but it is one of the only spots at the zoo that features the park's award-

winning advertising campaign: "Vitamin Z," which has gained international attention as

the 2012 winner of the prestigious "Brass Ring Award for Marketing Excellence" given

by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.[127] The campaign's

posters line the "Paver Pathway" and are obviously aimed at parents. They play on the

essentials of good health; one of the ads, notes: "There are certain elements essential to
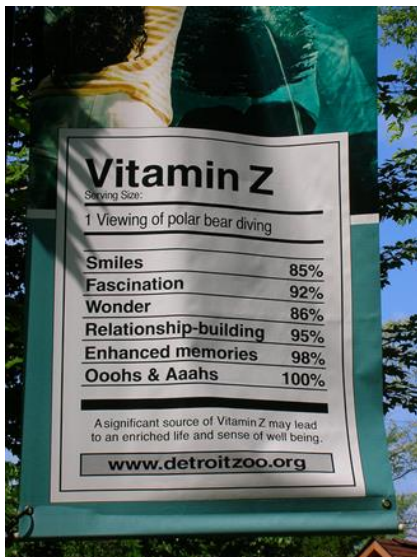
every childhood: eating fruits and vegetables, getting plenty of exercise, drinking lots of water -- and visiting the Detroit Zoo." The ads all highlight immersive experiences at the zoo: feeding giraffes, playing in the butterfly garden and so forth.

Figure 2.6. "Vitamin Z," Detroit Zoo. *Personal Photograph.*

What is Vitamin Z? Figure 2.6. is one example of a number of incarnations of

these nutrition labels. Some of them substitute "Delight," "Awe," and "Whoa," for

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[127] Other awards the campaign has received include the 2013 "One Show Merit Award in the Public Service Television Campaign" and the 2012 "Public Service Television Campaign D Show Award." For more on these, see: Doner Media, "Detroit Zoo's 'Vitamin Z' Campaign Brings Home Another Award," September 16, 2013, http://media.donerus.com/?s=vitamin+z.

"Smiles," "Relationship Building," and "Enhanced Memories." But the terms on the label are all roughly in the same family of emotions and emotional response: wonder. The implication is that wonder is essential to "a complete childhood." [The 2013 incarnation of the ad campaign](#) features children behaving strangely—trying to feed a houseguest the way they might feed a giraffe at the zoo, pretending to be an anteater, or grooming themselves to look like lions, because of "vitamin z deficiency." A parent discovers the strange behavior, and the ads end with visits to the zoo and children's expressions of awe, wonder, and joy, which restore them to good health.

In the television ads, as well as the nutrition label posters, wonder is a seemingly biological effect of outward experience. Immersive experiences with animals, which produce wonder, provide "vitamin z." Wonder is consumed and incorporated. Children's (and other visitors') bodies are nourished by their experiences of delight, awe, wonder and thus rendered healthy or "complete." Wonder changes one's constitution, as a result of an encounter with animals, in which the animals are acting upon the pedestrian visitor. The ad campaign thus offers a sketch of a kind of Latourian collective. The human/animal, subject/object categories seem not quite relevant in the paradigm of "vitamin z." Something else is going on.

But that something else is not clearly defined. Detroit's "Vitamin Z" campaign creates a direct correlation between going to the zoo and experiencing wonder, awe, delight, and so forth. But the ads do not provide a clear articulation of the function of wonder or Vitamin Z, beyond their contributing to "a complete childhood." Vitamin Z and wonder provide a structure to the experience, but not a script. The appearance of the "Vitamin Z" nutrition labels on Paver Pathway as one makes one's way past the birthday

pavilion and some eating areas to the second half of the park serves as an anticipatory suggestion: "One sighting of a polar bear" (the "serving size" on the label) coming up.

"Vitamin Z" is a clever—perhaps cutesy—imaginative trope for the zoo. On the one hand, it is a near-homophone of both "Vitamin C" and "Vitamin D," and plays on health and wellness discourses and the broader natural foods movement and its associations with holistic health, organicism, and "nature." On the other hand, it revises those discourses in a somewhat surprising way, attributing nutritional values to visual, environmental, and interactive experiences. All of the 2013 "Vitamin Z deficiency" ads, indeed, move from indoor settings of family homes to the outdoor settings of the zoo. Even though the indoor settings are well-lit, beautifully-designed, social, hospitable spaces, they lack something. "Vitamin Z deficiency" in that sense plays on the recent focus on vitamin D deficiencies among office-working, couch-sitting U.S. populations. The reframing of health discourses makes immediate sense, yet upon close scrutiny, it proposes a somewhat mysterious and mystifying translation between food consumption/sun absorption and emotional experience. This relationship resembles Brennan's notion of "the transmission of affect." Like Brennan's notion of an "outward" encounter that has an "inward" effect, the zoo's ads suggest that going to the zoo and participating in its visual and immersive experiences have biological effects, named "Vitamin Z."

People get Vitamin C and Vitamin D "naturally" in certain foods or by being exposed to sun. Alternately, they can get them as supplements. Vitamin Z—and the family of wonder emotions and responses it fosters—is a function of contact with animals in a naturalized setting. Zoo visitors acquire it through absorption, immersion, and active

interaction. It is also a function of consumption in the sense that going to the Detroit Zoo requires the purchase of an experience in Gilmore and Pine's "experience economy" model. Vitamin Z is both an advertising fiction and a figure that captures in layman's terms the phenomenon of the transmission of affect: the abstract and difficult to define effects and values of interacting with animals and "nature." The Vitamin Z nutrition labels' appeals to such terms as "wonder," "awe," "delight," "oohs and ahhs," and "Whoa" indicate that what they aim to capture is in the realm of the difficult-to-define and not-quite known. Although there are scientific studies that can, to a certain extent, measure the effects of vitamins and vitamin deficiencies, how can we measure the effect of "one polar bear sighting" or "feeding a giraffe"? How can we measure the transmission of affect? The quantification of "wonder," "delight," "relationship building," and so forth, on the Vitamin Z nutrition label both highlights that difficulty and aims to cleverly answer it. Zoo visits are like food and sun: they operate internally, invisibly in ways we might not even be aware of.

The Vitamin Z campaign itself, as a visual and conceptual metaphor, also arguably operates that way: as a delightful mnemonic device that helps people remember the Detroit Zoo. Anecdotally, I have yet to talk to a zoo patron who does not appreciate in the ad campaign's cleverness and freshness. On several visits to the Detroit Zoo, I have seen adults congregating around the signs, smiling and enjoying them. The Detroit Zoo's Facebook page also reflects fans' adoration for the ad campaign. Detroit's campaign is, of course, not the only such instance of mnemonic wonders at zoos. Wonder discourse more broadly in zoos across the country often appeals to mnemonic devices (not often as successfully), especially in alliterative forms that help visitors remember zoos and the

animals and experiences associated with them. There are countless bird shows named "Wings of Wonder," for example; Seattle has a spider exhibit entitled "Webs of Wonder;" the Toledo Zoo's Australia exhibit is called "Wild Walkabout: Wonders from Down Under." The close connection between "wilderness," "wildlife," "the wild," and "wonder" in the context of zoos, national parks, and the broader environmental education movement is pervasive.[128] Most zoos use phrases like "Join us in an exploration of the wonders of wildlife and conservation"[129] in their park exhibits, on their websites, and in their publications.

The Vitamin Z campaign is one of the most extended and successful mnemonic devices that uses wonder-discourse as a defining feature. Through such rhetorical devices, the experience and/or expression of wonder becomes a function not just of experience but of memory and the sometimes mysterious ways in which it operates— through figures, visual metaphors, sonic devices, smells, touch, non-narrative sensory perceptions. Vitamin Z is, at least in some versions of Detroit's ad, good for "98% Enhanced Memories." Wonder here participates in a trope that defines the undefined "transmission of affect" and then strives to allow visitors to remember that trope, the experience it stands for, and the Detroit Zoo as a whole. In this sense, too, wonder emerges as part of a collective that defines "Vitamin Z" as a human-environment-animal zoo-going nutrient/experience. It also defines visitors' experiences and memories as

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[128] There are, of course, a wide range of alliterative, consonant, and assonant word combinations. Binder Park advertises birthday planning with the slogan "Take your birthday from Mild to Wild!" Cleveland's Zoo has hosted a "Fairytales and Frogs" event. Very few zoos do not host an annual October "Boo at the Zoo" series of events leading up to Halloween."

[129] Binder Park Zoo, "Education Programs," http://www.binderparkzoo.org/education/index.php. The Columbus Zoo's webpage on its "North America" exhibit enjoins us to: "Discover the wild wonders of the wetlands, prairies and forests found in the wilderness."
http://www.colszoo.org/explore_your_zoo/zoo_regions/north_america.aspx.

multi-sensory and multi-dimensional. Both wonder and memory emerge as something other than subjective emotions/thoughts/recollections; they mark the ways in which zoo visitors become physiologically transformed by the zoo and its fostering of the emergence of collectives of "Vitamin Z."

This transformational experience, as I will elaborate, lays claim to a "worlding project" at recent and contemporary American zoos.[130] Vitamin Z participates in a transformational process that renders visitors not just "healthy" but worldly. In seeing, experiencing, and being part of the world's animal life, the zoo cultivates a worlding—a rendering global—of local, American environments and citizens. In chapter one, we saw how visitors to Yellowstone gained experiential capital that allowed them to participate in the national fantasy-scape of "Wonderland" and enact an experience-based form of citizenship. Here, visitors to institutions like the Detroit Zoo lay claim to a kind of worldly experience defined by animals that are ostensibly from around the world. Seeing, interacting with, and experiencing wonder collectives with/of these animals operates as a form of experiential capital that is not about performing a national citizenship, but about performing a civic duty with global import. "Vitamin Z" and the process of "collecting" wonder-memories through participating in zoos' wonder collectives is not just about good health; it is about good, worldly citizenship, performed by attending to the world's animals locally.

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[130] See Rob Wilson and Christopher Lee Connery, *The Worlding Project* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2007).

VIII.   The Rainforest, Wonder, Dread, and the Trouble with Wilderness

This "worlding project" is even more evident in zoos' foreign geographies. Having walked the length of Paver Pathway, visitors come upon a series of winding pathways that give way to different terrains. Paver Pathway's open park atmosphere becomes dense forest that houses the Great Apes. Detroit's exhibits are not quite immersion habitats, in the way that other zoos' are: San Diego has the "Lost Forest," not too far from its "Discovery Outpost," the Bronx has a "Congo Gorilla Forest," Cincinnati has "Jungle Trails," and Seattle has a "Tropical Rain Forest." Many of these exhibits are hybrid habitats that bring together animals from tropical forests across three continents (Asia, Africa, and South America). In San Diego, as one crosses the boundary between regions, the landscaping changes, and the paved pathway gives way to elevated boardwalks that take the pedestrian experience into the trees. Because of San Diego's climate, the "Lost Forest" is one of the few outdoor rainforest habitats in the country.

Cleveland's "Rainforest" is exemplary of indoor, climate-controlled immersion exhibits of this nature, and wonder discourse helps define it. Although wonder here operates as a form of nostalgia, as it did in "The Great Bear Wilderness," the Rainforest aims to inspire a wonder that hinges first on expectation and then on fear, dread, and a sense of doom that is deployed to inspire global conservation awareness and action. Now a twenty-year-old construction that stands apart from the rest of the zoo, Cleveland's Rainforest is a mostly glass construction that lets in light, but maintains the "tropical" temperature the plants and animals of the Rain Forest need to survive. In a climate like Northern Ohio's an indoor exhibit is the only way to maintain the "rainforest" atmosphere year-round.

Entering the exhibit requires walking first along a pathway lined with benches and a few signs with relevant quotations on them. The first one sets a tone of wonder and expectation as one walks towards the exhibit building: "The jungle filled me with a sense of wonder that has never left me. It has cast a spell over me, and I always return to it... I have seen all this perish. The jungle is burning. The great trees are being destroyed and no one cares." Gertrude Bloom was a journalist and anthropologist who spent fifty years chronicling life in Chiapas, Mexico. She turned to environmental activism as a result of her work in Mexico, and became a passionate advocate for conserving the rain forest. Unlike the largely un-scripted figures of Detroit's wonder-filled campaigns, this quotation immediately sets up a clear narrative for Cleveland's Rainforest exhibit. We have here a strong cautionary tale of global interconnection and responsibility. The immersion exhibit should trigger an experience of wonder, which should lead visitors to care about the trees and animals of the rainforest and push them to become more globally-minded citizens in order to help stop the "burning." A positive experience of wonder is bound closely here to a catastrophic and melancholic "feeling ecological," in LeManger's terms, that is meant to inspire action.

The next quotation (Figure 2.7.) by the man who introduced the notion of "biological diversity" to the scientific community highlights the biological function of the rainforest as well as its aesthetic beauty. Taken together, these two quotes give visitors "expert" opinions and reflections on what they are about to experience, but they are not technical or overly scientific. Instead, they both appeal to aesthetic or emotional categories of experience: everyone can relate to wonder and beauty. After these introductory quotes, I felt primed to enter a fantastical exhibit.

Figure 2.7. Thomas Lovejoy Quote,
The Rainforest, Cleveland Zoo.
Personal Photograph.
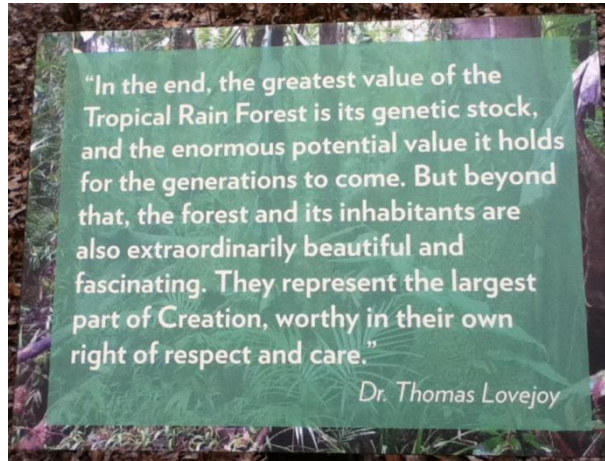
The Rainforest's entrance opens on a waterfall, and the sound of the water, as well as the radical shift in temperature, makes this a very different space than the world outside its doors. From there, the pathways lead through the forest, into scientific "stations" that peer into animal exhibits. On my mid-day visit on a weekday, I walked through the trees and up stairways built into reproductions of trees behind groups of bounding children, who were clearly enjoying the exhibit's architecture. They exclaimed "cool!" and "look at this!" as we walked through the scientific station and its lookout points. Both the scientific objects and theming of the station and the animals garnered these kinds of reactions.

Scientific stations of this sort exist in many American zoos. The one in the Cleveland Rainforest acts as a stage upon which visitors perform scientific observation through immersion field work. Visitors in these exhibits are given a narrative of amateur scientific exploration and study, which they can write themselves into. At some zoos, scientific stations are not just "lookout" points within exhibits; they serve as either

education centers or stations that showcase the zoo's own scientific work—be it in genetic diversity or on the ground conservation. All of these scientific stations provide educational opportunities for visitors, but they also serve as metonyms or microcosms of the zoo's scientific and conservation work, allowing visitors to participate vicariously and performatively in this globally-attuned scientific work.

In Cleveland's rainforest, this early performance of scientific worldliness reinforces the opening quotes' tone, stressing the need for serious and consequential action. The further I progressed through the "jungle," the more urgent the tone became. From expectation and anticipation, wonder became more cautionary, as there were more posters and exhibits that highlighted human impact on the rainforest and violent ecological disaster. As the tone changes, so does the lighting. Moving through the exhibit means moving away from the well-lit, windowed exterior exhibits into darker, more ominous interiors. This change occurs to simulate the limited visibility in actual rainforests and to give the animals privacy, but that darkness also functions with the
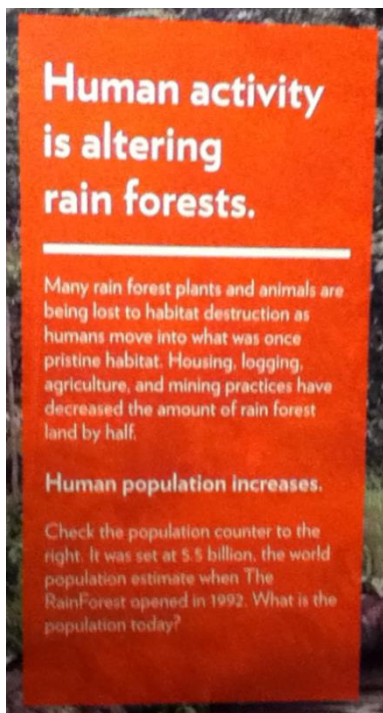
evolving narrative. One of the final and darkest exhibits draws the clear correlation between increasing human populations and decreasing rainforest acreage, replete with maps and computer-simulated visuals. The trend is seems irreversible. As I emerged from those final dark rooms back into the windowed lobby by the waterfall, I felt a sense of relief from what I then realized had been a growing sense of dread and entrapment.

Figure 2.8. "Human Activity Is Altering Forests," The Rainforest, Cleveland Zoo. *Personal photograph.*

I was more than ready to leave the doors of the Rainforest behind and be outdoors again. Stepping outside, however, does not quite conclude the experience. The "exit" pathway also displays signs with quotes on them—this time by more familiar and popular people. First we have Sting:

> As you get a little older, you get a little wiser. I used to think civilization was television cameras and computers and flying to the moon. Since being in the rainforest of Brazil, I've learned that real civilization lives in harmony with its environment. By that standard, we are not civilized. We are not even intelligent. There's no point in being the most successful performer in the world if that world is dying because its rainforests are being destroyed.

If the urgency of the situation is not yet clear, Sting states it plainly: something must be done. Sting's status as a globally-recognized and worldly figure of U.S. pop culture is invoked to authorize the serious, damning, and gloomy tone of the exhibit and the situation. Sting takes us to Brazil and to a form of global consciousness. The wonder and beauty of the rainforest must lead to global action. In case the block of Sting's text was too intimidating to read, Jerry Garcia is next quoted succinctly: "Somebody needs to do something—it's just incredibly pathetic that is has to be us." Garcia's snarky commentary adds to the now negative inflection of the discourse of wonder.

Sting's message highlights a need for global collectivity and action. In chapter one, my discussion of wonder-discourses was largely about contemplative and imaginative functions of wonder and wonder narratives. In contemporary zoos, wonder is affective and contemplative, but it is deployed in the service of a larger aim: active local and global conservation. In contrast to Sting's appeal to a global collectivity, Garcia's shorter punch posits an "us" that seems to imply a "them"—others who are or were unwilling to act, leaving "us" in the position to do something *now*. These others may be from other parts of the world or from the past. That distinction is not clear, but the

visitor-reader immediately becomes part of the "us," galvanized into a form of active

wonder that is marked as producing conscientious global citizenship based on

environmental care for the rainforests in Mexico, Brazil, and around the world.

Cleveland's rainforest exhibit presents a defined and linear progression for

wonder as an emotion and trigger for action; it takes us from light to dark and expectation

to doom. Here, wonder, beauty, and awe are not just healthful experiences that contribute

to "complete" lives; they are cautionary experiences that should inspire a sense of fear

and dread that will form the basis for environmental protection and global environmental

consciousness. As the zoo's website states in its description of the rainforest exhibit, "By

bringing the wonder of the tropical rain forests to millions of visitors, The Rainforest

increases public awareness of the value of these precious sanctuaries of life, and the

urgency of their protection."[131] The "urgency" of protection, however, emerges through a

mounting fear and dread built into the exhibit.

The consequences of the threat of "burning" are not clear, except that the exhibit

grows increasingly uncomfortable as a space, a process I imagined to mirror humans'

declining physical and emotional comfort as rainforests also decline. Although I felt

somewhat trapped and helpless in the grasp of this environment, the "Rainforest" insists

on a narrative that is about starting at home—at the zoo—where the experience of

wonder is scripted to cultivate caring and a sense of urgency about the destruction of the

rainforest. The Rainforest's immersion experience begins with distant figures talking

about wonder and beauty of distant worlds. These figures introduce the immersion

exhibits, and visitors leave the exhibit with the urgent words of rock and roll legends in

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[131] Cleveland Metropark Zoo, "The Rainforest,"
http://www.clemetzoo.com/tour/area.asp?name=The+RainForest.

the city that hosts the rock and roll hall of fame. The music legends connect the local to the global, figuring through their popular cultural status, the ways in which local phenomena are also global and vice-versa. Popular culture icons bring global ecological concerns home, showing visitors that ecological disaster is not just about the scientific community. It's about Sting. It's about us—here, in the U.S., in the Midwest.

The Rainforest exhibit in Cleveland sits apart from the rest of the zoo, near the parking lot. Thus, visitors are likely to see it at the very beginning or very end of their zoo visits. I saw it at the beginning, on a cold and snowy January day. Given the outside temperature, the Rainforest exhibit was by far one of the most physically comfortable parts of my visit to the Cleveland Zoo. But the exhibit's progressive gloominess and its insistent, linear narrative made me uncomfortable. It was announced before I set foot in the "Rainforest" with the running children on the pathways whose vegetation made for good hiding spots.

The connection between wonder and conservation runs deep —and Bloom's invocation of a violent "burning"—goes back at least to the nineteenth century. John Muir's many works expressed similar sentiments in advocating for the preservation of land in national parks.[132] More recently, Rachel Carson's approach to environmental education was steeped in wonder, and has provided a firm basis for many of the environmental education programs in zoos. In particular, Carson's *The Sense of Wonder* (1956) draws out the need for fostering an anticipatory and exploratory wonder in both children and adults as a form of caring for the environment (in the case of the book, in

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[132] For more on Muir and his role in the early environmental movement, see Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: the Life of John Muir* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

regard to the ocean and coastlines).[133] *The Sense of Wonder* is especially remarkable for

its insistence on feeling as a primary mode for connecting with the natural world: "...it is

not half so important to *know* as to *feel*. If facts are the seeds that later produce

knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the sense are the fertile

soil in which the seeds must grow."[134] Carson's narrative reflections in *The Sense of*

Wonder are structured around pedestrian experiences with her nephew at the beach and in

the woods, which she notes are "based on having fun together rather than on teaching."[135]

The pedagogical, Carson suggests, emerges out of feeling and sensory experience.

Having fun opens her and her nephew to wonder as a basis for knowledge and

environmental awareness.

Pedestrianism fosters attention, as Carson describes, and her walks with her

nephew are characterized by "calling his attention to this or that but only as I would share

discoveries with an older person," in a non-condescending or pedantic mode.[136]

Pedestrian attention and sharing foster memory in ways that Carson claims "no amount of

drill" or more conscious memory work would. Emotional and sensory experiences foster

memories. One of the specific experiences she describes includes coming upon lichen in

a rain-drenched forest: "lichens... have a quality of fairyland—silver rings on a stone, odd

little forms like bones or horns or the shell of a sea creature... [we] delighted in its

texture, getting down on chubby knees to feel it, and running from one patch to another to

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[133] For an excellent analysis of Carson's "sense of wonder" in her popular writing on the sea in its socio-historical context and the ways in which it was appropriated and commodified in the post-War U.S., see Amanda Hagood, "Wonders with the Sea: Rachel Carson's Ecological Aesthetic and the Mid-Century Reader," *Environmental Humanities* 2 (2013): 57-77, www.environmentalhumanities.org.
134 Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956), 45.
[135] Ibid., 10.
[136] Ibid., 18.

jump up and down in the deep, resilient carpet with squeals of pleasure."[137] The experiences she draws out are at once mundane, sensual, and ordinary. It is the attention they get that brings out the "sense of wonder."

Carson anticipates one of William Cronon's critiques of conventional ideas of "nature" in "The Trouble with Wilderness." As I discussed in chapter one, Cronon argues that the notion of "wilderness" environmentalists tend to uphold contributes to the perpetuation of a damaging divorce between "nature" and "culture." "Wilderness" refers to distant, "untouched" places, such as rainforests. In this incarnation, only selective versions of nature are valued, and conservation is aimed at protecting distant "wilderness" areas over local landscapes. Cronon urges abandoning "the dualism that sees the tree in the garden as artificial—completely fallen and unnatural—and the tree in the wilderness as natural—completely pristine and wild. Both trees in some ultimate sense are wild; both in a practical sense now depend on our management and care."[138] Carson makes a similar gesture in *The Sense of Wonder*. Having dwelled on the Maine woods and coastline for nearly fifty pages, she turns to the quotidian habits one can cultivate even if one has "little nature lore" at one's disposal:

> ...wherever you are and whatever your resources, you can still look up at the sky.... You can listen to the wind, whether it blows with majestic voice through a forest or sings a many-voiced chorus around the eaves of your house or the corners of your apartment building.... You can still feel the rain on your face and think of its long journey, its many transmutations, from sea to air to earth. Even if you are a city dweller, you can find some place, perhaps a park or a golf course, where you can observe the mysterious migrations of the birds and the changing seasons.... you can ponder the mystery of a growing seed, even if it be only one planted in a pot of earth in the kitchen window.[139]

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[137] Ibid., 39.
[138] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 88-89.
[139] Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*, 49

Carson promotes cultivating "wonder" in one's surroundings, much as Cronon aims for us to see our local environment as equally important as distant "wilderness." For Cronon, as I mentioned earlier, romantic wonder is the dominant paradigm for thinking about wilderness, and the problem arises "...if we imagine that this experience of wonder and otherness is limited to the remote corners of the planet, or that it somehow depends on pristine landscapes we ourselves do not inhabit."[140] The goal, then, is to make wonder a part of the landscapes we live in and to consider as "natural" all the landscapes that surround us.

Cleveland's "Rainforest" exhibit, in its expectation-turned-doom does not make that move. It invokes wonder as an emotional response that might move visitors to action, but that action is to be directed at a distant place that is figured as separate and separable from the local environment, even as quasi-locals like Sting and Jerry Garcia urge action. Although the exhibit promotes a worldly citizenship of ecological care, it does so in a narrative paradigm that imagines that care is decidedly not local. It is, in this sense, not only about promoting the ideas of distant "wilderness" Cronon critiques; it also walks a dangerous line of eco-imperialism or green imperialism, whereby "we" (civilized Americans) need to protect global rainforests, which tend to be found in the global south. Cleveland's rainforest fosters aesthetic appreciation and genetic value as motives for preservation, figuring the Rainforest as an object of appreciation and of biological mining, a tool for human aesthetics and science. The sense of doom the narrative space imposes also suggests—like the "Great Bear Wilderness" exhibit—a need to return to an impossibly "untouched" rainforest.

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[140] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 89.

In Gertrude Bloom's quote, the Rainforest/jungle is figured both as an acting

agent—"[the jungle] cast a spell over me"—and an object about which "no one cares."

Lovejoy's subsequent quote tells us why we should care: because of the rainforest's

"genetic stock and its enormous potential value for the future." Beyond this, their

"beauty" and "fascinating" status earn them a position as "the largest part of Creation,

worthy in their own right of respect and care." The Rainforest seems to be an entity of its

own—separated and separable from our surroundings and ourselves—and wonder is an

instrument of that separation and distance, even though, as Carson and Cronon suggest,

wonder need not be part of promoting a distant, exotic notion of the wild.

But, as Bill Conway, former director of the Bronx Zoo/Wildlife Conservation

Society, writes, zoos are in some significant ways bound into a need to conserve wildlife

in distant places. The zoo cannot just be an "ark." It has also to be an actor in the broader

movement to stop habitat destruction:

> Teaching people in Sheboygan, Wisconsin, about coral reefs and rain forests is not enough to save habitats in Belize or the Congo. Although most zoos were created as local cultural resources, like art museums and libraries, unlike these institutions they are indissolubly attached to their living exhibits. Few libraries or museums find it necessary to sustain writers or artists, but no zoos will survive unless they sustain wildlife.[141]

Cleveland's rainforest makes the urgency of saving global rainforests clear, drawing a

connection between increasing human populations and decreasing rainforest acreage. The

wonders of those interconnections are both awe-inspiring and fear-inspiring, given the

tendencies towards "burning" and degradation. Cleveland's Rainforest exhibits that

dichotomous wonder as vacillating between beauty-inspired awe and impending doom.

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[141] Conway, "From Zoos to Conservation Parks," in *Keepers of the Kingdom*, 34.

The exhibit is less successful in articulating how rainforests in Brazil affect local environments in Cleveland, even as local visitors are enjoined to become worldly citizens. Indeed, the two poles of wonder effects reproduce notions of a distant wild that makes it seem as if the only nature we need to worry about is at a great distance from us—in Cleveland, the Midwest, the U.S.—even as it emphasizes the interconnections that tie the well-being of wildlife, their natural environments, and human populations together. Cleveland's Rainforest thus showcase a form of wonder discourse that figures visitors as global citizens, who share responsibility for global ecological devastation. Wonder in this exhibit-world inhabits an ambivalent place. It is at once a trigger for affective connections to environments and animals we want to preserve and a participant in perpetuating an imperialist conservation ethos by which primarily American visitors are transformed into the necessary custodians and saviors of distant, exotic natures. In the process, it seems, visitors are granted a pass on their responsibilities for and to their proximate, local environments.

The wonderscape that constitutes Cleveland's Rainforest is an assemblage of positive and negative affects, brought together in the name of fostering a sense of worldliness and an urgent global responsibility for rainforest destruction. That worldliness is rooted in the sense that although "we" (Jerry Garcia's "us") can be part of the solution, the problem is elsewhere, in a distant wilderness that inspires wonder, because of its exoticism, beauty, and difference from the worlds here, around us. But in this iteration of wonder, the exhibit narrative, not unlike the exhibit itself—as a separate self-contained building—treats the rainforest and nature, not just as distant, but as separable and separate from us, the very dynamic both Cronon and Carson seek to dispel

as counter-productive to both local and global conservation movements. Cleveland's Rainforest offers us models for imperialistic global conservation that seems to ignore more local natures and forests at home. Wonder in this space mediates between the local and the global, between the proximate and the distant, and in these dynamics, it seems, if the distant rainforests have a chance of getting saved from the "burning," the more local, temperate forests, parks, and trees are not given that same chance.

IX.   Tiger Terrace: Spectacular Wonder and Fascinating Horror

Wonder is not only caught between conservation discourses and nature-discourses that represent wilderness as a distant place. It is also caught between a frequent tension between conservation and recreation and conservation and respect for indigenous peoples around the world, especially in the tropical regions that are home to some of the most beloved zoo animals, also known as the "charismatic megafauna" of the zoo world (lions, tigers, gorillas, elephants, and so forth). Although many zoos exhibits, like Cleveland's Rainforest, promote seemingly colonialist narratives of global conservation, many zoos' projects are, in fact, more collaborative and conscious of eco-imperialist dynamics. Some zoos—like the Bronx, Columbus, San Diego, and Brookfield, among others—showcase their conservation efforts with indigenous populations. For instance, the Wildlife Conservation Society (the collective organization that manages all of New York City's zoos, including the Bronx Zoo) participates in community-based conservation projects such as the Conservation Cotton Initiative, which promotes the development of eco-

friendly cotton farming in places that maintain high biodiversity (Zambia, Uganda, Madagascar).[142]

Nonetheless, many zoo displays containing African and Asian animals in particular are framed through poaching narratives that turn zoos and zoo visitors into the "saviors" of animals whose lives are seemingly at the hands of unenlightened non-Western native peoples.[143] This narrative framework is pretty ironic, given the fact that most animal poaching that takes place in protected reserves in Africa or Asia caters to primarily Western demands for high end animal skins and parts in the fashion industry. At the Bronx Zoo's "Tiger Mountain," nonetheless, visitors can climb into a sample poacher's truck. Even though zoos recognize that the biggest threat facing wildlife is habitat loss, and the Bronx's tiger conservation efforts focus on a number of different projects and problems (anti-poaching in Indonesia, community outreach in the Russian Far East, and population surveys in India), the exhibit's primary visual representation of the threat to tigers is the poachers' truck outside the indoor viewing area. The truck poses as an educational exhibit that doubles as a visitor playground. People climb on and off, check out the instruments and boxes, etc. These are props aimed as much at entertainment as at conservation.

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[142] WCS is easily the most active conservation organization associated with U.S. zoos. Their projects extend across the globe. Some other major zoos also contribute to globally-oriented conservation projects. Recently, zoos have begun to focus on more local environmental awareness and projects. An example is Columbus's partnership with Ohio State University (in Columbus) to build a solar house.

[143] Disney's Animal Kingdom's "Kilimanjaro Safari" used to take visitors on an open-air safari bus tour in which the bus was called upon to help the park ranger chase off poachers. Supposedly, some children found this narrative to be too scary, and in the spring of 2012, the poaching narrative was eliminated. See Kristin Ford, "Changes on Kilimanjaro Safaris at Disney's Animal Kingdom Take Place this Week," *All Ears* (blog), May 4, 2012 (8:04 a.m.), http://land.allears.net/blogs/guestblog/2012/05/changes_on_kilimanjaro_safaris_1.html.

Figure 2.9. Poacher's Truck, Tiger Mountain, Bronx Zoo.
Personal photograph.

In the Bronx, as elsewhere, the tiger exhibit is one of the most popular sites for "enrichment" activities such as feedings, games, and puzzles that give visitors opportunities to see the animals "in action." The threat of poachers is set up against an exhibit of active animals, whom visitors are encouraged to want to protect. Enrichment has been a major catch-phrase in zoos around the country since the '90s. It is, on the one hand, about providing animals with mental and physical stimulation, and on the other hand, it aims to give visitors a "show." This spectacular quality of some U.S. zoo events and exhibits is nowhere more obvious than at the Toledo Zoo's wildly popular "Big Feed" event.

Launched in 2005, the event stages graphic feedings: the animals do not just receive kibble. Carnivores get recognizable pieces of calves and horses. Snakes get mice. Although these spectacles seem potentially horrific, they tend to attract transfixed fascination. A June 2007 episode of Radiolab covers one of these spectacles—focusing

on the tiger feed at the zoo's "Tiger Terrace." For this event, a dead baby calf was strung

up in the tiger exhibit in front of about 150 people, most of whom expressed great

enthusiasm for the feed. NPR science reporter Nell Boyce, who was on site, described the

action: "one of the tigers just streaks across the pen, grabs the carcass. It starts

immediately playing with it. I have never seen, in all my years of zoo-going, I have never

seen a tiger move that fast. At one point, one of the tigers was carrying one [calf head]

around by the ear. You could see the little calf face, and it was dragging it around."[144]

Where one might expect zoo visitors to be horrified or stunned, according to Boyce, no

one was disturbed.

Fascination was the main response. For many children, that fascination was mixed

with bafflement. One of the consistent conversations Boyce heard around the tiger feed

involved children asking their parents what the tigers were eating. When the parents

answered "baby cow," the children recoiled, asking why the tigers do that. This

bafflement often led children to claim that they do not eat cow, so why should the tiger?

Parents and zoo keepers then explained that kids do eat cow in the form of hamburgers.

Even when some people expressed the sense that "that's really gross," they often

simultaneously moved closer to get a better view. In a survey conducted by the zoo after

the feed, 98% of respondents wanted to see more feeds with all kinds of animals being

fed to the zoo's carnivores. Although most zoo visitors did not want to see live animals

fed to the zoo animals,[145] some of them told stories about seeing a squirrel fall into a

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[144] Transcriptions are my own. Radiolab, *Zoos*, podcast audio, MP3, Season 3, episode 3, June 4, 2007, http://www.radiolab.org/2007/jun/04/.

[145] Feeding live animals to zoo animals has been a longstanding taboo. Former director of the Detroit Zoo, Steve Graham, faced major controversies in the 1980s and early 1990s for feeding live mice to snakes, for instance. The practice has been generally disapproved of (though it is not illegal), as being too graphic.

snow leopard's enclosure. One little girl recounted being unable to watch the dance between predator and prey, but when asked whether she was routing for the squirrel or the snow leopard, she surprisingly said "the leopard." Boyce's accounts of these events highlight the tension between a desire to see the "natural" habits of the tigers or snow leopards coupled with a horror or repulsion that visitors know is about their own distance from those natural behaviors.

The episode of Radiolab that covers the Big Feed opens with a dramatic recounting of Roman animal slaughters in the Coliseum, circa 80 A.D. This opening posits a parallel between the spectacle of animal slaughter that masses of Romans watched and the Big Feed's naturalistic feeding (of dead animals) to the zoo animals. The Big Feed's philosophy includes the recognition that tigers, snow leopards, lions, etc., are not just meat eaters but flesh eaters. Although specially-formulated kibble may meet their dietary needs, it doesn't allow them to exercise their minds and instinctual behaviors as predators. The Big Feed gives visitors direct access to those "natural" behaviors—so it is not just about making sure the animals are engaged in this primal way; it is also a spectacle for visitors, a different way in which they can "get close" to the animals. The Big Feed, in effect, displays the wildness of tigers to highlight zoos' role in maintaining that wildness and not (just) taming or domesticating it for captivity.

The Big Feed is unusual in zoos. Although the Badaltearing Safari Park in China allows visitors to throw live animals into animal enclosures, in the U.S. and Europe, most zoo experiences are fairly sanitized.[146] The Big Feed might, however, be considered alongside other forms of animal performances that occur regularly in zoos with seals and

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[146] For an excellent overview of the history of the processes at play in this sanitization of the visual field animals inhabit, see Jonathan Burt, *Animals In Film* (London: Reaktion Books, 2002).

birds, in particular. Such performances used to include primates and elephants, often

doing characteristically "human" things. Those kinds of shows—with chimpanzees riding

bicycles and such—are no longer considered appropriate in the "Wild Revolution" era.

But other "naturalistic" performances that help promote affective connections to animals

still operate. Sea World capitalizes on the public's attraction to these kinds of animal

performances that are the product of significant training and therefore showcase both the

animal's talents and the trainer-animal relationship as wonders. Susan Davis's

Spectacular Nature calls the Shamu show at Sea World "routinized magic," a term that

applies to most animal performances in zoos, as well.[147]

Davis's discussion of the Shamu Show hinges on the dual tactics of instilling fear

in the audience and humanizing the animals. For her, animal performance posits a

closeness between human and animal that cultivates ambivalence and expectant fear in

observers: "The presence of the human trainers in the water gives the show the same

ambivalent quality as the trained lion act at the circus or a daredevil stunt: the audience is

more than half-aware, perhaps even half-hoping, that something could go violently

wrong. It probably won't go wrong, but it has in the past and it *could*."[148] In the case of

the Big Feed, this fascination with potential disaster is displaced onto the dead calf, and

the tigers' easy play and predation with it opens up the imaginary possibility of live

predation. Widespread coverage of zoo accidents involving both keepers and visitors play

a role in keeping that fear alive and feeding visitors' fascination with the "wild."

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[147] Susan Davis, *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience* (Berkeley: California University Press, 1997), 199.
[148] Ibid., 214.

That fascination and fear do not always take place in spectacle-oriented moments. A friend of mine told me about taking her three-year-old daughter to the Potter Park Zoo in East Lansing on a rainy day when their family appeared to be the only visitors. When the daughter ran into the tiger-house, startling the animal, the tiger lunged at the glass. The daughter was stunned and her parents told me they shivered with a trepidation they knew was illogical: "The tiger couldn't get us, but man, it was clear our kid looked like a pretty good snack right then."

That reflection is all the more powerful in the aftermath of the death of two-year-old Maddox Durkosh at the Pittsburgh Zoo after he fell into the African Wild Dogs exhibit on November 4, 2012. Fear of public memory and sentiment about the death led the zoo to dismantle the exhibit, move the dogs to other unnamed zoos and "replace" them with a cheetah. The zoo explained this decision by claiming that "Unfortunately, the painted dogs would have been a continuous reminder of the accident and would distract from educational opportunities to learn about this wonderful and endangered species."[149] When I visited the Pittsburgh Zoo several month after Durkosh's death there, the exhibit had been closed down, but half a dozen visitors were surveying the site, trying to see where the boy fell. This fascination attests to the spectacle involved in such horrors and their persistence in zoos.

A number of books over the past several decades, among them Sy Montgomery's *Spell of the Tiger: The Man-Eaters of the Sundarbans* (1995) and John Vallaint's *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival* (2010) play into this fascination with

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[149] See Nina Golgowski, "Mother of a toddler fatally mauled by African dogs is to blame and shouldn't be allowed to sue," *New York Daily News*, September 12, 2013, http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/mom-blame-boy-mauled-death-zoo-article-1.1453399#ixzz2ehkV0Uhn.

horror in telling tales of "man-eaters" in the Siberian and Sundarban environments.[150] In

both books, tigers are quasi-mystical creatures who are both revered and feared. Like the

Big Feed, these stories inhabit a liminal affective terrain. Fisher describes wonder as

having to do with "a border between sensation and thought"[151] that is part of "an on-

going fragile project of making sense."[152] Radiolab's account of visitors' reactions to the

Big Feed does suggest a hovering between visceral horror or repulsion and intellectual

understanding of the "naturalness" of tigers' behavior. The feelings and thoughts remain

unreconciled in an ambivalence that maintains fear, respect, and fascination for the

animals, who are apprehended as both like us (many of us eat cow) and unlike us.

Even in these kinds of spectacles, the subject-object dichotomy is often, if not

collapsed, certainly tested through simultaneous differentiation and de-differentiation

practices. As viewers of spectacles like the "Big Feed," we feel a suspended "in-

betweenness" characterized by a wondrous fascination that may lean towards horror, but

emerges out of a recognition of the otherness of tigers even as, transfixed with the

spectacle, we identify ourselves or some part of ourselves in the animals. The tigers' very

predatory excitement—their speed and movement in attacking the calf corpse—helps to

produce an affective wonder collective that is defined by a multiplicity of feelings,

positions, and desires. That multiplicity is inherent in any wonder collective, to be sure,

but events like the "Big Feed" make it far more pronounced. It is clear that the tigers

themselves do not feel the potential horror that human viewers may feel. But their

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[150] A third book, Robert Frump's *Man-Eaters of Eden: Life and Death in Kruger National Park* (2009)
delves into the stories and histories of man-eating South African lions who prey largely on refugees from
Mozambique.
[151] Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experience*, 6.
[152] Ibid., 8.

behaviors are equally emotional—and those emotions, undefinable as they may be, participate in the emergence of a wonder collective that often leaves viewers with greater respect for the tigers and a longing to see more.

These spectacular wonder collectives are, in some senses, the least "pedestrian" of all; they are unusual (the Big Feed only takes place once a year, for instance) and they often provoke a transfixed immobility. Human visitors are, for the most part, not moving as they watch the moving tigers and other animals. But as the Radiolab show suggests in harkening back to Roman animal slaughters, animal spectacles of many different kinds (there are major differences between the mass slaughter of animals in imperial Rome and the feeding of a dead calf to tigers in Toledo) and the tension between fascination and horror they engender are relatively consistent, maybe even common, in the histories of human cultures around the globe. As a range of scholars have shown, television shows, nature films, and the internet have all made those spectacles widely accessible parts of our every-day lives.[153] In that sense, animal spectacles of the kind showcased in the Big Feed have never been more commonplace and pedestrian. The difference with seeing them at the zoo is the difference between "live" shows and televised versions, though, this is not to say, of course, that the "live" is un-mediated.

These spectacles serve as a reminder of zoos' location somewhere between "high" and "low" culture. On the one hand, their histories as important cultural institutions and conservation centers tie them to the practices and concerns of "high" culture in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century U.S. On the other hand, their propensities to draw on

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[153] See Burt's *Animals in Film*, Derek Bouse's *Wildlife Films* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), Cynthia Chris's *Watching Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), Gregg Mitman's *Reel Nature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

the practices of amusement parks and popular spectacles tie them to forms of "low" and popular culture. An early (likely late nineteenth-century), undated newspaper advertisement for the Cincinnati Zoo, for example, emphasizes the presence of "Rare Animals! Gorgeous Birds, and Gigantic Reptiles," as well as "Magnificent Buildings, Lakes, Ponds, Streams, and Leafy Avenues." In the ad, the zoo calls itself "one of the Most Attractive and Picturesque Resorts of the Great West." In a tradition zoo spectacle, the ad highlights "novelties" and rarity, as well as the institution's connections to "agents throughout the world."[154] The advertisement sensationalizes the zoo in the tradition of dime museums, pet shows, and small private menageries.

Before the emergence of zoos and well after zoos began to be founded in the U.S., these kinds of spectacles and circuses drew Americans to displays of animals and other "curiosities." The rise and international appeal of P.T. Barnum attested to American fascination with, curiosity for, and attraction to the extraordinary, unusual, and wonderful. Early on, zoos like Cincinnati drew on the popular appeal of these spectacular animal settings to attract visitors. Describing zoos as vacation spots and recreational spaces ultimately gained them much criticism, and contributed to the urgency behind their recent transformations into "conservation centers." But histories of the spectacular nonetheless persist in conservation-centered zoos; they are now considered to be performances of "natural" or "wild" behaviors that display the wild wonders of animals and of the zoo, even while feeding a kind of bloodthirstiness for voyeuristic spectacle.

Like zoos' embrace of a futuristic nostalgia, these performances mark the zoo as an off-modern space, even as they purport to give visitors access to first-hand experience

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[154] See Ehrlinger, *The Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden*, 148, for a reproduction of the ad.

of global nature-in-action. I noted earlier that first-hand experience was important to medieval and early modern wonder texts and to the later nautical "wonder tale." In the twenty-first century, zoo wonder still relies on the value of first-hand experience, now distinguished from televisual and virtual experiences.[155] The first-hand, indeed, defines the experiential capital of nature and animals in an era of mass-mediated visual experiences that purport to give viewers direct access to reality. With enrichment activities and spectacular performances like the Big Feed, zoos' affective collectives produce wonder as an authentic environmental experience that connects local populations to global environments through an ethos of care.

The zoological form of experiential capital is built not on a "national fantasy," in Berlant's terms, but on a zoogeographic one. In seeing a tiger leap across its exhibit to feed on a carcass, the zoo narrative goes, we experience and are part of the tiger's—and by extension, Asia's—nature collective. At zoos, animals are both individual beings and exemplary of their species. On the one hand, many zoo animals have names, often selected or voted upon by visitors, who, in this way, invite the animals into their local communities. On the other hand, at the zoo, a tiger is not just a tiger. It stands in for Asia, as a kangaroo stands in for Australia, as a bison represents North America. In their zoogeographic enclosures, zoo animals and visitors together participate in a fantasy of international experience and space based on immersion, nature, design, and movement.

That fantasy is an ancient one. Cabinets of wonder emerged in the medieval and early modern periods as both collections of souvenirs, early scientific archives, and modes of bringing distant places, cultures, and nature home for those who could not or

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[155] There are a surprising number of popular zoo-themed video and computer games. Among them are: *Zoo Tycoon*, *World of Zoo, Zoo Hospital, Zoo Racer, Zoomumba*.

would not travel. These collections were markers of cultural and social privilege for the collectors and sources of pleasure, wonder, and appreciation for visitors. Zoos emerged out of these traditions, and although they are now institutional "collections," in the post-Wild Revolution era, they still, perhaps more than ever, participate in the spatio-temporal fantasy that sharing space with an exotic animal transports us to that exotic place, allowing us to see and experience not just a different animal, but a different continent and its attendant naturecultures, to use Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway's hybrid term.

X.   The Gift Shop: Capitalizing (on) Wonder

The transnational fantasyscape is a way of selling zoo visits as experiences that are about something larger than mere leisure. They are educational, scientific, and, cultural experiences that transform visitors into worldly travelers and eco-conscious global citizens. In *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka urge a re-conceptualization of both animal rights and human-animal relations in treating animals as citizens.[156] In the zoogeographical era of zoo design, U.S. zoos have themselves moved in this direction, figuring zoos as worlds in which both humans and animals are cosmopolitan citizens; what we might call "zoopolitanism" is created through zoos' affective collectives. What humans and animals share at the zoo are not rights or other forms of political belonging, but affective experiences. These affective

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[156] Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Critiques of animal rights discourses are widespread in Animal Studies. Donaldson and Kymlicka position themselves as proponents of animal rights, who recognize its failings and ideological limitations. For more on the critique of rights-based discourse see: Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Kelly Oliver, "What Is Wrong with Animal Rights?," *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 22, n.8 (2008), 214-224.

collectives create narrative worlds of zoopolitan belonging and ecological responsibility that are not just rooted in local zoos but in global conservation.

The experience of zoopolitan citizenship at the zoo is not only about wonder; it is also about hope and futurity, even when zoo narratives like Cleveland's Rainforest forecast disaster. Zoos' promotion of global ecological citizenship is hopeful, because it allows humans and animals to continue to share space in ways that are not guaranteed in the rest of the world. Even with this potential hope, though, when the show is over and a zoo visit comes to an end, I often feel a sense of let-down. That deflation is not because, as Berger surmises, zoo visits are disappointments, but because the fantasyscape of zoopolitan citizenship is as temporary as the zoo experience. It is because I am preparing to leave the seemingly self-contained world of the zoo, and the highs and lows of its affective experiences. Leaving the zoo means returning to a different kind of attention, a different kind of space and belonging—more distant from the world's animals.

In most cases, the first experience of leaving a zoo entails leaving pedestrianism behind and resuming a different pace of movement, whether it be in a car, on a bicycle, on the subway or the bus. As I prepare to leave the zoo, I often feel the outside world rushing back. But before I leave, I walk through the gift shop to see what might be there that is different from other zoos and to see how the zoo hopes to package the experience its visitors just had. There are a number of common souvenirs in gift shops: stuffed animals, many of which are the same from zoo to zoo; tee-shirts, which are usually advertisements for the zoo; books, postcards, and native crafts, usually from Africa. These are all ways of remembering the zoopolitan experience and keeping memories of the zoo and of animals "close" in order for visitors to create a personal collection of zoo-

related souvenirs and about sustaining the narrative fantasy of zoopolitical citizenship. I have bought a range of souvenirs over the years: a hat at the Bronx Zoo, some cups at the Seattle Zoo, a tee-shirt at the Albuquerque Zoo.

Of course, gift shops are markers of zoos' commercialization and their status as capitalist institutions, even though most of them are non-profits. Zoos make most of their money on the products they sell in gift shops and on concessions. As a result, gift shops are places where visitors consume traditional colonialist adventure narratives, like those in Binder Park, Cleveland, and the Bronx. Much zoo "apparel" looks like safari apparel, as in a display in the Cincinnati gift shop (Figure 2.10.). Souvenirs are responsible for the revenue that allows zoos to meet the costs of daily operation. The costs of running a "wild" zoo in the post-1980s era are astronomical. As Maple notes, the naturalistic gorilla exhibit at Zoo Atlanta cost the zoo $20,000 in vegetation each month.[157] When critics focus on zoos' turn to "edutainment" and their increasingly commercialized atmospheres that resemble theme parks, they are criticizing both the expense of "naturalizing" zoos and zoos' needs to remain viable in a capitalist economy and in an era of radically reduced public funding for parks of all kinds. Are there possibly other ways of making

money? Probably—and critics' questions about whether this kind of money would be better spent on habitat conservation than on zoo displays are worth considering.

Figure 2.10. Safari Suit, Cincinnati Zoo Gift Shop. *Personal photograph.*

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[157] Maple, *Zoo Man*, 140.

But, as it is, zoos' forging of zoopolitan citizenship is not just a narrative fantasy

for visitors. AZA-accredited zoos spend $160 million a year supporting conservation-

based projects around the globe.[158] That is roughly $1 for every visitor who enters an

AZA-accredited institution. Furthermore, because they are local institutions that reach

local consumers, many zoos are able to get corporate financial support for their projects

and exhibits that potentially free up resources for conservation-projects both in the U.S.

and abroad, projects that are often unable to galvanize corporate support, because of their

supposedly "anti-business" objectives of protecting habitats and building community

partnerships. Zoos are institutions, for sure, but they are collectives of many different

kinds of interests; and although there are corporate-minded administrators in zoos, there

are also deep ecologists and seriously committed scientists. One need only talk to some

of the keepers and curators to realize that zoos are collectives of worker-citizens,[159] both

human and animal, that bring together a wide range of interests, intentions, desires, and

politics.

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[158] Association of Zoos and Aquariums, "Zoo and Aquarium Statistics," http://www.aza.org/zoo-aquarium-statistics/.

[159] Both Donna Haraway and Nigel Rothfels have urged the move of considering animals to be producers of labor rather than just potential recipients of "rights." In *When Species Meet*, Haraway moves to consider animals as workers in her analysis of the scientific laboratory: "My suspicion is that we might nurture responsibility with and for other animals better by plumbing the category of labor more than the category of rights, with its inevitable preoccupation with similarity, analogy, calculation, and honorary membership in the expanded abstraction of the Human." Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 73. Rothfels makes a similar move at the end of an essay entitled "Immersed with Animals." He suggests that zoo animals can be considered as workers. Their exhibits constitute their work environment—and their night quarters are their places for relaxing and being "off." Nigel Rothfels, "Immersed with Animals," in *Representing Animals,* ed. Nigel Rothfels (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 199-224. The notion of "work" and labor has also been part of the discussion within zoos about enrichment. In *Life at the Zoo*, Robinson uses the notion of animal "unemployment" to help create standards for animal care. The more time an animal spends unemployed the lower his/her quality of life. Phillip T. Robinson, *Life at the Zoo* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). Haraway's move to think of animals as laborers has a different aim: to consider the real work they do in our nature-cultures. In looking at laboratory animals through this lens, Haraway acknowledges the impossibility of ending animal use in science. The lens of "work" is a potentially more fruitful one than ideology critique at contemporary zoos for similar reasons: zoos are not going anywhere any time soon—and without the labor of animals, people would not go to zoos at all.

Some of those different interests emerge in debates like that surrounding keeping

elephants in zoos: whether to do it at all, whether to have "free" or "protected" contact,

etc. These debates lay bare the political lines that cross and sometimes divide the

zoopolitan collectives zoos create around different players and their conflicting concerns

about the animals, the institution's image, the community's desires, and the keepers'

safety. Elephants have always been among the most beloved zoo animals, but as Rothfels

notes, they have been progressively removed from direct contact with the public.[160] Some

major figures in the zoo world, like David Hancocks, now categorically oppose keeping

elephants in zoos, because they require more roaming space than most institutions can

provide, especially when they are in cold climates where elephants need to be housed

indoors for the winter. But elephants are beloved creatures to many zoo visitors, and the

Detroit Zoo's decision to close its elephant exhibit in 2004 was met with a lot of

resistance.[161] The zoos that do continue to keep elephants are increasingly moving to a

"protected" contact ethos that means no one—including keepers—will have direct

contact (without bars) with the animals. Zoos characterize this shift as supporting the

welfare of the animals, since free contact has sometimes meant human "domination" over

elephants. Many keepers, however, oppose the change as restricting their abilities to build

relationships with the animals, even if free contact has its (sometimes fatal) risks.[162]

These debates are fundamentally about the costs and benefits (for humans and

elephants) of proximity between human and elephant citizens in zoos, a proximity that is

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[160] See Nigel Rothfels, "Touching Animals: The Search for a Deeper Understanding of Animals," in *Beastly Natures*, ed. Dorothy Brantz (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 38-59.
[161] See Maryann Mott, "More U.S. Zoos to be Closing Elephant Exhibits," *National Geographic News*, March 2, 2006, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2006/03/0302_060302_elephants.html.
[162] See Christen Wemmer and Catherine Christen, eds., *Elephants and Ethics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008) for more extensive analysis of these debates.

both highly prized and potentially dangerous. At the end of one visit to the Bronx Zoo, I talked to one of the lion keepers while lingering by the lion exhibit, and she bemoaned the fact that keepers have long been kept at a distance from lions. I had looped back to this exhibit after visiting the gift shop, to draw out the minutes before the zoo's closing. I stood for nearly half an hour watching three adult lions play with six cubs. Watching animals of any species play is transfixing to me—because it seems like a simultaneously familiar and foreign scene. I could almost feel what it might be like to be in that playing collective, even as I recognized that there was no way I ever could feel what it would be like.[163] The simultaneous feeling of proximity and distance in sharing a space with animals captures the tensions of zoopolitan citizenship—and I could see why the keeper might want, for example, to be part of that play.

But standing at the lion exhibit as the sun was starting to set, I could only think of the experience as a gift. From the lions? Maybe. From the zoo? Possibly. From "nature"? Probably. The keeper told me that this was one of the most playful groups of lions she had ever seen, including during her time in Africa. And to me, the gift of seeing and momentarily being part of this playful collective—even at a distance—was enough, because it gave me an occasion to appreciate a very mundane and unexceptional set of interactions. And it taught me to pay a different kind of attention to such habitual interactions. This gift is, perhaps, part of what Sedgwick, in my epigraph, finds fulfilling at the zoo. It is a connection, however partial, with animals who inhabit the earth with us. That gift is one of the potentials of the zoopolitan world zoos have become.

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[163] Books like Kevin Richardson's *Part of the Pride* (2009) have been widely successful because they tap into this desire to know what it is like to be an intimate "part" of lions' lives.

The sense of having been gifted something through feeling wonder, delight, pleasure, and even at times horror, envy, and nostalgia does not efface the many troubling aspects of zoos—and the presence of racist, imperialistic narratives. Even a zoo like the Bronx Zoo in a sophisticated urban center with extensive resources and access to top scholars, curators, and human rights activists, perpetuates stereotypes about "Africa" and "Asia," in particular. "Africa" still comes across as unpopulated wilderness with unsophisticated native hut-villages. Even if the WCS's conservation projects work with animal and human populations around the globe in progressive ways and take into account the risks of "eco-imperialism" or "green imperialism," the zoo's exhibits have yet to find less problematic ways to represent a whole continent's diverse populations and variety in cultural heritage, political structures, and geographies.[164] These are the risks and dangers of zoopolitan worlds and the ways in which animals come to stand in for distant continents and cultures.

The sense of having been gifted something emotional and aesthetic is likely a function of the fact that my life—and as a whole "our" contemporary lives—are, as Burger suggests, distanced from most "wild" animals. In an essay entitled "Touching Animals," Rothfels argues that before the late nineteenth century and the advent of zoos, circuses, and later visual technologies that made seeing especially exotic animals a common occurrence, people valued catching even a glimpse of animals. Now, according to Rothfels, what people truly seek is to touch an animal, a desire that has emerged in an era when touching animals (who are not pets) is not a common every-day practice.[165] The

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[164] See Paul Driessen, *Eco-Imperialism: Green Power, Black Death* (Bellevue, WA: Free Enterprise Press, 2003).
[165] Nigel Rothfels, "Touching Animals: The Search for a Deeper Understanding of Animals," in *Beastly Natures*, ed. Dorothy Brantz (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 38-59.

experience of wonder and of zoopolitan citizenship at the zoo is related to this desire to touch; it is, in effect, a being touched by individual animals, being marked by an experience.

Wonder discourse in zoos functions to re-value seeing animals when touching them is often not possible. But the fact that touching animals is so rare need not be exclusively about a modern historical narrative of alienation from animals that many scholars, beginning with Berger, have perpetuated.[166] Those narratives themselves rest on a cultural nostalgia for a pre-industrial, pastoral "nature" that zoos do sometimes participate in (as with "The Great Bear Wilderness" exhibit). Although it is important to recognize historical transitions in the ways humans and animals relate, the reproductions of the same narrative of distance and alienation tends to exclude the possibility of other ways of relating to and being with animals now.

Some scholars claim that contemporary human-animal relations are conditioned exclusively by symbolism.[167] Symbols and other forms of cultural narratives shape our interactions with animals, but that does not mean that animals as specific living beings do not also exist and live with their own idiosyncrasies and embodied actions, operating within, against, and beyond those human symbols. Zoo animals are not a single category

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[166] Susan Willis, "Looking at the Zoo," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 94, n.4 (Fall 1999): 669-87, makes a similar claim to Berger's, updated for an era of mass media. She writes, "…above all else, in the video era the plate-glass enclosure represents the interjection of the TV monitor into the landscape. The consummate medium of consumption, television compresses the spectacle and the commodity in a neat package where there is no distinction between function and object. Seeing is buying. Our whole world is the Home Shopping Network. Every object is a commodity, just as every object is televisual…. Seen from this perspective, the zoo is Nam June Paik's garden of monitors, wherein the gorilla on the other side of the plate glass replicates the gorilla on *Animal Planet*. Gone is the rude reality of animal as other, held behind bars or kept at bay by a moat. This is the animal as already virtual, as pure phantasmagoria. Willis, "Looking at the Zoo," 686.
[167] For a good overview of the debate between symbolist humanist research and materialist social science-based research, see Dorothy Brantz's "Introduction" to *Beastly Natures*, 1-13.

of beings, and, as I hope has become clear, our interactions with them are shaped by symbols, narrative exhibits, preconceptions, but they are also shaped by individual animals' behavior, movements, and habits. Scholarship on zoos and other animal spaces that ignores the presence and actions of actual, living animals is as responsible for the "death of the animal" and the alienation of humans and animals as is capitalistic industrial "modernity" writ large.

In creating zoogeographic worlds of zoopolitan human and animal citizens, zoos recognize people's desires to be close to animals, but they also recognize the need for counter-narratives that contest the supposed alienation of humans and animals and forge connections with animals and ecosystems. Of course, these interactions are mediated by and produced within capitalistic, industrial structures. Zoos exploit those structures for their own benefit. They create a taxonomy of affective experiences and of zoopolitan belonging based on experiential proximity to animals. There are distant spectacles of "savagery" like the "Big Feed," which are associated with "low culture," even as they are accessible primarily to the middle class. But zoos have also moved into much more "elite" forms of spectacle, packaging expensive on- and off-site safaris that stage a much larger narrative of colonialist reenactment for well-to-do zoo supporters, tourists, and both amateur and professional photographers.[168] There are overnights at the zoo, behind-

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[168] The National Geographic photographer Michael Nichols, who put together the *Keepers of the Kingdom* collection, talks about being confronted with the task of doing a project on zoos for National Geographic after having been assigned for years to projects in "wild nature" abroad: "When *National Geographic* asked me to undertake a photographic survey of where the American zoo is today, I had just finished a ten-year journey through the world of great apes, both in the wild and in captivity.... My response to the zoo proposal, then, was that zoos were not important enough to warrant a similar expenditure of time and energy. Photographers, as a species, have a short life span and consequently must choose their projects with care. Furthermore, *National Geographic* projects...tend to make a lengthy and lasting impression on one's body of work." Nichols, of course, takes the job, and after his initial hesitation finds himself "obsessed with finding the best zoos had to offer," which turned out to mean that he took thousands of photographs in zoos that often looked as if they were taken "in the wild." Nichols, *Keepers of the Kingdom*, 10.

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the-scenes tours, and special encounter-based events for those willing and able to pay for them. In addition, there are different kinds of "safaris," available at select institutions like the San Diego Zoo's Safari Park and the Columbus Zoo's "The Wilds" park. Advertising for these "wilderness experiences" is often found in zoos' gift shops and by their exits, as if proposing a "supersizing" of the zoo experience: if you thought what you just saw was wonderful, wait until you see it on safari! There is a bigger, better form of the wonder-collectives zoos strive to foster. The more money you pay, the closer to the animals you get, and the more zoopolitan the experience. For thousands less than it would cost to actually go on safari in Africa, you can have the experience in California or Ohio. This is not just a valuation of a first-hand experience, but of the quality and proximity of a first-hand experience that renders an experience more "authentic."

A number of zoos also organize group trips to "conservation" sites around the world, where patrons go on safari in the wild with zoo-employed guides. These zoo-sponsored all-inclusive vacation packages come at a high premium and are often purchased by zoo donors who support the zoo well beyond paying for a membership. All of these "special" experiences capitalize on zoo visitors' desire to experience wonder and get closer to animals, their "natural" habitats, and habits in the hope that the animals will touch them, if not physically, then emotionally, transforming them into global zoopolitan, nature-citizens. The Cincinnati Zoo's webpage on "Behind-the-scenes Experiences," indeed, runs a series of photos, all of which picture visitors and animals touching. That hope for touch is based on an expectation that animals—contrary to Berger's assertion—do have the capacity to see us, perhaps even better than we see them.

The pedestrian nature of zoo wonders allows for their re-packaging in different

forms for an increasing price that promises less pedestrian contact. The sign enumerating

the different safaris at the San Diego Zoo's Safari Park (Figure 2.11.) makes the

hierarchy of that escalating scale clear. I took the basic "African Tram Safari," which

costs $42 and provides access to the park and a ride on the tram around a small part of the

expansive landscape. The ride takes roughly twenty-minutes and goes by half a dozen

animals. While on the tram, you can see cart safari vehicles, caravan safari vehicles, and

rolling safari segways, and those safaris clearly give visitors more mobility and greater

access to the park. Throughout the park there are also advertisements for the "Jungle

Ropes Safari" and the "Rolling Safari" to entice visitors to enhance their experiences.

Figure 2.11. "Choose Your Safari,"
San Diego Zoo Safari Park.
Personal photograph.

"Upgrades" to the zoo experience become markers of class and forms of experiential capital not entirely unlike the national park experiences of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But these forms of experience are less about the "nation" as such than about "nature"—in its supposedly "wild" and authentic incarnations. Connecting with "nature" in this way, perhaps ironically, has become a marker of "being human," a marker of authenticity, and more recently, a marker of global eco-conscious citizenship. The pedestrian-ness of zoo experiences is, in that sense, crucial. As Rebecca Solnit writes in her history of walking, *Wanderlust*, evolutionary biology now suggests that "upright walking is the first hallmark of what became humanity."[169] Bipedalism changed the development of our brains, our sexuality, our ability to use tools. And bipedalism and pedestrianism are forms of vulnerability. In our contemporary highly technologized contexts, they are a kind of temporary stripped-down version of our lives.

But the strange thing about zoos is that they both perpetuate notions of nature and wilderness as distant places while locating "nature" in institutional spaces that themselves collapse the nature-culture divide. In that sense, their very pedestrian wonders have the potential to bring "nature" home, in the ways that Cronon advocates—by showing visitors a nature that "can stop being (just) out there and start being (also) in here."[170] The "gift" of the possibility of being touched by wonder in its collective zoo forms is the potential beginning of that movement—an abstract, conceptual movement with very material consequences—of "nature" to the "inside." This bringing nature in is also figured as a transformation of visitors into zoopolitan global citizens who will take what they feel, see, and learn at the zoo "out" in the form of action to save animals, habitats,

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[169] Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust* (New York: Penguin Books, 2001), 32.
[170] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 90.

and the very notion of the possibility of a zoopolitan world inhabited by multispecies

citizens.

Chapter Three

(Re-)Animated Wonders:
Disney's Techno-natural "Movies, Magic, and More"

> "I admit I approached Disneyland with many intellectual reservations, myself, but these have been banished in my seven visits. Disney makes mistakes; what artist doesn't? But when he flies, he really flies. I shall be indebted to him for a lifetime for his ability to let me fly over midnight London looking down on that fabulous city, in his Peter Pan ride….an experience of true delight and wonder."[1]

In a little known 1923 short film entitled *Alice's Wonderland*, a flesh and blood Alice visits a cartoon studio for the first time. There, she watches in awe as hand-drawn cartoons magically jump off the sketchpad in animated excitement, matched only by Alice's delight. When she goes home at the end of the day, she, in turn, animatedly tells her mother about what she saw. As she goes to bed and closes her eyes, she is once again transported into another world: a full-blown cartoon wonderland.

This film was produced by Laugh-O-Grams studios in Kansas City, MO, the label created by a young Walt Disney. As one of Disney's earliest productions, the combination live-action and cartoon film is a kind of ars poetica for the still-emerging art of animation.[2] Alice's waking experience of the cartoon studio produces a form of visual

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[1] Ray Bradbury, "Letter to the Editor," *Nation* (June 28, 1958), quoted in Walt Disney's Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering: A Behind the Dreams Look at Making the Magic Real* (New York: Hyperion Books, 1996), 19.

[2] Although animation is generally recognized to have a long history, reaching back to sequential drawings assembled to create the illusion of movement, its modern history is usually drawn to J. Stuart Blackton's 1900 *Enchanted Drawing* and 1906 *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces*. For more on the early history of

wonder whose effects and value are subsequently narrated in a dream. The wonder of seeing the cartoons transports Alice in *Alice's Wonderland* to an imaginary landscape defined by cartoon geographies and inhabitants, while she remains a live-action, "real" figure. This journey begins with Alice embarking on a train that takes her through classic western American landscapes, including a desert, a canyon the train has to jump over, and distant snow-covered mountains. Upon her arrival in cartoonland, Alice is greeted by cartoon zoo animals—a giraffe, an elephant, a hippopotamus, monkeys, etc.—and eventually is chased by some lions who escape their cage.

In producing this "cartoonland" qua wonderland, the film presents animation as a technology that can transport viewers to distant natures. Its uses of natural landscapes and animals in Alice's imaginative journey also reveal nature as a technology of the imagination. The invocations of nature and of railroads further naturalize the technologies of animation of/in the film by showing that animation is a form of nature and technology by which Alice and viewers are transported to new landscapes. The film further draws on and re-animates the long-standing American wonder motifs and traditions I discuss in my two previous chapters—namely, landscapes, trains, and exotic animals—and thus situates cartoon animation within these broader genealogies of natural wonder in U.S. culture.

I begin this chapter's discussion of Disney-crafted wonders with this little known version of *Alice's Wonderland*, because it exemplifies much of what I will argue has defined Disney wonder over the course of nearly a century: the coupling of nature and technology, the invocation, re-iteration and re-animation of wonder motifs and histories, and the positing of wonder as an imaginative affect and creative inspiration. *Alice's*

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animation, see Charles Solomon, *Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989).

Wonderland is, of course, a modernized adaptation or re-animation of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* through a coupling of live-action and cartoon mediums. It is a filmic narrative in which wonder is sparked by a visual apprehension of technology, which then serves as a mechanism of transportation. Alice's wonder at the cartoon studio becomes a creative vehicle for her imaginative dream, itself defined by a vehicle of transportation (the train). Thus, her initial wonder at the cartoon studio is generative of a new imaginary world. As we will see, wonder in Disney's vast cultural and artistic corpus operates in a similar way: as a technology that transports visitors imaginatively and emotionally to envision and create alternate lands and/or worlds.

The 1923 *Alice's Wonderland*, a precursor to the later and better-known Disney films, the feature-length cartoon *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) and the live-action Tim Burton *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), attests to the historical re-iteration and re-animation of wonder narratives through new technologies and technological landscapes. The film highlights the centrality of wonder to Disney's history, and by extension to twentieth- and twenty-first-century U.S. popular culture. As scholar of popular culture Margaret King has noted, Disney productions and theme parks have been so significant to U.S. history and culture that we might well consider the theme parks in particular to be "capitals" of popular culture. Writing in 1981, King argued that: "Since the numbers of visitors to both parks together [Disneyland and Disney World] (16-18 million per year) exceeds the number going to Washington, D.C., the official capital, Disney Land and World can be said to be the popular culture capitals of America."[3] Today, her point may ring even truer

[3] Margaret King, "Disneyland and Walt Disney World: Traditional Values in Futuristic Form," *Journal of Popular Culture* 15, n. 1 (Summer 1981), 117.

as annual park attendance at Disney resorts in the U.S. exceeds 72,000,000.[4] Disney's

place at the center of American—and, indeed, global—popular culture is indisputable.

Disney theme parks are now sites of pilgrimage[5] not only in the U.S., but in Paris, Tokyo,

Hong Kong, and by the end of 2015, a new park is set to open in Shanghai. The

experiences visitors gain and participate in at parks around the world are, of course,

centered around Disney movies and characters. But, Disney's success—and its status as

"one of the wonders of the modern world"[6]—rests in its ability to create technological

experiences of nature and naturalized experiences of technology through a constant re-

iteration and re-animation of wonder motifs and narratives that have been central both to

Disney productions and to American history.

Wonder is, in some sense, everywhere in Disney. Wonder, dreams, and magic are

all part of the primary concepts, emotions, and experiences that Disney seeks to create in

viewers and guests. Disney markets its parks through these concepts as otherworldly,

uncommon escapes from the every-day. As I noted in chapter one, Gilmore and Pine,

among other scholars, claim that Walt Disney and especially Disney's theme parks are

the origins of the notion of an "experience economy." Chapters one and two have

examined two institutional sites and contexts in which wonder participates in an

"experience economy" in Gilmore and Pines's terms and acts as a form of cultural capital

I have called experiential capital. Both national parks and zoos—along with railroads,

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[4] This figure is for 2012, and include attendance at Disneyland (CA), Disney California Adventure (CA), Magic Kingdom (FL), Hollywood Studios (FL), EPCOT (FL), Animal Kingdom (FL). See Wikipedia, "List of Amusement Park Rankings," *Wikipedia.org*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_amusement_park_rankings#cite_note-2012_Report-5.

[5] For an analysis of Disney World as a ritual space of "playful pilgrimage," see Alexander Moore, "Walt Disney World: Bounded Ritual Space and the Playful Pilgrimage Center," *Anthropological Quarterly* 53:4 (1980): 207-19.

[6] Richard Schickel, *The Disney Version* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), 267.

landscape architects, animals, and conservationists, among many other players—have been engaged in producing so-called "themed" experiences for touristic consumption long before the first Disney theme park, Disneyland, opened in Anaheim, CA in 1955.

In this chapter, the notion of experiential capital is less important to my analysis, because of the ubiquity of Disney experiences and Disney's status as a kind of global *lingua franca*. By the end of the twentieth century, Disney experiences had become so pervasive that children and adults were and are more likely to be marked by *not* having been to Disney World or Disneyland. In this sense, Disney experiences are less about distinguishing forms of cultural capital than they are about experiential deficits for those who have not experienced Disney, or experiential accumulation for those who return to the theme parks, and vacation clubs again and again to experience and re-experience Disney wonder and magic.

The relative non-exceptionality of Disney experiences would seem to preclude the possibility of experiencing wonder at Disney attractions. Wonder, here, however, emerges not just as a function of rarity and exceptionality, but as a function of novelty through familiarity and re-visionary repetition. Indeed, Disney exemplifies wonder's reliance not only on notions of singularity and uniqueness, but on structures of repetition and revision. These structures are, in some significant ways, at work in both the national park and zoo contexts I examined in chapters one and two, especially through the emphatic repetition and re-iteration of wonder rhetoric as an authorization of first-hand experience. The re-iterative and re-visionary nature of wonder, however, is especially visible and important in the Disney context and in the context of technological histories.

National parks and zoos are both sites of "natural" wonder, but, as I have argued over the course of the last two chapters, nature in both contexts is defined through narrative devices, and natural wonder is discursively constituted through travel accounts, guidebooks, advertisements, exhibits, and so forth. It may nonetheless seem strange to some readers that my analysis of the history of wonder as a framework for thinking about nature in the U.S. would culminate in what many consider to be the most "in-authentic" environments of all: Disney theme parks. As *Alice's Wonderland* exemplifies, however, Disney's technological wonders are built on histories, figures, and motifs of the wonders of nature I examined in chapters one and two. In Disney's wide-ranging cultural productions, wonder as both an emotion and a rhetoric relies on consistent re-iteration and re-animation through different mediums and media. Again, *Alice's Wonderland* is exemplary both in its status as an adaptation of Lewis Carroll and in its animation of western American landscapes and zoo animals, framing a re-iteration of established wonder motifs.

Disney's animations and re-animations in film and theme park design do not rely only on re-iterations of wonder motifs. The wonder of Disney's animated technologies also lies in the theme parks' creation of environments in which nature is technologized and technology is naturalized in such a way that "nature" and "technology," as supposedly antithetical categories, are redefined. Disney's "(re)animated wonder" of this chapter's title is, indeed, a re-iteration and redefinition of both "nature" and "technology" through a collapse of the distinction between the two in Disney's theme parks and their diverse forms of attractions (movies, rides, architecture, performances, etc.).

I have heard it said about both zoos and Disney that there is no real wonder in such "artificial" places; wonder is just a rhetorical tool of commercialization, a form of public manipulation. Wonder and its cousins "magic," "dream," and "imagination" are so pervasive at Disney—as words and concepts—that they can seem both undefinable and meaningless. As early as 1968, just over a year after Walt Disney died, Richard Schickel claimed in the foreword of his "analytic biography," *The Disney Version*, that: "There were certain words—'warm,' 'wonderful,' 'amazing,' 'dream,' 'magical'—that attached themselves to Walt Disney's name like parasites.... They are all debased words, words that have lost most of their critical usefulness and, indeed, the power to evoke any emotional response beyond a faint queasiness."[7] Over forty-five years later, Schickel's statement still stands, especially in scholarly contexts, and not just for Walt Disney, the man, but for just about anything Disney: the movies, the parks, the broader "disneyfication" of American culture and of cultures worldwide.

In this chapter's epigraph, Ray Bradbury alludes to early skepticism about Disneyland. Bradbury, one of Disney's biggest public defenders, writes about being won over through multiple visits by the artistry of the park and its wonderful ability to create physical and emotional experiences we might never otherwise have access to. The tension between hostile skepticism towards Disney and delighted wonder defines the poles of critical disdain and popular response to Disney films and theme parks.

Schickel's *The Disney Version* inaugurated a critical tradition that most Disney scholars of the past five decades have followed: scoffing at words like "wonder," "dream," and "magic" that are at the center of the Disney empire and the technologically-

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[7] Ibid., 10.

defined experiences it produces. The "Magic Kingdom," the first of four parks built at

Disney World in Florida (opened in 1971) is often heralded as "fake." Disney's cruise

ships, the "Disney Wonder" and "Disney Dream," are seen as part of an ensemble of

tourist packages that offer up "inauthentic" experiences. Disney's Animal Kingdom,

which I mentioned in chapter two as one of the standard-setting institutions in the zoo

world, is routinely criticized for promoting "fake" symbols of nature in a park that is

supposed to be about "real" animals.[8] The past several decades of Disney scholarship

have focused on the distinctions between the "fake" and the "real" or the "authentic" and

the "inauthentic," often pointing to Disney as the pinnacle of fakeness and

inauthenticity.[9]

In 2006, Thomas Doherty, an American Studies scholar, published a critical

account of Disney Studies in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. He writes: "Unlike the

company's consumer base, scholars have never much cuddled up to Walt and his

friends…. But lately the impulse to deface the squeaky clean pictures and trash the

pristine grounds of the perpetual-motion image machine has become something akin to a

professional duty."[10] Doherty notes that the tendency among scholars is not only to

criticize Disney productions, but to demonize Walt Disney. Peter Schweizer and Rochelle

Schweizer's *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed* is a good example of this work produced in the

1990s. Its opening pages even feature a "Warning" from the authors: "In order to

accurately portray the Disney Company we have had to include material that is unsuitable

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[8] See Shelley Scott, "Conserving: Consuming and Improving on Nature in Disney's Animal Kingdom," *Theater Topics* 17, n.2 (September 2007): 111-27.

[9] Fjellman's *Vinyl Leaves* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 255, exemplifies this focus, even going so far as to push the distinction further into "real real," "fake real," "real fake," and "fake fake."

[10] Thomas Doherty, "The Wonderful World of Disney Studies," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 9, 2006, http://chronicle.com/article/The-Wonderful-World-of-Disney/9806.

for children and that some adult readers may find offensive."[11] The book's chapters

include "Mickey Rocks: Sex, Drugs, and Satan," "Disney's Pedophile Problem," and

"The Lyin' King."

Post-9/11, Disney Studies has become more global in focus, but continues to hold

the party line of hostility towards Disney productions and histories. Pointing to Mike

Budd and Max H. Kirsch's *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimensions* as

exemplary of current Disney scholarship,[12] Doherty notes that the book is, not unlike the

Schweizers' earlier book, "bent on queering the Disney brand, dissing [Michael] Eisner,

and trashing the theme parks…. The volume has more index references for 'commodity

fetishism' than for Mickey Mouse." For Doherty, although Disney Studies is far from

"dopey," much of the work being done in the field is "grumpy" and perhaps a bit too

quick to smooth over the real challenges of studying a popularly loved and critically

disliked institution. [13]

Doherty points to a very few recent books that offer "friendly" encounters with

Disney that "risk ostracism" in refraining from trashing the Mouse.[14] Douglas Brode's

Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment is one of the

strongest examples. It argues, contrary to critical consensus, that Walt Disney and Disney

productions were front-runners in promoting multiculturalism.[15] For Doherty, one of the

reasons Disney Studies has so belabored the same, now predictable critiques may have to

[11] Peter Schweizer and Rochelle Schweizer, *Disney: The Mouse Betrayed* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 1998).

[12] Mike Budd and Max H. Kirsch, *Rethinking Disney: Private Control, Public Dimensions* (Wesleyan University Press, 2005).

[13] Doherty, "The Wonderful World of Disney Studies."

[14] Ibid.

[15] Douglas Brode, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment* (University of Texas Press, 2005).

do with "the protective layer around…the Mouse House."[16] As a corporate entity, the company is protective of its brand and archives. Doherty notes that *Rethinking Disney* does not contain a single illustration from a Disney film, and many critics seem to think that access to images and archives requires sympathy to the company's goals or willingness to pay large sums for rights. My own discussion of Disney here uses images selectively, because of the challenges of securing rights from Disney, although I do include hyperlinks to videos and performances available online.

Although these challenges are real, for Doherty, the central, "greatest challenge facing Disney scholars is to ponder the gulf between elite contempt and popular devotion," a gap that even nearly a decade later remains largely unexplored. Doherty's overview of Disney Studies ends with a call for more complex readings and understandings of Walt Disney, the man, and the Disney Company's productions. Disney, he says, warrants "a more three-dimensional rendering than either the official portrait as the genial Uncle Walt or the revisionist defacing as the Evil Stepfather."[17] Nonetheless, since Doherty's 2006 assessment of Disney Studies, scholarly writing on Disney has continued to conform to the "Evil Stepfather" narrative. *Multiculturalism and the Mouse* has seen something of a rebuke in Johnson Cheu's *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability.*[18] Although this more recent treatment of multiculturalism does not attack Disney, the essays it contains suggest that upon close inspection seemingly progressive developments in Disney films

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[16] Doherty, "The Wonderful World of Disney Studies."
[17] Ibid.
[18] Johnson Cheu, *Diversity in Disney Films: Critical Essays on Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality and Disability* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company, 2013).

may, in fact, not indicate much more than Disney's ability to mirror and keep up with "our increasingly diverse society."[19]

M. Keith Booker's *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films* similarly employs a hermeneutics of suspicion in examining films of the Disney-Pixar era (1995-today).[20] Chris Pallant's *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation* takes a less damning and more historical approach to examining the evolution of Disney filmography from the 1930s through to the more recent Disney-Pixar era, examining the ways in which Walt Disney and the Disney Company have been pioneers and innovators in animation, an argument that is nonetheless tempered by Pallant's note that Disney was, in many ways, "the right person at the right time."[21] This assessment is as close to an even-handed treatment of Disney as contemporary scholarship gets.

Among the most influential and lasting readings of Disney is Jean Baudrillard's analysis of Disneyland in California (the first park, opened in 1955). For Baudrillard, Disneyland is emblematic of an order of hyperreal simulation that has replaced the "real":

> Disneyland is presented as imaginary in order to make us believe that the rest is real, whereas all of Los Angeles and the America that surrounds it are no longer real, but belong to the hyperreal order and to the order of simulation. It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus saving the reality principle.[22]

For Baudrillard, Disneyland is a "deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate the fiction of the real,"[23] and Disney's films and amusement parks are supposed to be

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[19] Ibid., back cover.
[20] M. Keith Booker, *Disney, Pixar, and the Hidden Messages of Children's Films* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2010).
[21] Chris Pallant's *Demystifying Disney: A History of Disney Feature Animation* (New York: Continuum, 2011).
[22] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 12-13.
[23] Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, 13.

perceived as "fake" in the interest of maintaining a widespread, public notion of "reality" grounded in the rest of life outside of Disney.

Following Baudrillard, Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyperreality* discusses Disneyland and Disney World as instances that exemplify the "American imagination['s] demand [for] the real thing and, to attain it, [it] must fabricate the absolute fake."[24] Disney's parks are not singular in this regard, but they are the "chief examples" of this phenomenon. The absolute fake for Eco, in effect, stimulates desire for the fake and "our will to buy," and Disney is the "quintessence of consumer ideology."[25] The fake is not fake to mimic or replace the real; it is fake in order to create a hyper-real, "because the public is meant to admire the perfection of the fake and its obedience to the program.... Disneyland tells us that technology can give us more reality than nature can."[26] This dynamic does not constitute an illusion for Eco. Rather, it is the production of "total theater."[27] In a similar, though more critical vein, scholars have argued that all things Disney—but the theme parks, in particular—are about artifice and a technologically-determined "nature that has been worked and transformed, subsumed by the doctrine of progress."[28] Nature, in the Disney corpus, is merely a thematic device, "relentlessly evoked"[29] in the service of theatrical entertainment.

My aim here is neither to praise nor to critique Disney's productions, but to better understand how Disney functions for those millions of visitors who find in the movies

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[24] Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1986), 8.
[25] Ibid., 43.
[26] Ibid., 44.
[27] Ibid., 45.
[28] Alexander Wilson, "Technological Utopias," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92, n. 1 (Winter 1993), 164. This issue of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* edited by Susan Willis is entirely devoted to essays on "The World According to Disney."
[29] Ibid.

and theme parks something wonderful that is worth their time, money, and, in many cases, repeated devotion. In this chapter, I place Disney and its theme parks, in particular, in a broader genealogy of wonder in the U.S. by arguing that Disney's cultural productions might also be read and experienced as a model for the relationship between nature and technology that does not resolve in such labels as "real" and "fake" or "real" and "hyperreal." I argue that Disney's parks do not "regenerate the fiction of the real," as Bourdieu argues; rather, they re-animate natures and narratives in forging techno-natural environments that point to the constructed nature of all place-making, both natural and technological, and reveal that the nature/technology binary is itself a false dichotomy. In what follows, I present a necessarily selective reading of Disney attractions and films, since it would be impossible to account for all of Disney—a company whose cultural productions span nine decades, innumerable genres and mediums, and at least three continents, to say nothing of the global processes of "Disneyfication."[30]

In its selections, this chapter is organized more loosely than my first two chapters. Chapter one chronologically followed the evolving, traveling roles and values of wonder in examining wonder's codification as an environmental discourse over the course of the nineteenth century. Chapter two was organized around an imagined pedestrian journey through a zoo that showed that zoos are affective collections and collectives whose wonders emerge in the idiosyncratic walking journeys visitors take in moving through their geographies. This chapter weaves in and out of different Disney attractions and historical periods. I ground this chapter's journey in one of Disney's most recent parks— Disney's California Adventure—and one of its most distinguished attractions—the

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[30] On this topic, see especially Alan Bryman, *The Disneyization of Society* (London: SAGE Publishers, 2004).

"World of Color" nighttime spectacular show. In addition to being one of the newest of Disney's technological wonders, the "World of Color" is also one of the last experiences a Disney visitor would undergo in the theme park, as the park closes after the show's conclusion. My aim in focusing on "World of Color" is to foreground one of Disney's most advanced technological performances in order to move backwards in time to other relevant attractions and historical moments. Along with "World of Color," the chapter examines related films, attractions, and performances that invoke wonder. This structure allows me to analyze a range of different iterations and re-animations of Disney wonder narratives. It also exemplifies part of my argument about Disney's wonder practices: that they are associational and multiple, as well as technological. When visitors experience wonder at Disney, it emerges out of a plethora of different kinds of experiences and technologies, as well as the personal and collective associations they have with any given attraction.

The chapter's associational trajectory is also meant to enact the kind of "episodic" wandering and time travel that structure Disney's themed environments and visitors' movements through Disney's animations and re-animations of different geographic and historical moments, among them the American "frontier" (Frontierland), the "wilds" of Africa and Asia (Adventureland and Animal Kingdom), and the early twentieth-century "golden age" of cruise ships (Disney Cruise Lines). As Karal Ann Marling notes, although Disneyland was conceptualized and planned through film culture and history, the theme park experience is not filmic: "In the movies, the experience is continuous and unbroken, but in Disneyland, it is discontinuous and episodic, like watching television in the privacy of one's own home—each ride a four- or five-minute segment, slotted in

among snacks, trips to the rest room, and 'commercials' in the form of souvenir emporia."[31] Indeed, walking through a theme park might mean moving from one moment to the next from an early twentieth-century American "small town" scene on Main Street U.S.A., to the tropical jungle of Adventureland, to a nineteenth-century New Orleans Square. In presenting episodic attractions and histories of Disney wonder, this chapter thus shows that, for nearly a century, Disney has created techno-natural wonderscapes that transport viewers/guests to imaginary landscapes. Disney wonder is fundamentally imaginative, and the re-iterative nature of many Disney productions, highlights the creative, re-visionary potential of wonder for/at Disney. In contrast to wonder's traditional role as an arresting and often immobilizing emotion, Disney's works point to an ideal of generative, productive wonder borne out of experiencing (and consuming) imagineered, techno-natural environments.

The episodic and associational structure of the chapter also highlights the dissertation's larger genealogical project. My analysis in chapter one examined a genealogy of wonder and travel; chapter two's focus on zoos analyzed the genealogy of wonder and collection in twentieth-century conservation-focused zoos. This chapter places Disney's "animated wonders" in a broader genealogy of wonder and technology by examining a range of changing technologies and technological wonders. As I suggested in the introduction, these genealogies are not linear; they are, however, about varieties of historically reproduced and re-animated rhetorics, ideas, and emotions. My analysis of Disney aims to highlight the process of historical re-production and re-animation in its more cyclical trajectories. I examine tropes, ideas, and narratives that

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[31] Karal Ann Marling, "Disneyland 1955: Just Take the Santa Ana Freeway to the American Dream," *American Art* 5, n. 1/2 (Winter-Spring 1991), 205-6.

cycle through different Disney productions and historical moments. Correspondingly, my own trajectory through my argument cycles through a number of different Disney and technological histories, at times following the routes visitors take through the theme parks and at times making use of digressions that cycle back to show specifically how "World of Color" re-animates a range of historical instances of technological wonder.

This episodic, cyclical trajectory is also a function of the technologies I examine and the ways in which they evolve and are used in layered historical ways that do not follow linear trajectories. Indeed, I will insist that Disney's technological innovations and the company's success in crafting wonderscapes rely not only on constant reinvention, re-iteration and re-animation, but on constant returns to past moments and technologies to make them "new" again. Examining Disney—in contrast to the supposedly "timeless" wonders of the natural world—reveals that wonder, as both a rhetoric and an emotion, is itself a technology in need of constant reinvention as expectations, norms, and understandings of nature change over time.

Studying Disney productions poses a number of categorical and analytical challenges. As Pallant examines in a chapter dedicated to "Disney Authorship," the collaborative nature of film production means that Disney—as a production studio and a corporate entity—is "a rather unconventional authorial figure."[32] As early as 1935, the Disney Studio employed 250 people, who were all involved in Disney's first feature-length films. Today, Disney is a much larger entity than just the Studio—and the Studio itself is many times the size it was in the 1930s. Pallant discusses Walt Disney's gradual move from a studio artist to a theme park proprietor, a move, which made him less and

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[32] Pallant, *Demystifying Disney*, 4.

less involved in "authoring" Disney film productions but more involved in "imagineering" space. Disney history and scholarship often attributes some form of authorship to the "Nine Old Men," "a group of senior animators (Les Clark, Marc Davis, Ollie Johnston, Milt Kahl, Ward Kimball, Eric Larson, John Lounsbery, Wolfgang Reitherman and Frank Thomas) who had been at Disney since the 1930s."[33] This group of creative agents, who were central to Disney productions through the 1970s, is possibly the clearest authorial unit in Disney history. In the past several decades, as Pallant notes, Disney CEO in the 1980s and 1990s, Michael Eisner (and his successor Bob Iger), and Chief Creative Officer, John Lasseter, have also been heavily involved in the company's creative productions.

The "Nine Old Men" are associated with Disney films, but in the arena of theme park design as it began to be developed in the 1950s, a different collaborative authorial entity emerged: the Imagineers. As the collaboratively authored book *Walt Disney Imagineering* elaborates, "Imagineering has become a purely Disney word. The name combines imagination with engineering to describe both what we do and who we are."[34] The Imagineers are the creative personnel whose job is "to come up with ideas to build on—and then build those ideas."[35] In their introduction to *Walt Disney Imagineering*, the Imagineers briefly chronicle the transition from a relatively small group of a dozen or so creative engineers to a larger more corporate entity that emerged from the combining of forces in 1996 of Walt Disney Imagineering and the Disney Development Company. As the Imagineers note, as of 1996, "the primary responsibilities for carrying on the

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[33] Ibid., 10.
[34] Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 11.
[35] Ibid.

Imagineering tradition are in the hands of Peter Rummell, Chairman of Walt Disney Imagineering, Marty Sklar, Vice Chairman and Principal Creative Executive, and Ken Wong, President"[36] with thousands of creative people working under and with them.

In this chapter, for the sake of consistency, I often refer to the Imagineers as authorial actants and producers of Disney narratives. If I attribute authorial intentionality to Disney as a collective corporation, it is with the Imagineers in mind. This authorship is collaborative—not only because of the vast size of the studio and the number of people involved in making any given Disney imagineering feat, but also because in recent decades, Disney productions have increasingly engaged with both critical and popular responses to films, rides, and performances. Disney constantly conducts surveys and assessments of the company's performance in the theme parks in particular. In four research visits, two to Disney World and two to Disneyland, over the past three years, I have been asked to fill out three surveys and have been interviewed twice about my experiences in the parks.

The recent widespread acclaim of films like *Frozen* (2013) also attest to the ways in which Disney is now incorporating public opinion and feedback into its productions. *Frozen* is recognized for a range of technological achievements, but two of its most notable features are its strong female protagonists and its challenges to conventional understandings of a "Disney ending" in which a female protagonist-princess winds up with her prince. In *Frozen,* not only does the supposed "prince charming" turn out to be a jerk, but the life-saving love act in the end is one between women (sisters). These character and plot developments are clearly creative responses to public and scholarly

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[36] Ibid.

criticisms of predictability and formula in Disney films. They are part of a collaborative

"authorial" process and a function of Disney's wide-ranging cultural reach and its

unparalleled resources as a major multi-national, multi-media corporation.

In this model of collaborative authorship, Disney viewer-visitor-consumer-

spectators are not merely consumers but part of the authorial collective. Indeed, one of

the pitfalls of Disney Studies is the scholarly treatment of Disney as a single, unified

authorial voice consumed by a duped spectator. Among Disney scholars, there is a

general consensus that consumer-visitors at Disney theme parks do little more than buy

into Disney's products, narratives, and pre-scripted views of the world, all of which

produce alienation and in some cases mindless subjugation to what we might call the

mouse-machine.[37] The theme park environment, however, is considerably more

complicated than that reductive reading would allow, and the relationships between

producer and consumer are no more direct than are Disney-goers' trajectories through the

theme parks. In analyzing Disney wonders, my aim is to tease out the ways in which even

within the hypercommercialization of Disney's stories and environments, there are

openings for re-imagination and participation in narratives and collectives of

transformation that emerge through the experience of Disney's wondrous technological

transformations.

In this chapter, I use a number of different terms for Disney patrons: consumers,

viewers, visitors, spectators, actants, co-authors. The shifting terminology corresponds to

the shiftiness of the roles Disney-goers inhabit. Since the opening of Disneyland in 1955,

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[37] This line of criticism is widespread. See, especially, The Project on Disney, *Inside the Mouse* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), and Carl Hiaasen, *Team Rodent: How Disney Devours the World* (New York: Random House, 2010).

the Disney Company has referred to its patrons as "guests" and to its employees as "cast members." Although Disney theme parks are obviously places of consumption and spectatorship, on the whole I avoid that terminology, because of the ways in which it has been used to oversimplify both guests' roles in theme parks and the relationships between Disney as "author" and "spectators." Disney's theme parks are part-theater, part-shopping mall, part-thrill ride, part-three-dimensional narrative, and much more. As visitors, consumers, riders, viewers and so forth, Disney's guests are, like the zoo-goers I discussed in chapter two, co-producers of their and others' experiences at the theme parks. In what follows, my analysis of Disney's attractions aims to understand how and why those experiences—defined by wonder, magic, and so forth—are valuable, memorable, and often repeatedly worthwhile.

I.   "World of Color": Openings

On June 11, 2010, the <u>"World of Color"</u> nighttime spectacular opened at Paradise Bay in Disney's California Adventure theme park in Anaheim, California. The half-hour show takes place in a three-acre lagoon and brings together 1,200 programmable water jets, music, colored lights, lasers, and fire, in addition to clips from Disney movies. The scenes are projected onto a 380-foot screen made of water, individual fountains rising up to 200 feet in the air out of an underwater platform the size of a football field. [38] At a cost of $75 million, "World of Color" is, in short, a wonder of modern technology. When I saw the show in July of 2012, I was one among several thousand visitors, who stood wonder-struck along the bay's edge—and I immediately wanted to see it again.

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[38] Brooks Barnes, "Disney Hopes Wall of Water Will Revive Theme Park," *The New York Times*, June 10, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/10/business/10disney.html?src=busln&_r=1&.

That desire was a reaction to the impressive, indeed, astounding spectacular nature of the show and my sense of having been unable to grasp its narrative trajectory amid the layering of music, color, film, water, and fire. I wanted to see it again, because I wanted to try to understand what I had just seen and why or how it had so riveted and amazed me. The show is not just a technological wonder; it is, as Disney's vice president for parades and spectaculars, Steven Davison notes, a narrative technology designed "to tell stories in a new way."[39] The "World of Color" narrative is not a traditional Disney plot-driven film narrative built around well-developed characters, nor is it even the four-dimensional film-based narrative experience that unfolds over the course of many Disney theme park rides based on particular films. Instead, "World of Color" assembles segments from a wide range of Disney films.

Davison notes that the show is an attempt at "painting with water," and it was inspired in part by the 1960s-era "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color" television series, [40] a renamed continuation of Disney's original "Disneyland" television series launched in 1954 to sell the park-in-progress to the general public. One of the sung refrains that both opens and closes "World of Color" is "the wonderful world of color," and the performance showcases Disney's history of doing wonderful things with color— from its pioneering use of Technicolor in its *Silly Symphonies* of the 1930s to its first animated feature film *Snow White* (1937) to recent Disney-Pixar digital productions like *Toy Story* (1995), *Finding Nemo* (2003), *Wall-E* (2008), and *Up* (2009). Scenes from these films and many others populate the show's narrative, displaying a variety of

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[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

animation genres and histories from the early hand-drawn comics to contemporary digital graphics.

The show opens with a quote attributed to Walt Disney: "Every child is blessed with a vivid imagination," projected over the lagoon.[41] The quote functions as an epigraph—the only text to appear in the show, save the title—and offers a poetic introduction to the multimedia display. The epigraph frames "World of Color" as a product of a "vivid imagination." It further potentially frames the show as a child's dream-like apprehension of the "world of color" as seen through Disney films. But since everyone was once a child, the epigraph also serves as a reminder of sorts to viewers that they all have a "vivid imagination" that might just need to be re-ignited. In that sense "World of Color" is immediately a technology of the imagination, and the show situates itself as a multi-media experience that has the potential to stimulate viewers' imagination. From the start, the show is figured not just as a product to be consumed or viewed in a passive way. Rather, the wonder of "World of Color" rests in the fact that its technological environment transforms viewers into imaginative actants, who participate in the narrative's trajectory. Because the show takes place in an immersive environment, "spectating" here is about inhabiting the creative technologies of "World of Color." Being a part of the set and the narrative in an immersive way, as the show's epigraph suggests, not only inspires viewers' imaginations; it can transform them into laymen imagineers of sorts, creators and writers of their own stories and wonder technologies.

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[41] All of my analysis of "World of Color" and citations from the show are from The Walt Disney Company, "World of Color," Multi-media Film Performance World Premiere, Disney California Adventure, 27 minutes, June 10, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7o0Icz6ExiM.

As the quote fades, the original musical introduction to "Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color" begins to play and the fountain jets in the lagoon light up in a multi-colored bubbling. The Nashville Choir, together with the London Symphony Orchestra, are responsible for the production of the show's music. The choir comes on, singing "The world is a carousel of color," as colored water comes out of the jets in the bay shooting higher into the night sky (Figure 3.1.). The opening scene thus creates a musical choreography for what might be described as multicolored dancing water jets that act like a massive, live Jackson Pollock painting, in a medium of colored lights projected through water on a night sky canvas. The words "carousel of color" in the choir's opening line are, of course, alliterative, but they also associate color—a "natural" feature—with two technological images: a carousel amusement ride and a carousel slide projector of images. Both associations with the term figure the role of color in the show: as a form of moving amusement, and as a series of technological, sequential image-projections. The term "carousel" is also, however, a subtle articulation of Disney's historical status as a re-animator of traditional theme park attractions and pioneer of sequential moving images.

Figure 3.1. "World of Color," opening water jets, Disney California Adventure. *Personal photograph.*

The colored jets embody the choir's words as "a carousel of color" becomes "a rainbow of imagination." When the choir sings "a blue rolling sea," the jets turn a deep blue; when it sings "a red sunrise... a sunset in the sky," they turn blazing red—and in these movements, the first film images appear in quick flashes: Ariel of *The Little Mermaid* (1989) against the "blue rolling sea," Belle and Beast of *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) against the "red sunrise," and Simba of *The Lion King* (1994) against the "sunset in the sky." As these images fade, the show announces its aims in song: "Beauty, I'm told, is ours to behold. Dazzle your mind and your eyes." These lines are sung to a melody that resembles the tune of *Aladdin's* (1992) famous song "A Whole New World." The show thus frames itself as a dazzling technology that affects both our physical senses and our intellectual and emotional capacities. The show's refrain—"the wonderful world of color"—returns as the introductory movement reaches its peak and the lagoon's jets explode in multicolored dance: "Adventure is waiting... Open your eyes... Imagine and see what wonders can be..." As this prelude comes to a close, the set fades to green.

The opening movement provides a snap-shot of its narrative form. The "World of Color" uses visual assemblages of animations and multi-colored jets as portals to "imagination" and "adventure," leaving the definitions of "what wonders can be" open to viewer-actants. The "story" the show promotes is thus associational in two senses: it creates novel visual, sonic, linguistic and thematic associations among the films it juxtaposes, and it relies on viewers' knowledge of and personal associations with the films "World of Color" draws from to define for themselves "what wonders can be." From the outset, the show does not offer a traditional narrative plot with well-developed characters and a definite end-point. Rather, it points to a diverse range of characters and

narrative pathways that reflect the multiplicity of ways in which color—along with sound, animation, and other media—builds different kinds of perspectives and worlds in Disney films. The show's segments and associations come together in a kaleidoscopic collection of Disney's diverse uses of color and color's historical role in pioneering technological innovation, but it also offers viewers a "build your own adventure" model for entering the "World of Color" and its wonders. In contrast to a "build your own adventure" book, however, the narrative is not pre-written. "Imagine and see what wonders can be" is a directive: "World of Color" will foster viewers' imagination and invest them with the capacity to actively re-animate their own stories, experiences, and pasts through Disney's associational, imaginative performance. In this collective authorial process, Disney's technologies and narratives offer up a world of diverse launching points that open up narrative pathways without pre-determining their contents or ends.

The show's absence of a clear "main character" allows viewer-actants to step in as protagonists at the heart of "World of Color's" performance. In a sense, the show's "main character" is color itself—and its many environmental, biological, and cultural manifestations that make appearances in many different mediums: film projections, lasers, water jets, and fire. These mediums share a common source: light, specifically, electric light. With color as the main character, the associational, pastiche-narrative the show crafts is about the world*s* that color enables in Disney's filmographic history. But, with an abstract main character and an associational structure that rely on viewers' knowledge and experiences of Disney films and color, the show is also about the role of color in viewers' own lives, defining what we see, who we are, and how we experience

the world. Thus, we become a collective of protagonists in the show's performance. The "World of Color" of the show's title can be read as a titular designation for nearly all of Disney's films, many of which make appearances in the show, as well as for "the world" of viewers' everyday environments, most immediately, the environment in which "World of Color" takes place: California.

II.   Revised Trajectories: California Adventure and Disneyland

The "World of Color" show is to Disney's California Adventure park what the famous nightly fireworks display is to Disneyland: a spectacular "finale" at day's end. But both the park and its finale are, in some sense, re-visions of Disneyland and the narrative and spatial trajectories it offers guests. "World of Color" was part of a $1.1 billion expansion at Disney's California Adventure aimed at revising and packaging the park after a disappointing first decade. Opened in 2001, Disney California Adventure, as the park is officially called, initially received negative reviews. After a change in Disney leadership and an infusion of capital, the park officially "re-opened" to widespread acclaim in 2012 with a range of additions and changes, including the entirely new "Cars Land" (based on the successful Disney-Pixar *Cars* movies of 2006 and 2011) and the "World of Color" show. [42]

Even before that revision, California Adventure was conceived in the early 1990s as "Westcot,"[43] a counterpart/reproduction of the "World Showcase"—a museum of international cultures with pavilions representing the histories, arts, and cuisines of

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[42] The one scholarly treatment of the park—Marina R. Voila, "Deconstructing the Myth of California" (Dissertation: The Pennsylvania State University, 2009)—analyzed the park in its pre-renovation form.
[43] Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 56.

eleven countries—at Disney World's EPCOT Center (FL).[44] Although the park's theme

ultimately differed greatly from EPCOT's, its conceptual origins are telling for an

analysis of its contemporary status. California Adventure does not display world cultures

and technological innovations as EPCOT does, but it is organized around a variety of

California landscapes and technological innovations and influences. "Cars Land" is an

homage to the Pixar-animated *Cars* films, as well as to car culture in California.

"Hollywood Land" is a testament to film history in California and to Walt Disney's

creative history; "Pacific Wharf" and "Paradise Pier" nod to the importance of coastal

culture and early twentieth-century boardwalks and amusements parks that were built on

them. California's status as a place of natural wonders is captured in "A Bug's Land,"

"Grizzly Peak," the Grand Californian Hotel adjacent to park, as well as in the primary

attraction of "Condor Flats," "Soarin' Over California." The park is not an international

tour of culture and technological innovation; it is a domestic tour of Californian wonders,

both natural and technological, and a reflection on California's status as an American

pilgrimage site since the nineteenth century. Although California was not on Northern

Pacific's "Wonderland" route, discussed in chapter one, the state's resources—gold, big

trees, Yosemite, etc.—were often at the center of wonder-narratives from the mid-

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[44] Of all the Disney theme parks, EPCOT Center is probably the one that has gained the most critical attention, because it is often considered to be the most "adult" of the theme parks, built on World's Fair traditions of futurism and international cultural museums. See, for example, Alexander Wilson, "The Betrayal of the Future: Disney's EPCOT Center," *Socialist Review* 84 (1985): 41-54; Steve Nelson, "Walt Disney's EPCOT and the World's Fair Performance Tradition," *The Drama Review: TDR* 30, No. 4 (Winter, 1986), 106-146; Margaret J. King, "The Theme Park Experience: What Museums Can Learn from Mickey Mouse," *The Futurist* 25, no. 6 (1991): 24-31; Fjellman's *Vinyl Leaves*; Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp, "Wonder and Worth: Disney Museums in World Showcase," *Museum Anthropology* 17, no. 3 (1993): 32-42; George F. Macdonald and Stephen Alsford, "Museums and Theme Parks: Worlds in Collision?," *Museum Management and Curatorship* 14, no. 2 (1995): 129-47; Rika H. Houston and Laurie A. Meamber, "Consuming the 'World': Reflexivity, Aesthetics, and Authenticity at Disney World's EPCOT Center," *Consumption Markets & Culture* 14, no. 2 (2011): 177-91.

nineteenth century onwards. Disney's California Adventure recognizes that history and its importance to Walt Disney and to the Disney Corporation's history and cultural status.

The name "Disney California Adventure" is a new iteration of the main attraction in the EPCOT World Showcase U.S.-American pavilion: the "American Adventure": an audio-animatronic show, narrated by Benjamin Franklin and Mark Twain, that roughly chronicles the history and triumphs of the U.S. Similarly, California Adventure is a spatialized narrative that chronicles the history and triumphs of California. Although the park is not "Westcot" as it may have been originally conceived, it is a California Showcase animating California's landscapes, histories, and technologies that first inspired Walt's vision for "a little park celebrating America"[45]: Disneyland.

Disney California Adventure is therefore not just a translation of Florida's "American Adventure" in California. It is also a re-vision of Disneyland and its spatial and narrative trajectories. California Adventure has emerged as a little park celebrating Walt Disney's experiences of and trajectories through California, a setting that facilitated Disney's work both technologically and imaginatively. Guests arriving at Disneyland walk through the gates and find themselves on "Main Street U.S.A.," an avenue that represents small-town America circa 1900 and leads to Disneyland's other "lands."[46] The park's five major landscapes revolve around geographic, historical, and imaginative

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[45] Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 12.
[46] There is a fairly substantial critical literature on Main Street USA. See, especially, Richard Francaviglia, "Main Street USA: The Creation of a Popular Image," *Landscape* 21, no. 3 (1977): 18-22; Richard Francaviglia, "Main Street USA: A Comparison/Contrast of Streetscapes in Disneyland and Walt Disney World," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 15, no. 1 (1981): 141-56; Richard Francaviglia, *Main Street Revisited: Time, Space, and Image Building in Small-Town America* (University of Iowa Press, 1996); Virginia A. Salamone and Frank A. Salamone, "Images of Main Street: Disney World and the American Adventure," *Journal of American Culture* 22, no. 1 (1999): 85-92; Deborah Philips, "Consuming the West Main Street, USA," *Space and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2002): 29-41; Robert Neuman, "Disneyland's Main Street, USA, and Its Sources in Hollywood, USA," *The Journal of American Culture* 31, no. 1 (2008): 83-97.

couplings. Moving clockwise through the park, a visitor first encounters Adventureland, the "the wonder world of nature's own realm," as the "Disneyland" television series first framed it, focusing on "exciting and unusual adventure stories"; Frontierland, as its name suggests, brings to life a nineteenth-century American Frontier town and associated "tall tales and true from the legendary past;" Fantasyland is a "world of imagination, hopes, and dreams," based largely on Disney animated films; and Tomorrowland is a futuristic landscape that celebrates science and science fiction and showcases the potential of future technology.[47] Many scholars suggest that this mapping of Disneyland and of people's trajectories through it is prescriptive and teleological.[48] Although both Disneyland and California Adventure have maps and are bounded, thematized spaces, I want to suggest here that, not unlike World of Color, the California Adventure park offers a variety of structures for a nearly infinite number of visitor trajectories through the parks and their narrative spaces. Unlike Disneyland (especially Frontierland and Tomorrowland), California Adventure's lands do not have distinct temporal thematics built into them. As a result, visitors' trajectories through the park are significantly less scripted. The park's lands offer structures of movement that are cyclical and reiterative, moving people

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[47] Each land was initially described in these terms in "The Disneyland Story," Walt Disney, *Disneyland,* ABC, October 27, 1954, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZUBiptZDLU. For more thorough descriptions of each land, see Stephen Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*. For more on Frontierland, see Richard Francaviglia, "Walt Disney's Frontierland as an Allegorical Map of the American West," *The Western Historical Quarterly* (1999): 155-82; Michael Steiner, "Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 48, no. 1 (Spring, 1998): 2-17. For more on Tomorrowland, see Scott Bukatman, "There's Always Tomorrowland: Disney and the Hypercinematic Experience," *October* (1991): 55-78, and JP Telotte, "Animating Space: Disney, Science, and Empowerment," *Science Fiction Studies* (2008): 48-59. For a recent analysis of Frontierland and Tomorrowland as foils of one another, see Catherine L. Newell, "The Strange Case of Dr. von Braun and Mr. Disney: Frontierland, Tomorrowland, and America's Final Frontier," *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 25, no. 3 (2013): 416-29.
[48] William T. Borrie, "Disneyland and Disney World: Designing and Prescribing the Recreational Experience," *Loisir et societé/Society and Leisure* 22, no. 1 (1999): 71-82.

through space in ways that require them to see certain sites and attractions repeatedly in

getting their bearings and creating their own trajectories through the parks.[49]

A walk down Main Street U.S.A. suggests that American history—of the

nineteenth-century, in particular—paved the way to the "lands" that represent the past,

present, and future of the U.S. in Disneyland. Although there are many trajectories

visitors can follow through any Disney park, the path through Disneyland (and Disney

World) has traditionally moved from Main Street, U.S.A. to Adventureland, to

Frontierland to Fantasyland to Tomorrowland. This pathway was defined by Walt Disney

in the *Disneyland* television show's introduction to the park. It is a trajectory that moves

from representations of the past to representations of the future, as well as one that

showcases experiences that are thematically increasingly defined by technology.

Adventureland and Frontierland facilitated by advanced technologies, but these

technologies aim to create an experience of wilderness, nature, and frontier life. By the

time visitors get to Tomorrowland, the setting is not just highly technologized; it presents

a "tomorrow" defined by technological advances in transportation and everyday life.

In Disney California Adventure, however, this linear narrative and spatial

trajectory is absent. The park opens on Buena Vista Street, which, like Main Street

U.S.A., is a boulevard filled with retail stores and restaurants. Buena Vista Street is a

reference to the Burbank home of the Walt Disney Studios at 500 South Buena Vista

Street. Opened in 1940, it has been the ever-expanding creative hub for the studios.[50] A

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[49] For more on Disney's design processes in the parks, see Beth Dunlop and Vincent Joseph Scully, *Building a dream: The art of Disney architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996); Karal Ann Marling, *Designing Disney's Theme Parks: The Architecture of Reassurance* (New York: Flammarion, 1997); J. Sehell and Joe Shochet, "Designing Interactive Theme Park Rides," *Computer Graphics and Applications, IEEE* 21, no. 4 (2001): 11-13.

[50] Disney's first studio home was the Hyperion Studio (1926-1940). For more on the early Disney Studios, see Michael Bowling, "The Walt Disney Hyperion Studios," *DIS Blog* (July 28, 2013):

walk down Buena Vista Street presents the Hollywood Golden Age of 1920s and 1930s

Los Angeles as the starting point for Disney's explorations of California—from

Hollywood to the coast and "nature" more broadly. Buena Vista Street does not direct

visitors to a past or future landscape. It opens onto lands whose temporality is largely

irrelevant: Hollywood, A Bug's Land, Cars Land, Pacific Warf, Paradise Pier, Grizzly

Peak, and Condor Flats.[51] Given the absence of temporal markers of past and future,

visitors' movements through the park are open to their whims. Buena Vista Street can

lead to Hollywood or the wharf, the forest or the desert. In Disneyland, of course, visitors

can also move through the park in a variety of ways, but if they start with Tomorrowland

and move "backwards," the effect of the space and its narrative trajectory is altered—and

it feels backwards and perhaps a little less wonderful. In Disney California Adventure,

there is no forward or backwards trajectory. This park is not about a narrative of progress

and futurity. Rather, it is about the variety of Californian landscapes, a diversity, which

allows each guest to define his or her own California adventure.

If visitors move through the park counter-clockwise, Buena Vista Street, true to

Burbank's location vis-à-vis Hollywood, becomes Hollywood Boulevard as they move

south toward the center of the park. A trolley runs the length of Hollywood Boulevard

and Buena Vista Street, invoking both San Francisco's historic trolleys and the Los

Angeles Railway streetcars that operated from 1901 to 1963. At the end of the trolley

line, visitors pass from a miniaturization of Hollywood into a land that turns that sense of

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http://blog.wdwinfo.com/2013/07/28/the-walt-disney-hyperion-studios-1929-1939-the-foundation-of-an-empire/.

[51] This designation of lands corresponds with the 2012 re-opening of the park. Prior to that, Cars Land did not exist, and Pacific Warf, Grizzly Peak, and Condor Flats were all part of the same "Golden State" land. Thus, prior to the re-opening, California Adventure was made up of four lands: Hollywood Land, A Bug's Land, Golden State, and Paradise Pier.

scale on its head. A Bug's Land, which re-animates the Disney-Pixar movie *A Bug's Life* (1998), makes bugs and their environments larger than life. From this miniature re-creation of Hollywood, visitors set foot in a land conjured and created by Hollywood via the Disney-Pixar studios. They move out of a miniature city into a larger-than-life world of grass that could be the rural country-side or Walt's suburban back yard. Many of the rides in this land are re-iterations of rides in Fantasyland at Disneyland. "Flik's Flyers" is a repackaged version of "Dumbo" and "Francis' Ladybug Boogie" re-animates Disneyland's "Mad Tea Party" ride with ladybugs instead of teacups.

The transition from Hollywood land to A Bug's Land is marked by a movement from an urban space into a naturalistic space. As we then pass from A Bug's Land to Car's Land, we move into a Route-66 themed post-industrial town marked by car-based attractions, 1950s style architecture, and the naturalism of a desert geography. This small-town throwback then weaves onto a Monterey-style wharf of eateries that lead to Paradise Pier, a Victorian-style Boardwalk, replete with a large roller coaster, fair games, and a Ferris wheel, much like the amusement parks that lined the coast of California in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Across Paradise Bay from the "pier," is the Embarcadero (Spanish for "wharf"), which invokes California's Spanish-influenced history and San Francisco's famed waterfront area. This area serves as a transition from the fair-like atmosphere of the pier to the national-park environment of Grizzly Peak. "Grizzly Peak" refers to the mountain that is the primary visual cue from the "Grizzly River Run" water raft ride in that land. Although "Grizzly Peak" only features two attractions, it serves as a resting place from other, often more crowded, areas of the park. Benches line the walkways, surrounded by

trees and other greenery. Aside from the water ride, the area's other attraction is "Redwood Creek Challenge Trail," which offers children the opportunity to earn "Wilderness Explorer Badges" while accomplishing tasks on a hiking/climbing course. This attraction draws on the National Park Service's "Junior Ranger" programs that encourage kids to earn their badges.[52]

"Grizzly Peak" leads into the "Condor Flats" part of the park, which is a small flight-themed area, most known for the ride "Soarin' Over California," a paragliding simulation that lifts visitors into the air and into a panoramic, spherical screen that projects beautiful scenes from California: Napa Valley, Yosemite Valley, the San Diego Coastline, etc. The journey ends back at Disneyland at night amid the nightly fireworks display. The wait for the ride is often a long one, but the hallways lining the hangar-styled building showcase the history of aviation and its major figures, creating both an historical and nature-inspired experience of technology. Condor Flats returns to Buena Vista Street. This trajectory through the park could easily be reversed or otherwise altered without altering the sense of California's adventurous wonderscape.

Disneyland presents a linear historical narrative that ends with Tomorrowland and its attendant technological sensory overload, replete with flashing lights and loud music. By contrast, no matter where visitors go and "end" in California Adventure, the "departure" is marked by heightened sensory experiences of natural landscapes and their colors—from the bug's version of a grassy world, to the wondrous dessert, the waterside wharf, the visuals of rushing water, greenery, and the scents of pine, ocean, and vineyards that are part of the "Soarin'" ride. Coming to California for Hollywood, it seems, leads

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[52] National Park Service, "Be a Junior Ranger," http://www.nps.gov/yose/forkids/beajuniorranger.htm.

us, as it led Walt Disney, to the desert, the ocean, Yosemite, the Redwoods, and the sequoias. There is nowhere to go that isn't naturally California.

Disneyland's vision of the future is somewhat ironically, a nostalgic one. It is by now a half-century old, modeled on futuristic technology from the 1950s and on World's Fair exhibits created in an era of corporate utopianism.[53] California Adventure does not offer visitors the same scripted technologically-defined futuristic visions. Instead, the park is a re-iteration and re-animation of California that capitalizes on the state's history and reputation as a wonder. And wonder here is neither about historical progress, nor a specific spatial or narrative trajectory. Rather, it is tied to the absence of prescribed trajectories: to surprise, unpredictability, and narrative openness.

California Adventure thus offers up Walt Disney's California—defined by car culture, deserts, planes, classic Hollywood, boardwalks, and the golden era of the national parks—as launching points for visitors' own adventures. If Disneyland proposes moving us through a historical trajectory from the nineteenth century (Adventureland and Frontierland) to the twenty-first century (Tomorrowland) in order to experience and celebrate "America," California Adventure maps the state's wonders in open-ended trajectories and experiences of geographies. There is no need to go backward or forward in time. We just need to look around in our/Walt's/Disneyland's backyards. Wonder and adventure are here, in California, on whichever path we choose to follow.

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[53] For more on Disneyland's Utopianism, see Jack Wolf, "Disney World: America's Vision of Utopia," *Alternative Futures* 2, no. 2 (1979): 72-77; Mark Gottdiener, "Disneyland: a Utopian Urban Space," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 11, no. 2 (1982): 139-62.

III. "World of Color": Re-animating *The Little Mermaid*

Indeed, as the set fades to green and the opening of "World of Color" moves into the narrative proper, the show locates us in an ocean-scape, drawing on California's coastal nature. The scene opens with *The Little Mermaid's* main character Ariel's silhouette on the water-screen, and soon, she is singing "Part of Your World:" "I want to be where the people are. I want to see...want to see them dancing..." and so forth as she swims in the ocean and through her underwater collection of human instruments, among them the fork she uses to brush her hair. For a little over a minute, Ariel performs her solo, "wish[ing] I could be part of that [human] world," in a scene famous for its charming and ironic depiction of a mermaid longing to trade her fins for feet. Ariel's longing, here, is one that mirrors traditional human longing for the sea, as well as Disney viewers' longing to see how the "magic"—of "World of Color," of Disneyland, and Disney's films—is made.[54] As Ariel sings and swims, the color blue dominates the show's background and foreground, blending with the film's projected waters and highlighting the color associated with the near-by Pacific Ocean and one of the main mediums of "World of Color": water. The dominance of blue materializes Ariel's ponderous, perhaps even sad, mood as she swims through her oceanic environment.

This opening scene introduces the "world of color" to viewers as a world of nature and wonder, culture and human emotion. Ariel and *The Little Mermaid* are here re-animated and re-iterated for a new narrative purpose. They display a world in which colors are, on the one hand, natural and pervasive, operating independently of human

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[54] When Disneyland was first conceptualized, it was intended to be a "behind-the-scenes" park that would give visitors access to the kinds of processes that went on in the studios, which is part of why Disney originally wanted the park to be built across the street from the Walt Disney Studios. See Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*.

worlds (in the ocean, fish, plants, the sky, etc.); on the other hand, they also hold

powerful, cultural and historical meanings in the human imagination, where blue, for

example, has long been associated with sadness or melancholia.[55] *The Little Mermaid*

deeply valorizes the wonders and colors of the natural world, as they exist in an

underwater setting that is one of the most distant earthly "places" from the human world

that operates mostly on land. As Patricia Yaeger notes in her editor's column in the May,

2010 *PMLA*, which includes a section on ocean studies, despite the fact that most of the

earth is covered in water and all life derives from the ocean, "our general obliviousness to

the gigantic bodies of water surrounding islands and continents" attests to the ocean's

cultural distance from, despite its frequent geographic proximity to, human cultures.[56]

    The Little Mermaid stages a rapprochement between land and sea in its

imaginative rendering of nature's desire (i.e. Ariel's) for the human and the cultural that

flips the traditional human desire for both the real and imaginary worlds nature offers

culture, in that traditional binary. *The Little Mermaid* is the story of a transaction between

Ariel, a mermaid who wants to become human, and Ursula, the octopus-sorceress, who

wants Ariel's beautiful voice. Ariel trades her voice for human feet and a chance to woo

her human love-interest without the ability to speak to him. None of this plot appears in

"World of Color." Instead, the film is selectively re-animated to give us a glimpse of

Ariel's longing, which, divorced from the film's specific narrative trajectory, becomes

about all kinds of human longing to be elsewhere or otherwise. In this way, "World of

Color" transforms a film's specific, predictable narrative (Ariel and her love interest fall

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[55] For an excellent cultural history of the color blue, see Michel Pastoureau's *Blue* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).
[56] Patricia Yaeger, "Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons," *PMLA* 125, n.3 (May 2010), 525.

in love and get married) into a basis for a range of new and different narrative and emotional trajectories. The transformation is an opening for visitor-participants' own imaginations and narrative desires and personal associations.

The Little Mermaid is, not unlike *Alice's Wonderland*, an adaptation/re-animation of an older story. The film is based on a Hans Christian Anderson's fairytale of the same name, first published in his 1837 collection of *Fairy Tales*. Disney's cartoon is a cinematic, technological interpretation of the text in highly visual terms that nonetheless displays a world of tropes, myths, and colors that lie deep in the (Western) cultural psyche. Disney's release of the film in 1989 is popularly considered to have launched the so-called "Disney Renaissance" of the 1990s after nearly two decades of films that performed disappointingly at the box office following the deaths of Walt and his brother, Roy, in 1966 and 1971, respectively. In addition to *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*, all invoked in the opening of "World of Color," are considered to be the major films of this "Renaissance." They are also among Disney's last resounding successes in hand-drawn animation before the advent of the digital and Disney's partnership with the Steve Jobs-funded Pixar that began in 1995 with *Toy Story*. (Table 3.1. presents a chronology of Disney's animated films that appear in this chapter.)

The Little Mermaid elicited such popular wonder and delight when it was first released in movie theaters that "audiences actually burst into applause at colorful show-stopping musical numbers like the sprightly 'Under the Sea' and the enchanting 'Kiss the Girl.'" [57] The film's technological success rested in its composition as a visual narrative

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[57] Stephen Graydanus, "*Quo Vadis* Disney? Notes on the End of the Disney Renaissance, circa 2001," *Decent Films Guide*, http://www.decentfilms.com/articles/quovadisdisney.

set to music and song. Sound and music are crucial to "World of Color" as well,

highlighting the ways in which the visual and the aural are often inseparable in human

sensory experience and in memory and imagination. During all three "World of Color"

shows I saw, there were inevitably people cheering and singing along at times, when the

images of favorite or particularly charismatic characters emerged in the water.

Animation Films	Year Released
Alice's Wonderland	1923
Midnight in a Toy Shop	1930
Flowers and Trees	1932
Snow White and the Seven Dwarves	1937
Fantasia	1940
Dumbo	1941
Bambi	1942
Cinderella	1950
Alice in Wonderland	1951
Peter Pan	1953
Lady and the Tramp	1955
The Little Mermaid	1989
Beauty and the Beast	1991
Aladdin	1992
The Lion King	1994
Pocahontas	1995
Toy Story	1995
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	1996
A Bug's Life	1998
Toy Story 2	1999
Finding Nemo	2003
Cars	2006
Enchanted	2007
Wall-E	2008
Tinker Bell	2008
UP	2009
The Princess and the Frog	2009
Toy Story 3	2010
Cars 2	2011
Frozen	2013

Table 3.1. Selected Disney Animation Chronology.

One of those moments occurred as Ariel's image and her blue solo faded, as her red hair became the bright red shell of her crab side-kick, Sebastian, who appears singing the vivacious "Under the Sea." The song provides a tit-for-tat retort to Ariel's yearning: "Ariel, listen to me.... Life under the sea is bettah than anyt'ing they got up there..." The transition is marked by red and orange lighting, which, along with the upbeat music, signals the change in tone. As Sebastian's performance takes off, the film's animation of the sea and the lagoon explode with rainbow-colored worlds, sea plants, and fish. Sebastian then points out that "the seaweed is always greener..." and the lights turn green; they shift back to blue when Sebastian gestures to have Ariel "...look at the world around you, right here on the ocean floor. Such wonderful things around you! What more are you looking for?" As the song shifts to its c(h)oral refrain "Under the Sea," pink, purple, yellow, and orange jets animate the stage, reflecting the multicolored constitution of the sea itself.

The more frequent shift between colors in Sebastian's performance goes along with the more dynamic and vivacious rhythm of his song and portrayal of the sea. Ariel displays a surprising and therefore delightful, if meditative, reversal of human longing for the sea. Yet, even as the film displays a very colorful underwater world around her, the privileging of blue in the water jets' lighting highlights her uniform view of her world and longing for the human. Sebastian, on the other hand, conducts a vivacious under-water wonderland of dancing sea-creatures, and the variety in colors both in the film and on the "World of Color" platform-stage make that dynamism palpable. Ariel prizes her collection of inanimate human curiosities (utensils, mirrors, etc.) that line the "walls" of

her underwater cave-turned-cabinet-of-wonders, but Sebastian shows us a sea that is its own far more dynamic, living world of wonders of diverse colors and creatures, both natural and supernatural, as it is home to the magical mermaids.

The foregrounding of *The Little Mermaid* in "World of Color" is part of a broader effort at Disney to integrate more recent—and successful—Disney characters into the parks and their rides. Built in 1955, Disneyland, of course, was planned around pre-1955 Disney films, many of which are no longer recognizable to Disney-goers. Although Disney World was built later, the Magic Kingdom, at least, was built on the model of Disneyland with many of the same rides and filmic references. All of Disney's most recent building and design projects have included *The Little Mermaid*-themed rides, performances, and spaces. The redesigned Fantasyland at Disney World in Florida, which opened in April 2012 (the most dramatic building project at the Magic Kingdom since its opening in 1971) includes a *Little Mermaid* attraction. The second Tokyo-based Disney theme park, DisneySea, opened in 2001, features a "Mermaid Lagoon" designed around the film. The Hollywood Studios park in Florida (opened in 1989) has since 1992 featured an impressive animatronic theatrical performance of the film, condensed to seventeen minutes. And *The Little Mermaid* is at the heart of the theming on Disney's cruise ships, launched in the late 1990s as part of a corporate expansion that created new branches of Disney's vacation-planning enterprises, including cruise ships and non-theme park vacation resorts. *The Little Mermaid* is, in short, an emblem of a revitalized Disney wonder. As a widely-published print ad for the "new Fantasyland" at the Magic Kingdom

visualized it, the ocean and its mermaid character paint a concrete image of a wonderscape that is mysterious and undefined: "Behold the wonders that await."[58]

The ad features a silhouette of Ariel, gazing into the oceanic distance, an image which captures the sense of anticipation one might have before traveling and embarking on an adventure that is still as of yet undefined. This combination of mystery, wonder, and adventure is also at the heart of Disney Cruise Line's most popular ships. The Disney Wonder, in particular, bases its interior design almost entirely on *The Little Mermaid* in creating spaces that are meant to resemble the ocean. The Disney Wonder is one of Disney's ships (the others are Disney Magic, Disney Dream, and Disney Fantasy), which take guests to Europe, the Panama Canal, the Bahamas, the Caribbean, the California Coast, Vancouver, and Alaska. The ship is, according to Disney, "one of the most revered and recognizable ocean liners in the world, inspiring awe wherever it pulls into port."[59] Built in Italy with the most advanced engineering and design, the ship's interior is made to reflect the nautical world in which it travels: "The interior of the Disney Wonder reflects all the majesty and enigmatic beauty of the seas, with its swirling wave patterns, marble accents and touches of Venetian glass adding brilliance to the Art Nouveau décor." In addition, the ocean-world of *The Little Mermaid* enhances the ship's architecture and seeks to make it into a technology of imaginative transport: "A bronze statue of Ariel from the classic animated Disney film *The Little Mermaid* greets Guests in the lobby—an installment designed by Disney Imagineers to evoke a feeling of

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[58] The ad appeared in a range of *National Geographic* and *AAA* publications. The image that is central to the ad is available on the web at: Tinker bell, "See What Wonders Await in New Fantasyland," *Insider Blog*, December 6, 2012, http://www.insiderblog.downtowndisneyhotels.com/2012/12/wonders-await-fantasyland%C2%AE/.

[59] Disney Cruise Lines, "Disney Wonder," http://disneycruise.disney.go.com/ships-activities/ships/wonder/.

adventure. Guests are invited to discover the sheer wonder, from the wide expanses of the sunny decks to the inviting interiors of the cozy staterooms." These features are meant "to bring the golden age of ocean liners to life." [60] Thus guests are transported not just to and from a specific place, but into the world of a Disney film and into an experience of historical architecture. Wonder here, as in "World of Color," is a technology of travel through space and time and a function of the ocean and the under-water world of Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. The vehicle of travel across the ocean is posited as a part of the ocean itself. The ship thus traverses the seas and also imaginatively immerses guests in the ocean-scape of the film. Disney Wonder thus offers a narrative basis for the imaginative transformation of space and travel into marketable leisure experiences, of course, but experiences that are rendered exceptional and valuable by virtue of their narrative and imaginative dimensions.

"World of Color" similarly calls on *The Little Mermaid* as an opening act in making a clear association between water, one of the show's primary mediums, and imagination. The two opening scenes of "World of Color," however, do not present a straight-forward narrative about water, color, or technology. Rather, they structure the show's opening around an open question or debate: is the human world (defined by the many utensils and rudimentary technologies Ariel collects) more desirable than the world of nature/the sea? The beauty of "World of Color" is that it does not have to answer the question or take a side. The show's two opening scenes from *The Little Mermaid* instead offer different entry points and trajectories for viewers into the narrative. If the romance of Ariel's yearning for the human and love does not do it for you, then perhaps

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[60] Disney Cruise Lines, "Disney Wonder."

Sebastien's vivacious celebration of the diversity and color of the ocean/"world around you" does. As a viewer who never particularly liked *The Little Mermaid*, I surprised myself in being "hooked" by "World of Color's" condensation of the film to these two scenes that became less about a love story and more about a series of environmental questions.

The dynamism between these different parts of a single Disney film highlights a point that has been central to recent Disney enterprises: dispelling the myth of a singular notion of Disney products and story lines. In re-animating *The Little Mermaid* through staging a debate between two characters, "World of Color" showcases how approaching narrative through color technologies opens up new narrative and emotional trajectories, transforming a scripted film narrative into a mine for different individual and collective stories. In the first two opening scenes, Ariel and Sebastian are brought together by two colors: the blue of their ocean and the red of Ariel's hair and Sebastien's shell. Those color overlaps open onto species differences and differences in opinion and desires. In short, color's ability to highlight similarities and differences here posits a narrative built on tension and a multiplicity of possible story lines. In this sense, the show's construction around clips that do not give us access to all of *The Little Mermaid* offers us seemingly opposite entry points or portals into the show's approach to telling a story: is the technological human world or the natural world a better starting point?

This tension opens "World of Color" with a set of narrative choices for viewer-actants, rather than a clear, linear plot. Building on the opening's directive to "imagine and see what wonders can be," the seeming opposition between Ariel and Sebastian re-animates *The Little Mermaid* in such a way that both draws on audience familiarity with

the film and characters and de-familiarizes the film by extracting parts of it for new purposes. The simultaneous familiarity and novelty re-introduces viewers to Disney's "wonderful world of color" in a re-making of the classic television show through subsequent Disney films, transformed in their extraction from their original narrative contexts and re-inscriptions in the "World of Color."

IV.   Flashback Interlude: Disney's Naturalism

The apparent opposition in the beginning of "World of Color" between the natural world and the human or cultural world has long been central to Walt Disney's work and the broader reception of his animated films, especially *Bambi* (1947). When *Bambi*, Disney's fifth full-length animation, was released, it received mixed reviews. The film about forest animals struggling to avoid human contact attracted extensive criticism for its naturalism and apparent departure from "fantasy."[61] Critics, on the whole, found that Disney animation was at its best when its technologies constructed make-believe visual narratives, rather than realistic nature-plots. Animation technology, it seemed, should stick to fantasy. *Bambi* was also controversial, because of the titular character's loss of his mother at the hands of a hunter; American sportsmen considered the film to be an un-American insult to hunters everywhere.[62]

Walt Disney's aim in *Bambi* had been to use the natural world as a starting point for drawing the film's animated world. Artists' work on the film had included repeated

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[61] See Greg Mitman, *Reel Nature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 112.
[62] See Ralph H. Lutts, "The Trouble with Bambi: Walt Disney's *Bambi* and the American Vision of Nature," *Forest and Conservation History* 36 (1992): 160-71. For a more extensive history of hunting in U.S. history and culture, see Daniel Justin Herman, *Hunting and the American Imagination* (Washington [D.C.]: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

trips to Maine's Baxter State Park to draw live sketches and capture footage in different seasons. In addition, Disney had brought live deer to the Disney studios, so that artists could work on animal anatomy from life. This unprecedented attention to nature in animated film, however, displeased many viewers and critics, but *Bambi*'s lackluster showing at the box office did not cause Disney to give up on nature in animation and film. Instead, it pushed the studio in a different direction: away from animation and towards documentary.

This new direction earned Walt Disney and his studios a reputation not just for animation technology but for naturalism. In August of 1963, *National Geographic Magazine*, the print mouthpiece of one of the world's premier education and conservation non-profit organizations, published a feature on "The Magic Worlds of Walt Disney." Nestled between a story about ascending Everest and Jane Goodall's essay "My Life Among Wild Chimpanzees," the article framed Walt as a "Genius of Laughter and Learning" whose legacy would be fraught with debate, not over whether he was a positive or negative force, but over what kind of positive force he was: "When future historians sit down to choose a Hall of Fame for our time, there will be trouble over the name of Walt Disney. Some…will list him as an artist; others will call him an educator. Still others may insist that Disney belongs with the inventors, and some will argue that he was a naturalist."[63] National Geographic Society president and editor of *National Geographic Magazine*, Melville Bell Grosvenor found each of these labels appropriate

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[63] Melville Bell Grosvenor, "Walt Disney: Genius of Laughter and Learning," *National Geographic* 124, n.4 (August 1963), 158.

and went on to claim that everyone would agree that "…Disney was a genius who brought laughter and knowledge to the world."[64]

Of all the labels *National Geographic*'s 1963 article offers up in describing Walt Disney's "genius," "naturalist" might seem to be one of the more far-fetched, even to a contemporary audience familiar with Disney Nature's recent film series, including the 2012 documentary *Chimpanzee*, co-produced with the Jane Goodall Institute. The Disney Nature label, founded in 2007 is a modern iteration of the "True Life Adventures" film series the 1963 *National Geographic* recognized as having "received accolades from educators" for its naturalistic, scientific approach to the non-human world.[65] Walt Disney began this series of films after *Bambi*'s poor reception. Produced between 1948 and 1960, the "True Life Adventure Films" won Disney Studios eight Academy Awards, including three for Best Documentary Feature.[66]

The film series not only bolstered Disney's status as an educational force; it also established him as a naturalist, who successfully made the intimate and largely inaccessible workings of the natural world accessible to viewers around the globe. These "True Life Adventure" films re-animated Disney's naturalism and inaugurated the widespread nature filmography we see on television today on such channels as Discovery, National Geographic, or Animal Plant.[67] The films, as Greg Mitman notes in his landmark *Reel Nature*, were not unsentimental in their depictions of non-human nature, but they garnered the support of naturalists and conservationists engaged in the

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[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] For More on Disney's nature films, see Margaret King, "The Audience in the Wilderness: The Disney Nature Films," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 24, n.2 (Summer 1996): 60-69.
[67] Relatively little has been written about the "True Life Adventure" films, but Gregg Mitman's *Reel Nature* devotes a chapter to the "innovative series of nature films…. [that] succeeded in capturing and monopolizing a mass market for nature on the big screen throughout the 1950s." Mitman, *Reel Nature*, 110.

wilderness movement of the 1950s and 1960s that brought about the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the foundation of the National Wilderness Preservation System. [68]

After *Bambi*'s failure, Disney shifted his creative interests from the north-easternmost state of the U.S. to the north-westernmost state. Interested in the U.S.'s "last frontier," he hired a couple of Alaskan photographers in 1946 to shoot footage of Alaskan wildlife, especially marine mammals. Walt himself then traveled to Alaska and returned with the idea for the first "True Life Adventures" film, *Seal Island* (1948), which proved far more successful than *Bambi*. The twenty-seven minute short film came to theaters in December 1948, as an opening act to MGM's *The Three Musketeers*. This appearance on the big screen made the film eligible for the 1948 Academy Award, which it won, prompting the *Motion Picture Herald* to create a new category of film: "short feature."[69]

By the early 1950s, Disney was pairing the "True Life Adventure" films with releases and re-releases of the company's own animations, a coupling that some critics remarked made fantasy seem real and actuality seem fantastical.[70] In this packaging, Disney marketed the films to schools and educators, sending mass-market mailings to teachers and educational institutions around the country. In the 1950s, the success of the short films lead to the production of full-length feature "True Life Adventure" films, including *The Living Desert* and *The Vanishing Prairie* (1953 and 1954, respectively), which were Disney's biggest financial successes at the box office, behind only *Cinderella* (1950). Between 1953 and 1960, the studio produced seven full-length nature films under the True Life Adventures label.

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Ibid., 109.

[70] Ibid., 113.

The films pursued Disney's naturalistic interests first tested in *Bambi* in a radically different genre: live-action documentary. Thus, the "True Life Adventure" films moved in the direction of un-coupling technology and nature in rendering a seemingly "un-mediated" version of wildlife and natural scenery. Many of the films—beginning with *Seal Island*'s Alaskan setting—were shot in the Pacific Northwest, where Disney framed landscapes that preexisted the time when "wagon trains rolled west."[71] As Mitman notes, "Through the wonders of the film, Disney brought to full life once again a disappearing wilderness."[72] In their ability to "capture" nature, the films helped fuel and gain support for the larger wilderness movement, bolstering the work of organizations such as the Conservation Foundation, the Wilderness Society, and the New York Zoological Society, which strove to establish protection for wilderness areas such as the Arctic Wildlife Range (designated in 1960).[73] As Mitman notes, Disney's coupling of scientific knowledge, artistic vision, and "folk authority," placed emphasis on "experiential knowledge" of the world and insisted on a natural world that was broadly accessible and "open to anyone who had the yearning and diligence for understanding."[74] Although the films were romanticized and often anthropomorphic, what is "most striking is the extent to which naturalists and conservation organizations endorsed these nature films. Disney's 'True-Life-Adventures,' as seemingly un-mediated representations of nature, won the respect and admiration of the professional biological community…. Anthropomorphism was just one means by which Disney captured the emotional

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[71] *The Vanishing Prairie* (James Algar, 1954).
[72] Mitman, *Reel Nature*, 115.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., 118.

elements of nature, and it was his ability to touch the emotions of viewers that biologists appreciated most."[75]

If, as I argued in chapter one, Northern Pacific used the coupling of wonder and nature to promote a notion of "wonder citizenship" that had the appeal of being accessible to all while remaining deeply inflected by class and other structures of inequality, Disney's resounding success in the "True Life Adventures" was in using film technologies in such a way that seemed to give viewers direct, unmediated access to a nature and science defined by emotional experiences such as wonder. In turn, these depictions helped turn conservation into a popular cause. Mitman writes that "Disney was just the ally conservationists needed. The wilderness experience Disney provided to the masses dispelled accusations that preservation of nature benefited only those with money, leisure, and physical stamina to experience nature for themselves."[76] Disney's insistence on anti-elitism in presenting wilderness and nature as wonders waiting to be experienced made the "True Life Adventure" both educational and instrumental in building support for wilderness preservation.

When the *Disneyland* television series was launched in 1954, the films became even more widely available; *Seal Island*, among other "True Life Adventures," was featured in the television show's first season as an introduction to one of Disneyland's "lands": Adventureland, the region framed as "the wonder world of nature's own realm." By the time the last "True Life Adventure" film, *Jungle Cat*, was released (August 1960), the ambivalence around *Bambi*'s naturalism was long buried. Re-releases of the film in 1947 and 1957 more than made up for the 1942 failure at the box office. Finally, it

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[75] Ibid., 121-2.
[76] Ibid., 123.

seemed as if the "True-Life-Adventures" films had created a publicly acceptable form of technologized nature that opened the door to a plethora of subsequent iterations and animations of Disney's couplings of nature and technology, forging a publicly-sanctioned techno-natural aesthetic that became the basis of other films, rides, and performances like "World of Color." It was not just that Disney could "do" nature documentary, but that nature and nature's wonders were acceptable and even desirable sources for Disney's animations. The crucial point, however, the "True Life Adventures" revealed was that public wonder could also emerge out of couplings of nature and technology in which neither "entity" was separate and separable.

V.   "World of Color": *Finding Nemo*'s Transitional Trajectories

Even though the "True Life Adventures" were a success, after *Bambi*, Disney's coupling of naturalism and animation did not resurface until *Finding Nemo* (2003). In "World of Color" the oceanic fantasy world of *The Little Mermaid* and Sebastian's dynamism almost imperceptibly transform into the naturalistic waters of *Finding Nemo*'s "EAC"—the East Australian Current. The popular "surfer dude" sea turtle characters, Crush and his "totally awesome" dad emerge, coasting through the water. The transition from one film to the other takes place in a return to blue water jets with a touch of green and the sound of Crush's distinctive voice. The passage through the EAC in *Finding Nemo* serves as a conduit for fast and efficient travel when Nemo's dad, Marlin, a clownfish, and his trusty sidekick, the regal tang Dory, are looking for the lost Nemo and want to get to Sydney Harbor. In "World of Color," too, the scene serves as a mode of "transportation" and transition, moving us from the world of *The Little Mermaid* to the

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world of *Finding Nemo*. Repurposed in this way, the twenty-second clip creates a

delightful transition through a slight change in color.

Segment	Characters
Introduction	Ariel (*The Little Mermaid*), Belle and Beast (*Beauty and the Beast*), and Simba (*The Lion King*).
The Little Mermaid	Ariel and Sebastian
Finding Nemo	Crush and Dad; Dory and Marlin
Wall-E	Eve and Wall-E
Toy Story	Woody and Buzz
Toy Story 2	Buzz and Zurg
UP	Carl, Russel, and Dug
Aladdin	Aladdin and Jasmine; Genie
Brave	Merida
Fantasia	Spring Sprite
Pocahontas	Pocahontas and John Smith
A Bug's Life	Heimlich
The Old Mill	Windmill
Pirates of the Caribbean	Jack Sparrow
Peter Pan	Skull and bones
The Hunchback of Notre Dame	Gargoyles
The Lion King	Scar, Mufasa, and Simba
Memory Images	*The Lion King, Bambi, Dumbo, Pocahontas, Lady and the Tramp.*
Transition	Tinker Bell
Scenes of Transformation	*The Princess and the Frog*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella.*
Transition	Tinker Bell
Closing	Cheshire Cat (*Alice in Wonderland*), Sebastian, Dory and Marlin, Wall-E and Eve, Buzz and Woody, Aladdin and Jasmine, Genie, Spring Sprite, Pocahontas.
Fantasia Finale	Sorcerer Mickey

Table 3.2. "World of Color" Film Clip Sequence.

This twenty seconds is, however, a fairly major transition, facilitated by both

films' association with ocean-life. Apart from their ocean setting, the two films have little

in common. In creating an associational narrative trajectory based on environment and

setting, "World of Color" opens up both films to new narrative trajectories. This

associational mode also models imaginative couplings as new narrative possibilities. The

EAC scene marks a shift not just from one film to another and one Euro-American-

centered region to another Australian-centered one; it moves us from fable to fiction—

albeit a fiction that aims to follow the "real rules of nature"[77]—and from a film that

yearns for the human to a film that demonizes the human (as humans are the ones who

have captured Nemo for amusement and fail to valorize fish life). *Finding Nemo* presents

us with colorful fish characters, who, as David Whitely notes, "broke new ground....in

extending the range of animal forms with which viewers can be affiliated."[78] These

characters' arrival on scene marks a seamless movement from one Disney "era" to

another: from the era of hand-drawn animation to that of digital animation, as *Nemo* is

one of the most successful films of the Disney-Pixar era.[79]

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[77] For a *Nemo* origin story, see James Prosek, "Clownfish," *National Geographic Magazine* (January 2010), http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/01/clownfish/prosek-text/1.

[78] David Whitely, "Tropical Discourse," in *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation* (Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2008), 129. The film does much to value aquatic life and provides vivid and realistic details of the barrier reef. See Stephen Lovgren's "For *Finding Nemo*, Animators Dove into Fish Study," *National Geographic* (May 2003), http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/05/0530_030530_findingnemo.html. However, it is worth noting that its widespread popularity caused two contradictory but equally harmful environmental consequences: a huge, decimating demand for clownfish and other tropical fish; and a move by fish owners to release their fish into the "wild," often therefore introducing non-native, sometimes invasive species to bodies of water around the globe. See Alex Brylske's "Invaders from Inner Space: Revealing Nemo's True Colors," *Dive Training*, http://www.dtmag.com/Stories/Ocean%20Science/10-04-feature.htm, and Charles Arthur, "'Finding Nemo' Pets Harm Ocean Ecology," *The Independent*, July 1, 2004, http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/finding-nemo-pets-harm-ocean-ecology-565398.html. Lynne Dickinson Bruckner's "*Bambi* and *Finding Nemo*: A Sense of Wonder in the Wonderful World of Disney?," in *Framing the World: Explorations in Ecocriticism and Film*, ed. Paula Willoquet-Maricondi (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 187-208, discusses the contradictions in *Nemo*'s ecological message and its public reception.

[79] It is at present the fourth highest grossing Disney animation and the fifth highest grossing animated film of all time, after *Frozen* (2013), *Toy Story 3* (2010), *The Lion King* (1994), and *Despicable Me 2* (2013). Wikipedia, "List of Highest Grossing Animated Films," *Wikipedia.org*, July 11, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_highest-grossing_animated_films.

If, as Whitley suggests, *The Little Mermaid* marks Disney's return to "the traditional fairy tale" after a thirty year hiatus from the genre, *Nemo* is an attempt at oceanic realism from the perspective of a fish. [80] Part of its widespread acclaim was rooted in its departure from humanoid fantasy in favor of a decidedly non-mammalian world that has many real, historical references (World War II ship wrecks, the Great Barrier Reef, a dentist's office), in addition to the mundane and anthropomorphized scenario of an over-protective father and his adventure-seeking son. In contrast to *The Little Mermaid*'s humanoid animation of the sea with fantastical mermaids, *Finding Nemo* maps a conventional human narrative onto distinctly non-humanoid bodies in presenting a kind of animated naturalism that once again caught the attention of *National Geographic*, this time for the film's impact on clownfish populations (through increased consumer demand for the fish) and inspiration of increased concern for vulnerable reef environments.[81]

The EAC and the music fade as *Nemo*'s two main characters Marlin and Dory take the stage in "World of Color's" first non-musical scene "Excuse me! Woo-hoo! Little fella?" says Dory, voiced by Ellen DeGeneres, into the dark silence. Dory thus introduces one of the more comical scenes in the film, in which Dory tries to "speak" whale in order to get directions that might help Marlin find Nemo. The scene characteristically portrays Dory as the earnest, somewhat clueless, but happy-go-lucky helper that she is, alongside the fearful and tentative Marlin, who recognizes that the whale with whom Dory is trying to communicate is, in fact, not a "little fella," but a large, potentially dangerous force in their path. The scene is a directional one: Dory and

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[80] Whitely, *The Idea of Nature in Disney Animation*, 39.
[81] Prosek, "Clownfish," http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2010/01/clownfish/prosek-text/1.

Marlin, not unlike the audience watching "World of Color," are trying to figure out where they're going and how to get there.

The sense of suspended movement is amplified by the absence of music and light (besides the projected image), which highlights the foreignness and darkness of the ocean—a counterpoint to the bright and vivacious sea of Sebastian's performance. The lighting sets an ominous tone—not just for Dory and Marlin's mad attempt to avoid being swallowed by the whale, seconds after Dory tells Marlin that there's no need to worry, because "whales don't eat clownfish; they eat krill... Oh look. Krill!"—but also for "World of Color's" larger narrative trajectory. As Dory and Marlin swim for their lives, the lagoon once again erupts in light—this time, white light—amid the flurry of krill being sucked into the whale's mouth, creating a vortex that begins to suck the image and viewers into a different world. The music resumes, as the flurry of krill becomes a pod of whales, outlined in white light, swimming and jumping, as if floating, across the dark water-screen, a single white firework going off in the background. The pod of whales thins out, and a last whale flips in the air and plunges into the water, eliciting a multi-colored splash from the lagoon's jets. This rainbow-colored splash highlights the fact that, besides Dory's blue and yellow colors and Marlin's orange, this entire minute-and-a-half scene hinges on white lighting against a black background. This black and white focus stands in radical contrast to the opening's carousel of colors and goes hand-in-hand with a marked silence of the music during the dialogue between Dory and Marlin. As the whale sucks in the krill, the music returns in a frenzied tempo. Color and sound and their absence and contrasts here emerge clearly as narrative elements that indicate mood, tone, and development.

With the *Finding Nemo* selections as with *The Little Mermaid* excerpts in "World of Color," the "wow" factor, so to speak, emerges out of the invocation of familiar characters and narratives that are transformed through the technologies of the show. Although there is little that is new about the films in "World of Color," the show's juxtaposition of films and the effects of the colors, water jets, and music change the scale, emotional tenors, and narrative and imaginative trajectories of the films. In the *Finding Nemo* selections that appear in "World of Color," we can see Disney's deliberate move from a transitional scene of recognizing the familiar (the EAC and Crush's voice), to a scene that locates us in a "problem"—that of finding Nemo—through comedy (Dory's communication attempts), another mode of familiarity and comfort that then becomes overturned by the technological vortex of the whale and krill. In *Finding Nemo*, Dory and Marlin do, of course, scurry to escape consumption by the whale, but the visual effects of the scene are different on a screen (television, computer, or movie theater) than on the three-dimensional set of "World of Color". The image gets spun around to create a vortex-like impression as the water jets and music set a more turbulent atmosphere. The scene, therefore, slowly moves viewers from a sense of familiarity with the script and characters to a recognition that we don't know what is going to happen next. That tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar breeds anticipation, surprise, and wonder.

The sense of transition and not knowing, as well as the absence of *Finding Nemo*'s titular character from "World of Color," highlights one of the more subtle undercurrents of the film. Although Marlin and Nemo are eventually reunited in the film, the task of finding Nemo, which consumes most of the plot, has something of an element of waiting for Godot. The name Nemo, which means "nobody" in Latin, adds a

somewhat ironic resonance to the bulk of the film's action and to the notion of animation as a technological conjurer bodies.[82] Certainly, a fair amount of looking for Nemo goes on in the film, but in the end, there is not actually a whole lot of "finding." Nemo, who eventually manages to escape from captivity in a fish tank, makes his way home. In that sense, the movie is, in fact, about finding nobody and nothing, but in the process it is about seeking everything, for losing Nemo is a kind of existential crisis for Marlin. In seeking Nemo and risking leaving the safety of his own world, Marlin is seeking meaning, wisdom, understanding—his own life and narrative trajectory.

Marlin's seeking thus mirrors our own, as viewer-seekers watching a familiar narrative in a new, unfamiliar technologized rendition. Perhaps like Dory asking the whale for directions, people experiencing "World of Color" for the first (or second or third) time may be wondering where the show is going and how it is going to get there. The *Finding Nemo* clips therefore are transitional in moving from *The Little Mermaid* to *Finding Nemo* as well as in explicitly figuring the suspension, wonder, and difficulty of the narrative experimentation in "World of Color." Before the show's immersive, sophisticated technological performance, as viewers, we are, in effect, tiny fish in a vast ocean of diverse and complicated technologies, histories, and narrative potentialities.

The tension between the familiar and the unfamiliar in the *Finding Nemo* clips are further reinforced by contrasts between black/white and color and between sound and silence. These dynamics highlight another major contrast that pervades "World of Color" and Disney theme parks more broadly: that between different scales and sizes. The show's large scale and expansive screen highlight the play of scales all the more as

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[82] Nemo is also, of course, the name of the captain of the Nautilus in Jules Vernes *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (1870), which Walt Disney produced as a live-action film in 1954.

"World of Color" is part of the immersive environment that completely surrounds

visitors, who are much, much smaller than the technologized stage. The play of scales

also happens on set: when Dory and Marlin appear on the screen, they appear to be

large—certainly more than life-sized—until the whale comes up behind them and they

are entangled in much smaller krill. At that point, the two main characters become tiny

and indecipherable, amid the krill and compared to the whale's massive size. The issue of

scale is highlighted further in the juxtaposition of the school of krill and the pod of

swimming whales. The juxtaposition of different scales is also at work in *The Little*

Mermaid's parallel scenes between the humanoid Ariel and Sebastian, the crab—brought

together, not just as two characters in the same movie, but as two characters associated

with variations of the color red (Ariel's hair and Sebastian's shell). Ariel's red hair fades

into Sebastian's red shell and vice-versa several times throughout the scene, and the

spotlight on Sebastian in his "Under the Sea" solo also makes him much larger than life.

He, in fact, seems almost as big as Ariel. The transitional EAC scene with the small

Crush and his much larger father sets up the play on scale that ensues, as we move from

The Little Mermaid to *Finding Nemo*.

The dynamic between different scales is, on the one hand, playful and light-

hearted. It draws out variety and difference in natures, provides some surprising and

impressive perspective shifts. But Dory and Marlin's confrontation with the whale on the

"World of Color" set also stages a very different kind of confrontation, because of its

setting in the corporatized theme park environment. It is not just that Marlin and Dory's

need for directions mirrors audience members' processes of figuring out where the

narrative is going and how it works. Against the night sky, in the heart of Disney's

California, the two small fish in front of the indifferent and massive whale also figure visitors' relationship vis-à-vis Disney as a corporation that, perhaps especially in its California home, like the whale, sucks in to its corporate grasp just about everything in its path—be it krill or clownfish. It would seem that this situation would not only be immobilizing but possibly altogether disempowering. Perhaps ironically or at least surprisingly, though, "World of Color" offers a multiplicity of non-linear, associational narrative and emotional trajectories as an imaginative "way out." Dory and Marlin's confrontation with the whale forces them to surrender a specific, clear, and predetermined directionality, as they swim for their lives, amid the mass of krill. In this scene, the threat of being consumed makes them pursue a different, unplanned trajectory of their own, impromptu devising.

Without ascribing intentionality to a collaborative unit, "World of Color," seems to be an enactment of Disney Imagineers swimming for their lives as they create narrative attractions and spaces for a seemingly all-consuming corporation *and* respond to public criticism about the predictability of Disney narratives. If creativity or imagination and corporate culture seem antithetical in the Disney context to those who consider the company's "magic," "wonder," and "dreams" to be empty catch-phrases, the *Nemo* clip here offers a different configuration of the problem: one in which the threat of the corporatization of imagination is, in fact, the inspiration for seeking, testing, and finding other narrative forms, mediums, and trajectories. In this re-animation of *Finding Nemo* we thus find, not Nemo, but an opening to re-imagine, re-write, and re-animate not only Disney narratives but the ways in which they structure audience experiences of Disney and of corporate capitalism. What if the threat of corporate capitalism, instead of lulling

us into its all-consuming vortex, pushed us to scramble to find other improvised modes of seeing, thinking about, and living in the world? In Disney's need to constantly produce and reproduce wonder experiences through an ever-increasing and changing set of technologies, "World of Color" exemplifies some ways in which seemingly fixed narrative trajectories can be re-opened, re-animated, and re-invented, if and when people are willing to imagine other narrative trajectories—to give up directions and existing pathways to swim or scramble elsewhere.

VI.   Flashback Interlude: Disney's Miniatures

These dynamics of scale are present in the films themselves, but they resonate rather differently in "World of Color," because the films themselves are on a much larger screen/scale in the show, and because the show is indistinguishable from the theme park environment. The show's issues of scale are re-iterations and re-animations of dynamics that pervade Disney's theme parks, which often create miniaturizations or magnifications in their different geographic lands. For instance, as I discussed earlier, "Hollywood Land" is a miniaturization of Hollywood and "A Bug's Land" is a radical magnification of bugs' environments that seem to turn human visitors into miniatures. Disney's two iterations of "Main Street U.S.A." at Disneyland and at Florida's Magic Kingdom are a sort of dream-vision of turn-of-the-century small town America, but they are also, as scholars have noted, miniaturized replicas of Walt Disney's childhood home town of Marceline, MO.[83] Disneyland's Main Street U.S.A.—and the rest of the park—is

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[83] Richard Francaviglia, "Main Street U.S.A.: A Comparison/Contrast of Streetscapes in Disneyland and Walt Disney World," *Journal of Popular Culture* 15:1 (Summer 1981), 141-56.

"approximately three-quarters life-size,"[84] a design that is "something like a movie

set,"[85] where the Magic Kingdom's version is more expansive and corresponds more

closely to a full-size downtown architectural scale—in a condensed space. For some, the

difference in scale between Disneyland and Disney World brought with it a loss of

"character" and "intimacy."[86] The play of scales at Disneyland in particular was

designed to be a marker of difference, one of the mechanisms through which visitors

should feel as if they were entering a different, wonderful world. As Herbert Ryman, one

of the original designers of Disneyland recalls, when Walt asked Ryman to begin drawing

up the plans for an amusement park, he said: "I just want it to look like nothing else in the

world, and it should be surrounded by a train."[87]

The vision of the train, which set the theme park's design in motion, was a

miniaturization. Disney's original plans for Disneyland already show that he was

planning a 1/3rd scale live railroad. As is well-documented in Disney history and

scholarship, trains were among Walt Disney's biggest passions. As Marling notes, Walt

Disney began thinking about building a theme park long before Disneyland opened its

gates to the public in July of 1955. The train inspiration came from the 1948 Chicago

Railroad Fair, which Walt attended with Ward Kimball, one of Disney's original

animators. Upon returning to L.A., Walt built a 1/8th scale live steam engine line in his

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[84] Francaviglia, "Main Street U.S.A.," 148.
[85] Francaviglia goes on to note that that one of major contributing factors in this difference between Disneyland and Disney World rests in technological development, namely the fact that Disneyland is built of "real" materials, whereas Disney World is built of fiberglass, which "makes possible the 'cloning' of a streetscape at its most extreme—and most obvious. The use of fiberglass provides ease in maintenance, replaceability, and perhaps most important, infinite facility in creating the most complex of designs." Ibid., 152.
[86] Ibid., 154.
[87] Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 90.

backyard in 1950, the Carolwood Pacific Railway, which in turn inspired the plans for Disneyland.

As Disney historian Jim Korkis notes in his essay "The Miniature Worlds of Walt," Walt Disney "took some of his greatest delight in the world of miniatures. For decades, he both constructed and collected a huge variety of intricate tiny objects. Sometimes those small objects inspired some much larger ideas, including attractions at the Disney theme parks."[88] His first experiences with miniatures included helping a nephew build a model train in the 1930s. Susan Stewart notes in her essay "The Miniature" that such toy miniatures have long been implicated in wonder and dreamworlds, because they reveal a "secret life of things": "That the world of things can open itself to reveal a secret life…is a constant daydream that the miniature presents. This is the daydream of the microscope: the daydream of life inside life, of significance multiplied infinitely *within* significance." [89] The potential of miniatures to inspire imaginative wonder rests on this possibility of the animation of things. Stewart examines toys, in particular, as offering up this potential, because the world of toys "presents a projection of the world of everyday life" that is miniaturized and therefore transformed into another possible world. [90]

Disney's fascination with miniatures may have started with building a toy train, but it flourished in his development of a personal cabinet of miniature wonders. In 1939, he attended the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco where he saw the

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[88] Jim Korkis, "The Miniature Worlds of Walt," March 30, 2011, http://www.waltdisney.org/storyboard/miniature-worlds-walt#sthash.mB2mRsKM.dpuf.
[89] Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 54.
[90] Ibid., 57.

famous Thorne exhibit put together by Mrs. James Ward Thorne.[91] The exhibit consisted of miniature furnishings and accessories Thorne's uncle had collected during his world travels, which Mrs. Thorne painstakingly assembled into "exquisite rooms decorated to represent European and American interiors of different eras. It was said that the rooms were so perfectly crafted that viewing them was like becoming miniaturized and then entering another time."[92] In response, Walt also began collecting miniatures during his travels and eventually decided that he, too, wanted to put together miniature tableaus. The first of these, "Granny Kincaid's Cabin," was based on the 1949 film *So Dear to My Heart* and was exhibited publicly in the 1952 Festival of California Living at the Pan Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles. This launched a broader plan to create miniaturized tableaus of Americana, a project dubbed "Disneylandia."[93]

As Walt grew frustrated that the miniature exhibits could only reach a limited audience, Disneylandia became Disneyland. At its inception, Disneyland included a land called "Liliputan Land" between "Fantasyland" and "Tomorrowland."[94] Conceived as "a land of little things," visitors would walk through "a miniature Americana village inhabited by mechanical people nine inches high who sing and dance and talk to you as you peek through the windows of their tiny shops and homes."[95] Beyond the miniature village and people, there would also be "an Erie Canal barge that takes you through the famous canals of the world, where you visit the scenic wonders of the world in

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[91] For more on Thorne and the Thorne exhibit, see Fannia Weingartner and Elizabeth Stepina, *Miniature Rooms: the Thorne Rooms at the Art Institute of Chicago* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).
[92] Korkis, "The Miniature Worlds of Walt."
[93] Ibid.
[94] Imagineers, *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 15.
[95] From the 1953 sales pitch for Disneyland that Roy Disney presented to possible investors in New York, quoted in Korkis, "The Miniature Worlds of Walt."

miniature."[96] Miniatures became a way of collecting and re-animating an aggregate of wonders from all over the world in a single place. This planned land infused plans for the rest of the park; the lands at Disneyland are not miniatures in the way that Walt's early 1950s tableaux exhibits were, but they are miniaturized landscapes, built on a smaller scale than, say, Los Angeles.

To return to my opening invocation of *Alice's Wonderland*, part of the wonder of that early short film rested in its ability to condense a vast landscape—both real and imagined—through and for the purposes of animation. Nearly thirty years later, when Walt Disney shifted to working on miniatures, something of an inverse dynamic was at play: he built miniature objects and landscapes as a way of re-animating and condensing the plot and settings of his films. Stewart writes that miniatures are about animating the inanimate in a contained way. In Disney's miniaturizations—especially as he worked towards building Disneyland—we see a way of containing expansive units—nation, environment, wonder. Stewart notes that traditionally, "both the miniature and the gigantic may be described through metaphors of containment—the miniature as contained, and the gigantic as container."[97] Although Disneyland's "Liliputan Land" never came to be, the park as a whole, as we saw in Main Street U.S.A., was mapped through allegorical miniatures that sought to contain much larger spaces and histories— "Frontierland," "Adventureland," "Fantasyland." Miniaturization for Disney and the play of scales became a way of dealing with the expansiveness—spatial, historical, and conceptual—of landscapes and histories technologically. In Stewart's account, the gigantic is about explaining "the environment" as that which encircles and engulfs us in a

[96] Korkis, "The Miniature Worlds of Walt."
[97] Stewart, *On Longing*, 71.

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seemingly infinite way. It is "a figure on the interface between the natural and the human."[98] Disney landscapes are technological hybrids of the miniature and the gigantic. They are not so small that they transform visitors into giants, but they translate vast territories—of space and history—into contained "lands." These translations, facilitated by technology and artistry, perform the animation Stewart names as the potential of the miniature, which "initiates another world, the world of the daydream" or of imagination.[99] This experience defines one of the primary aims of Disney theme parks: to offer visitors an architectural space that differs in scale, coloring, and purpose from their every-day environments in order to initiate a larger world of imagination. This imagination hinges on the understanding, made visible and physical in the theme parks, that the worlds we live in need not be as they are, an understanding that is, of course, portable beyond the walls of the theme parks.

Stewart does not mention Disney, but she notes that the effect of animation in the miniature has allowed it to become associated with amusement: "Today in America the uses of miniaturized landscapes continue to emphasize this sporting, or play, function. Miniature golf, the fantasy land, the children's zoo, and storybook countries realize the exotic and the fantastic on a miniaturized scale…. The referent here is most often the fantastic, yet the fantastic is in fact given 'life' by its miniaturization."[100] At Disneyland and in the Disney corpus more broadly, miniatures do, in fact, have referents that are often both historical and/or filmographic, as most Disney lands and attractions refer to filmic predecessors, animated or live-action.

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[98] Ibid., 71.
[99] Ibid., 57.
[100] Ibid., 60.

Disney's California Adventure is a case in point, as the referents for its miniaturizations are California's environments, a fact which perhaps provides the clearest example of Disney's mediation between vast territories/histories and human experience. Although it is impossible to experience all of California at once, Disney's park makes it possible to experience a range of different Californian environments, histories, and amusements in a contained way, and that containment opens up the space of wonder. This experiential dynamic is also at work in "World of Color," which deals with vast—even gigantic—concepts, worlds of color, and Disney films through excerpting moments from the films that function as miniatures and re-animate the films, also gesturing towards a much broader narrative by association.

The fact that Disney's miniatures and the inspiration for the company's animated dream worlds draw from actual historical places and time periods might seem to undercut the wonder and imaginative potential of the technologies at play. But the parks' use of known things, narratives, places, and histories in its play on scales and miniaturization reveals that imagination is not simply about making things; rather it is about transforming what is already here or known. This seemingly simple point is at the heart of one of the biggest paradoxes of Disney experiences. On the one hand, Disney deploys highly technologized and sophisticated narratives, architectures, amusements, etc., in creating other-worldly experiences that foster a sense of "magic" and "wonder" that depends largely on visitors' being unable to grasp how Disney does what it does. On the other hand, and perhaps ironically, these experiences rest on Disney's ability to develop visitor-actants' sense of possible imaginative and/or technological transformation through the known, existing, and familiar. Disney's "magic" and "wonder," in this sense, rests in

maintaining guests' sense of awe and bafflement at the complexity and artistry of the parks' amusement all while also building in them a sense that they, too, can imaginatively transform their own worlds and lives. Much as Disney's "True Life Adventures" popularized the cause of wilderness conservation without actually giving viewers access to wilderness, the theme parks, in effect, render imagination and technological transformation into a popularly available potential without actually giving visitors access to how Disney's transformations work.

VII.   "World of Color": *Wall-E* and *Toy Story*

The "World of Color" is a prime example of this contradictory dynamic at play, especially because of its reliance on Disney films that most viewers likely know well. The show, in that sense, is rendered eminently accessible, even as its narrative turns and spectacular technological effects are far more sophisticated than viewers who are not themselves imagineers or at least engineers could grasp. The "World of Color," like Disney's miniatures, is a world defined by the play of scales in a number of different ways. Brightly colored objects and beings often appear much larger than subtler-colored entities do. And the largely black-and-white background in the scene between Dory and Marlin highlights this fact. Much like Sebastian, Dory and Marlin first appear larger-than-life, but this sense of scale changes radically as the scene is stormed with the white mass of krill and the white light that outlines the whales. The foregrounding of scale in this segment of "World of Color" is yet another transitional device that sets the stage for the final whale's colorful splash, which washes out *Finding Nemo* and lands us not just in

a different movie, but on a different planet—a shift that lends itself to a contemplation not just of the wonders of the ocean but of the vastness of the universe.

The darkness and other-worldliness of the deep ocean transform into an equally dark outer-space environment as the robot *Wall-E* (2008) and his love interest Eve take center stage, creating a visual echo of the whales in the previous scene, as they float past planets and stars. From the quasi-miniature world of clownfish, we move to the gigantic world of outer space. In this scene, the night sky itself becomes the projection screen— and the boundaries between the "World of Color" and the world, its environment, blur. Again, the scene remains dark to highlight the mostly white bodies of the characters as they move through space. Eve's quick movements are marked by short splashes of blue jets in the lagoon. The robots appear, then disappear, and we are left with the projection of yellow-orange planets, as a few blue jets begin to sway below pink-to-blue atmospheric lights, set to ambient, ethereal music. The robots reappear, recognizing each other, and embracing. When Eve lets go of Wall-E, he, on cloud nine, begins to float away, holding a fire extinguisher, which he turns on and uses as a jet to twirl through space as Eve laughs. The music continues to play its ethereal tune, never letting us forget that we're in space, even as the characters disappear, and the mostly blue lights and jets return. Wall-E reappears on screen, still jetting himself from left to right through space with the fire extinguisher, each white puff behind him slowly turning into a cloud.

After Marlin and Dory swim for their lives, this scene provides a visual, emotional, and directional respite. As viewer-protagonists, we can just float through space, with the robots, break from the need to find something specific, and enjoy a journey whose trajectory is still unclear or undefined. But floating through space brings

with it an experience of an ever-vaster environment. Wall-E and Eve's repeated

appearance and disappearance point to the vastness of space, which builds on the vastness

of the ocean. Although we cannot always see the characters in this scene, they are still out

there, somewhere. Their material, metallic bodies stand in radical contrast to the airy,

ethereal quality of the environment through which they float and highlight the dynamics

of the "World of Color" show itself as both a material, technological production invested

in imaginative, immaterial meditations. The play on scale in *Finding Nemo* is here

pushed to its limits in the apparent infiniteness of space and of the universe, even as

Wall-E as a film is a reminder of the finite, vulnerable resources of the earth. Wall-E is

the last robot on earth created to compact trash on a ruined planet. Eve is a construction

of the human refugee community living on a spaceship, sent back to earth to find signs of

organic life that might indicate the possibility of a human return to earth. The *Wall-E*

scene thus shifts us into a contemplation of scale on the largest of scales: the place of

humans on earth and in the universe.

Just as that contemplation and the universe might threaten to get too big, the

exhaust coming out of Wall-E's extinguisher begins to turn into clouds that surround

what turns out to be a child's bed, and the ethereal quality of the vast outer-space

becomes a dream-world of childhood. As the film projection centers on stage, we find

that we are in a world of miniature toys, fulfilling what Stewart considers to be the

miniature's dream: animation. The vastness of *Wall-E*'s outer space has become *Toy

Story*'s world of lively toys, as the film's two main characters—Woody and Buzz

Lightyear—meet for the first time: "Howdy, my name is Woody, and this is Andy's

room." As this introduction takes place, the clouds born of Wall-E's fire extinguisher

hover in the background of this domestic scene, turning the bedroom into a sky: "I am Buzz Lightyear. I come in peace." When another of the toys asks Buzz "Hey, what's that button do?" he pushes it, and wings pop out of his silver-metallic body, which echoes those of Wall-E and Eve. Although *Toy Story* brings us back to earth after *Wall-E*'s outer-space environment, it does so in a scene that introduces us to Buzz, a space-character toy, who goes on to try to prove to a taunting Woody that he can, in fact, fly.

"Stand back, everyone," Buzz announces, and as he leaps into flight, so too do the water jets in the lagoon. Their white and green mirror Buzz's own colors, and this jump—Buzz's and the jets'—also marks a jump from *Toy Story* to its sequel *Toy Story 2*. We "land" in outer space again, in a battle between Buzz and his antagonist, Emperor Zurg, in "Gamma Quadrant, Sector 4" as the screen projection tells us. The battle between Buzz and Zurg is staged in space, their "home," through which Zurg flies and both characters shoot lasers at each other, amplified by dramatic music, laser-lights, and select water jets coming from the "World of Color" stage. Green, blue, and white, which are associated with Buzz, dominate the scene, along with red that marks the force of the danger and heat that Zurg presents. Zurg is himself a projected laser, a massive white-colored outline of a threat in the sky, compared to Buzz's smaller filmic image. The difference in scale between the two is obvious—and serves both to align Buzz with us, the audience, as he is closer to us than the larger but more distant Zurg.

The difference in scales here provides a narrative turning point. Zurg is the first appearance of evil in the show, although the whale does pose a real threat in the *Finding Nemo* clip. In the stand-off conflict, the miniature toy Buzz, as the audience's avatar, is battling a gigantic force "out there" in the night sky. The dynamic between Dory and

Marlin as little guys trying to avoid consumption/destruction by the whale is, here, re-introduced in a more deliberate battle scene. Buzz's alignment with the audience extends the mirroring of viewers' own battle of sorts with Disney's corporate imagination as potentially not only all-consuming, but actively threatening. The forces of good, it would seem, have little chance of prevailing.

Zurg seems to grasp this point and tells Buzz to give up, prompting his famous lines "I'll never give in. To infinity, and beyond!" These words mark the scene's finale, as Zurg disappears in a flash of blue lasers, and the lagoon throws a splash of green and white light into the sky. At this point, several of *Toy Story*'s three-eyed squeeze toy aliens (also known as Little Green Men) take the place of the suspended planets from the *Wall-E* scene, staring out at the audience and expressing a delighted awe—"oooooooooooooohhhhhh"—at the white and green jets, just before the scene goes dark. The Little Green Men act as a prompt for the audience at the conclusion of the most complex use of lasers in the show.

Although Zurg disappears in a flash, there is no sense that he and the massive world-threatening force he represents are gone or defeated. Rather, Buzz's persistence, and his movements—dashing lasers across the sky—offer another scene of impromptu, responsive trajectories. Buzz follows a path defined by his seeing and avoiding Zurg's lasers. Although it would seem that this approach to battle is rather defensive, it nonetheless serves the purpose of Buzz's survival as an animated toy both in *Toy Story 2* and in "World of Color." Buzz's survival strategy consists of truncated and transitory trajectories, a mode of movement that mirrors "World of Color" as it jumps through technologies from different, brief film extractions in producing a different kind of

narrative experience. This strategy in "World of Color" is, in effect, about the survival of Disney wonder in an era of such widespread consumption and knowledge of Disney that it would seem difficult for the company and its Imagineers to offer something novel and unexpected.

A little more than a third of the way through the show, we have traveled from the ocean to outer space, and *Toy Story* lands us in a liminal place that is both on earth in a child's bedroom and in the outer space of the imaginary world in which Buzz and Zurg operate. We are both in the gigantic universe and in the miniature world of toys. Before Buzz takes flight to prove his abilities to Andy, their conversation is marked by Andy's doubt and insistence that Buzz is "just" a toy and therefore cannot actually fly. And although "World of Color" seems to collapse this doubt (in the movie Buzz does eventually recognize that he is a toy and not "the real thing," although what that means is unclear, since he is still "alive" or animated), the show's juxtaposition of *Wall-E* and *Toy Story* reminds us of the play of imagination, as we enter a bedroom that is populated not by human children, but by one child's animated toys. Color, here, like miniaturization, becomes a function of play—the play of scale, technology, and imagination in the show, as well as the play of children with toys.

Color also emerges as a crucial function of characterization and difference. Buzz's space colors are distinctive to him and create a striking visual difference between him and the earth-toned cowboy Andy in the first scene, even as both characters are united as symbolic of different "frontiers": of the American West and of outer space. The flash of Little Green Men at the end of the *Toy Story* segment further highlights this role of color in characterization—in racialization—and the production and imagination of

difference. "World of Color," to a certain extent, seems to try to avoid associations between color and race. That is possible, in part, because its opening segments are populated largely by animals and toys, with the exception of the humanoid Ariel. This preponderance of animals in the show's first half does allow for a kind of white-washing or, at least, a portrayal of the "World of Color" as a world of beauty, wonder, and aesthetics, in which real, lived differences are idealized.[101]

In fact, "World of Color" introduces the connection between color and race in a movie about toys. *Toy Story* is a story populated by a wide range of different creatures. Buzz and Andy are the main humanoid figures among the toys, which include Mr. Potato Head, two dinosaurs, a piggy bank, a slinky dog, a penguin, cars, etc. The characters have their own distinctive colors that aim to make them "realistic" (the piggy bank is pink, the slinky dog is brown), but also serve to differentiate them from other characters. Mr. and Mrs. Potato Head are distinguishable by their different colored hats, Mr. Potato Head's black mustache and Mrs. Potato Head's red lips. Buzz and Andy are both clearly marked as white characters, but the other non-human characters are less clearly racialized, except for the aliens.[102] Issues of race and ethnicity do, however, come more prominently to the fore in the human-focused clips from *Pocahontas* and *Aladdin*, as I will show shortly.

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[101] The vast majority of studies of race and ethnicity in Disney films, finds the animations, in particular, to be white-washing and therefore producing mostly negative images of non-white racial and ethnic populations. See Elenor Byrne and Martin McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 1999); Gabriel Gutierrez, "Deconstructing Disney: Chicano/a Children and Critical Race Theory," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 25, no. 1 (2000): 5-46; Vincent Faherty, "Is the Mouse Sensitive? A Study of Race, Gender, and Social Vulnerability in Disney Animated Films," *SIMILE: Studies In Media & Information Literacy Education* 1, no. 3 (2001): 1-8; Mia Adessa Towbin, Shelley A. Haddock, Toni Schindler Zimmerman, Lori K. Lund, and Litsa Renee Tanner, "Images of Gender, Race, Age, and Sexual Orientation in Disney Feature-Length Animated Films," *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 15, no. 4 (2004): 19-44; Lee Artz, "Monarchs, Monsters, and Multiculturalism: Disney's Menu for Global Hierarchy," in *Rethinking Disney*, 75-98; Johnson Cheu, *Diversity in Disney Films*. More recently, as I mentioned earlier, Brode's *Multiculturalism and the Mouse* praises Disney's portrayals of diversity.
[102] "'Look Out New World, Here We Come'? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children's Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks" advances that non-human animated characters are

VIII. Flashback Interlude: *Silly Symphonies*

The use of color to create more sophisticated and nuanced characters was one of Disney's earliest technological innovations in animation in the 1930s *Silly Symphonies*, short, playful films that set "silly" animations to symphonic music. In their book *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies*, Russell Merritt and J.B. Kaufman consider the short films to be "Disney's first Fantasyland," the "Tiffany line" of the studio's early short films that established Walt as "a popular entertainer" also working on "serious art." [103] The innovation of the *Silly Symphonies* rested at first in their use of visual narratives set to "musical pastiche," a "cut and paste job of unrelated classical melodies and pop tunes with original bridge music" that created compositions of "musical openness ahead of its time, a non-hierarchical approach in which all genres of music were considered equal."[104] Initially, the primary intervention of the *Silly Symphonies* was musical. In contrast with the Mickey Mouse animations, which revolved almost exclusively around gags, the *Symphonies* allowed Disney to develop "atmospheric mood pieces" that set the stage for the later full-length feature films.[105]

"World of Color" draws on the *Silly Symphonies* in its approaches to both music and color. The show, like the *Symphonies,* is a "cut and paste job" of music that is, if not

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rarely unmarked by race: "rather than construing animated characters as generally unmarked by race, it is more likely that these characters are raced as White (which is why mainstream audiences do not notice many characters' races) as well as non-White (which is why other characters jump from their backgrounds)." Although the article discusses *Toy Story*, it only discusses it in terms of heterosexuality. Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo and Mary Bloodsworth-Lugo, "'Look Out New World, Here We Come'? Race, Racialization, and Sexuality in Four Children's Animated Films by Disney, Pixar, and DreamWorks," *Cultural Studies↔ Critical Methodologies* (November 2008), http://csc.sagepub.com/content/early/2008/11/03/1532708608325937.

[103] Russell Merritt and J.B. Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies* (Gemona, Italy: La Cineteca del Friuli, 2006), 3. Very little has been written on the *Silly Symphonies*. Perhaps the only recent analysis of them is: Russell Merritt, "Lost on Pleasure Islands: Storytelling in Disney's *Silly Symphonies*" *Film Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (Fall 2005), 4-17, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2005.59.1.4.

[104] Merritt and Kaufman, *Walt Disney's Silly Symphonies*, 8.

[105] Ibid., 6.

unrelated, then certainly extracted from another context. The show's music comes from

Disney films and television, but in many cases the music from one film is set to the

visuals from another. This shuffling of musical scores and moving images helps mark the

show as both familiar and unfamiliar in ways that build the narrative and foster a wide

range of emotional moods and surprises. This combination of familiarity and

unfamiliarity, a sameness with a difference, is, I am arguing, a marker of Disney wonder

practices and their re-animation and re-purposing of existing films, film components, and

technologies to craft different narrative and emotional trajectories.

One of the early *Symphonies*, *Midnight in a Toy Shop* (1930), like *Toy Story*,

features toys that come to life when a spider comes into the shop to get out of a winter

storm. Although this particular *Silly Symphonies* short film was produced before the

advent of color, it is another example of the ways in which ideas, figures, and tropes get

reiterated and reanimated in the Disney corpus through radical revision and technological

transformation. In the seven-minute film *[Midnight in a Toy Shop](#)*, the toys that become

animated in dance are mechanized. Their machine-like movements provide visuals for the

movements of the music. They are hardly characters. Instead, the spider, who initiates the

toys' animation by stumbling upon them and then starting to play the piano, is the

animator of sorts. Only the miniature spider—who appears larger than many of the toys

in the film—gains access to and/or trigger the animation of this miniature world of toys.

As Merritt and Kaufman note, *Midnight in a Toy Shop* is exemplary of the early

Symphonies produced between 1929 and 1931. Their black and white filmography

invokes "the midnight hours" to mark the springing to life of "the time for toys, scarecrows, watches, statuettes, the supernatural, the dead, and hieroglyphs."[106]

In *Toy Story*, of course, the toys are full-fledged animated characters in their own right, who think, speak, and move in anthropomorphic ways, and it is not a miniature being like the spider that allows for animation; our presence as audience does. The humans in the film—Andy, his family, and friends—do not know about the animated toys in Andy's room, but we, the audience, as outsiders, do. In *Midnight in a Toyshop,* as in *Toy Story*, the maintenance of distinctions between the insiders and outsiders facilitates the dreamworld of animated toys. In *Midnight* those distinctions are maintained by the snow storm, which indicates that humans are nowhere to be found, and the spider's miniature stature that puts him and his perceptions in the fantasyscape of the miniature. In *Toy Story*, those distinctions are maintained by marking the enchantment of Andy's Room as a secret world in which the audience partakes, but of which the humans in the film are ignorant. This state of things is facilitated through camera views that portray the toys in the film on a human scale on screen for us when the doors of Andy's room are shut but zoom out to reveal them as toy-sized when the humans in the film are on stage.

Many of the sequences in "World of Color" have antecedents in Disney's *Silly Symphonies* of the '30s—both in color and in black and white. The second of the *Silly Symphonies* to be made in color (though it was the first conceived entirely with the aims of color production), *King Neptune* (1932), revolves around ocean life and mermaids, as does the later *Merbabies* (1939). *King Neptune* even features an orange-haired mermaid, who is captured by a group of pirates, which triggers a battle between the ocean and the

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[106] Ibid., 7.

pirates that showcases the powers and resources of the ocean's creatures as they work to restore order and free the mermaid.

The early color *Silly Symphonies*, like *King Neptune* are mostly nature-focused animations, no doubt because nature scenes like the ocean and the woods provide colorful environments that allowed Disney to showcase the new colored animations. The first four films produced in color, for instance, are *Flower and Trees* (1932), *King Neptune* (1932), *Bugs in Love* (1932), and *Babes in the Woods* (1932). Although the *Silly Symphonies* are largely forgotten[107] (with the exception of a few Academy Award winners, among them *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), *The Old Mill* (1937), and *The Ugly Duckling* (1939)), the "wonderful world of Disney" was in some important ways built on the advent of color and Disney's pioneering use of musical innovation and the three-color Technicolor process. A two-color process already existed and was occasionally in use, but it was expensive, and most film producers and critics were skeptical of its value. This same skepticism surrounded the new three-color process, until Disney released *Flowers and Trees* (1932) in an effort to vitalize its *Silly Symphonies* shorts, whose popularity lagged behind that of the Mickey Mouse shorts begun in 1928. The infusion of color in Disney's productions changed the course of both Disney and film history.[108]

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[107] A recent exhibit at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, "Treasures of the Walt Disney Archives," celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Walt Disney Company (1923-2013) refocused popular attention on the *Silly Symphonies* as the films that most defined Disney's early success and set the stage for the full-length feature films that made the studio an international name in film.

[108] For more on the history and processes of color filmography, see Richard W. Haines, *Technicolor movies: The History of Dye Transfer Printing* (London: McFarland, 1993); Angela Dalle Vacche and Brian Price, *Color: The Film Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012); Simon Brown, Sarah Street, and Liz Watkins, *Color and the Moving Image: Story, Theory, Aesthetics, Archive* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

As Richard Neupert has documented in his essay "Painting a Plausible World:

Disney's Color Prototypes," Disney's use of Technicolor became a selling point for the

process, whose value was contested through the end of the 1930s. Before Disney's foray

into Technicolor, none of the other animation studios (Paramount and MGM, in

particular) was willing to take a chance on the expense of the new technology. By 1935,

after Disney had won four academy awards for the *Silly Symphonies*, both Paramount and

MGM signed with Technicolor. One of Disney's key strategies in working with

Technicolor Inc. in the early 1930s had been to secure exclusive use of the three-color

process for five years, a duration which allowed Disney to develop what Neupert calls a

"codified color use," making Disney's films into better prototypes for Technicolor than

any of Technicolor's own prototype films could be.[109]

[*Flowers and Trees*](), as the title suggests, animates a spring morning awakening of

flowers, birds, trees. Three trees are the main characters—one a male-gendered, brown-

haired (leafed) wooer who plays a harp to attract another tree, a green-leafed female-

gendered dancer who moves in sync with the music; the third tree is a grey hollowed out

stump that clearly symbolizes evil. The seven-minute short unfolds in three movements—

an opening narrative in which flowers dance along with the music, washing their faces as

mushrooms sprout, and birds sing; this is the context in which the one tree will meet and

seek to seduce the other. Approximately three minutes into the film the grey tree appears

to try to take the female tree away. A fight between the two male trees ensues. When it

seems as if the forces of "good" have triumphed, the grey tree lights a fire and throws it

at the other two trees, igniting the countryside/forest. The fire appears to be all-

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[109] Neupert, Richard, "Painting a Plausible World: Disney's Color Prototypes," in *Disney Discourse*, Eric
Smoodin, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1994), 106-17.

consuming, despite the presence of a small body of water. But just as the fire threatens the trees, some birds poke holes into clouds that begin to shed rain. The fire is extinguished, and good triumphs.

The advent of color in this *Silly Symphony* creates a clear shift from the earlier shorts in the series, which rely on exaggerated movements inspired by slapstick. In *Trees and Flowers*, we have a montage of animated nature that is designed to showcase a vast array of colors. The color scheme, as Neupert suggests, is dependent on a light background (sky blue for the most part) with a terrain that is brown with some green patches of grass. The green of the grass, however, is far lighter than the green of the trees' leaves. Indeed, this backdrop is set as a stage against which the characters come to life. Color here, as in *Toy Story*, enters the picture as a mode of characterization. The flowers, for instance, are all the same color—white with a black center—and they act in unison, as a kind of dance troupe moving in sync with the music. Likewise, the mushrooms are also designed in a similar color group, and the short's first three minutes draws out sequences of dancing flowers and mushrooms that have little purpose other than to showcase the scene's colors. The animated flowers and mushrooms perform choreographed dances that capitalize on color's ability to create depth in the picture and draw character distinctions.

The trees that form the center of the action as individual characters each have their own color schemes—whose differences are subtle enough that they would be difficult, if not impossible, to pull off in black and white. The light brown of the "good" trees makes them stand apart from the gray tree, but the difference is fairly muted, even though for an audience used to black and white, that difference was likely noticeable. In

general, the colors form a harmonious "plausible" nature, as Neupert advances, by being relatively un-dramatic—a tactic that would later inform the naturalism of *Bambi*. Only the arrival of the fire—the film's climax—creates drama through radical color contrast and movement that threatens to be all-consuming. Indeed, before the grey tree unleashes fire, the color scheme relies entirely on earth-tones of brown, green, and blue. Despite its much less technologically advanced production, in this first Technicolor short from 1932, many of the elements of "World of Color" are already present: animated color, water, fire, music, and a plot line that moves from light delight to a more ominous darkness and doom that will ultimately resolve in a finale in which good and imagination prevail and nature is saved.

IX.   "World of Color": *Aladdin* Re-Defining the "Disney Story"

In "World of Color," *Toy Story's* colorful characters do not point to nature in this way. Rather, the film's diverse characters, especially Woody and Buzz, serve as a transition from the opening's emphasis on the ocean and outer space to the "human" world of Disney films. In the final seconds of the *Toy Story* segment, the little green men's expression of awe—and their unmistakable introduction of the racial and ethnic dimensions of color as green aliens—is followed by darkness, and then a single pink balloon wafts up the screen. Close behind are a blue and yellow one, and a brief gap in which a piano starts to play as the lagoon's blue lights bubble. Most viewers will have already anticipated the arrival of *UP*'s (2009) flying house, its thousands of multi-colored balloons lifting it in flight. The balloons themselves fill the screen for over twenty seconds, displaying their carousel of color as the piano plays its contemplative tune. The

house—with its three main characters Carl (the older man who owns the house), Russel (the boy scout at Carl's front door when the house takes flight), and Dug (the dog)—only occupies the screen for ten seconds, just long enough for Dug to introduce himself in his characteristic affection and distractedness: "My name is Dug. I have just met you, and I love you... Squirrel." The house flies off screen, followed by a single orange Mickey Mouse-shaped balloon, like the ones visitors can purchase in the theme parks.

This allusion to the material goods of the parks marks the transition back to the pre-Pixar era of hand-drawn animation, as the balloon's orange color fades into a zoomed-in image of human skin. In this moment, color finally reveals itself to be about race and the production of human difference. The skin moves across the screen, becoming recognizable as the arm of one of *Aladdin*'s (1992) main characters, Jasmine, whom we see from behind, cuddled up to Aladdin on yet another unusual vehicle for flight: their magic carpet. We see the couple momentarily, as the song "A Whole New World" comes on, also set to piano music, providing continuity from the previous scene. As the magic carpet disappears, the blue and pink water jets begin to move back and forth against a yellow-orange sky background, the silhouette of Genie's lamp resting on what seem like sand hills. Aladdin's voice sings "I can show you the world. Take you wonder by wonder..." Jasmine and Aladdin fly across the water jets, their perspective becoming our own, as we see the "unbelievable sights, indescribable feelings" of the song's designation—a palace, the globe's curved horizon, etc. The sights fade back into a focus on the couple's flight, and then on a close up of them as they embrace to the song's refrain: "A whole new world, a whole new life, for you and me." The last phrase of the song is drawn out, as the couple is shown flying from a blue-lit foreground on the magic

carpet towards a large yellow moon in the distance. As they move toward the moon, the whole set turns to orange-red lighting and jets with occasional shots of purple, a spectrum that stands in for both the sunset and the fulfillment of the couple's love.

Aladdin's "whole new world" that emerges here is marked as new in the show in several ways. It is the first of the clips in "World of Color" to focus on humans. The newness, however, of this world is also very clearly about its exoticism and location in the Middle East. Aladdin and Jasmine's flight over the palaces and the desert highlights the earlier segments of "World of Color" as distinctly white, Europeanized worlds. *The Little Mermaid* is a European fairy tale; *Finding Nemo*'s Australian location distinguishes it from *The Little Mermaid*, but the worlds it depicts, from the over-protective father to the snorkelers from Sidney who capture Nemo and the dentist office fish tank Nemo lands in, are clearly white and European. The only "exotic" parts of the movie are its natural landscapes and the fish.

Similarly, *Toy Story* is a colorful world of toys, racialized in very white terms. Woody, Andy, and Buzz are all white characters, and Woody, as a cowboy, and Buzz, as an astronaut, in particular, are emblems of white, masculine frontiers. Although *Up* only appears on screen for a brief time, the floating house scene invokes cultural, racial, and species differences that are central to the film. Carl is an older white man, who wants nothing to do with Russell, the Asian American boy scout, who is at Carl's front door when his house takes flight. Finally, the dog Dug communicates through a special technological collar that "translates" dogs' thoughts/voices into human/English. This world of American cultural difference appears momentarily as the backdrop against

which *Aladdin* emerges as a "whole new world" in which color is linked to different landscapes, cultures, and ethnicities.

Racial and ethnic difference here is less whitewashed than it was in the earlier clips, but as scholars have noted, *Aladdin*'s world is filled with Middle Eastern stereotypes, drawn from the Arab tradition of *One Thousand and One Nights*.[110] Aladdin is a street boy, a thief trying to get away from the palace guards, and Jasmine is his superior, the princess of the realm. The film highlights class differences, even as it portrays an exotic Middle Eastern world. In the contest of "World of Color," however, this "whole new world" only seems superficially different: its colors, landscapes, and the color of people's skins are different. Otherwise, the Aladdin-Jasmine love scene seems like a kind of fulfillment of *The Little Mermaid* clip and Ariel's longing for the human world and human love in the show's opening scene. *Aladdin* returns to the genre of folktale—this time drawing from the Arab tradition—and seems to offer narrative coherence and closure: having gone from the sea to the moon and back, we find love in its most predictable and precious form.

But just as resolution appears to be taking place, even before Jasmine and Aladdin disappear into the moonlight, the moon begins to bob up and down as laughter overcomes the nearly messianic music of the love scene. The moon rotates to reveal a face that belongs to the shape-shifting, chameleon Genie. The water jets turn blue around the moon, just as Genie pulls up the moon-screen to uncover his blue image, which in turn correlates with an explosion of orange and yellow lighting in the jets and stage behind

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[110] See Alan Nadel, "A Whole New (Disney) World Order: Aladdin, Atomic Power, and the Muslim Middle East," *Visions of the East: Orientalism in film* (1997): 184-203; Brenda Ayres, *The Emperor's Old Groove: Decolonizing Disney's Magic Kingdom* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

him: "Made you look!" he exclaims before disappearing in a puff of blue smoky water. Like the show's two opening scenes from *The Little Mermaid* that depicted contrasting perspectives and moods, the first segment from *Aladdin* in the show gives us a meditative, "happily-ever-after" love scene between Aladdin and Jasmine, but the second scene pokes fun at the conventionality of the first, with the comical, playful Genie pulling the love scene's screen away to reveal its staged artificiality, as he launches into his staple song, "Friend Like Me."

As with Sebastian's earlier scene, the music here is upbeat and lively. Genie is a showman, displaying his shape-shifting abilities: "Master, I don't think you quite realize what you've got," he announces, as he shows us the "possibilities." If Aladdin and Jasmine showed us a conventional love scene, Genie shows us a different kind of relationality: "Can your friends do this?" The show's lasers and lights respond to his call and light up the stage in a wave from left to right. "Can your friends do that?"—and the lights wave back on from right to left. As Genie himself changes into different creatures, the lights change with him, marking each instance of "magic." As with the opening of "World of Color" and its invitation to the audience to "imagine and see what wonders can be," Genie's doing "this" and "that" is open to audience-imaginers' definition and interpretation. "This" and "that" are marked by technological flourishes on stage, but they are also categories of much larger narrative and relational possibilities, especially given Genie's role in making Aladdin's dreams and relationship with Jasmine possible.

In *Aladdin*, although Genie is a colorful character—both because he is blue and because he is dynamic and different from Aladdin and the other more conventional humans—his purpose is to grant Aladdin's wishes and enable the burgeoning relationship

between Aladdin and Jasmine. "World of Color," however, re-writes Genie's role, making him less a facilitator of the conventional love story than a maker of alternative narrative trajectories and possibilities. Genie, in effect, becomes a figure for Disney's technological magic and invention. The "World of Color" stage erupts in its most complex movement of lighting and colors thus far, as Genie works towards his performance's peak: "You ain't never, never, never... had a friend like me!" The lights on the rides at Paradise Pier, behind the bay, light up with the jets and lasers, which run concurrently and in different colors and sizes. They mark new patterns and combinations; unlike Sebastian's performance, which was dominated by red colors, Genie's is explosively diverse in its colors and patterns of color use. Disney here capitalizes on the spectacular nature of the show's technologies through Genie's embodiment of magic.

Genie's scene, on the one hand, shows us a use of color as sheer spectacle; "can your friends do this?" and "can your friends do that?" act as "look what I can do." On the other hand, this light-hearted and seemingly simple showmanship introduces a new kind of tension in the "World of Color" that is specifically about Disney's awareness of public criticism of the predictability and conventionality of Disney narrative trajectories. As a figure for Disney Imagineering, Genie's pivotal role is to wipe away the conventional love story as a foregone conclusion. Just as resolution appears to be taking place, he laughingly interrupts the romance and pulls that narrative closure away: "Ha, ha, ha. Made you look!" In this way, "World of Color" reverses the conventional expectations of a Disney ending. It re-animates *Aladdin* to disassemble the film's "happily ever after" ending in order to offer a more open-ended narrative trajectory.

"World of Color" seems to recognize one of the biggest critiques of Disney diversity: that it is often not about cultural or racial differences, but about reproducing whiteness under the guise of difference. This critique has been especially strong in regards to *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Disney's first film about an African American princess, set in New Orleans. [111] Sarah Turner writes about the film:

> The dominant message encoded within this 21st century text [sic] is one of colorblindness, meaning that while Princess Tiana is clearly black, that is not the points of the text—she is simply a princess who 'happens' to have black skin but is not representational of blackness or racially-prescribed tropes. Color-blind racism denies difference based on skin color by simply refusing to see color…. The rhetoric of color-blind racism enables an adherence to dominant ideologies and institutional practices by negating difference.[112]

The juxtaposition in "World of Color" of *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin* as love stories that seem to fulfill one another, highlights the films' color-blindness in Turner's terms. Although one film is set in the ocean and features a white, red-head mermaid who becomes human to woo her prince and the other is set on land in an enchanted Middle East and features an Arab street boy-turned-prince attempting to woo his princess, these differences are little more than surface differences. The stories—and certainly the endings—pursue the same narrative trajectories to the same ends.

Genie's role in "World of Color" is to interrupt that apparent reproduction—to call it out, question it, and begin to move towards alternatives. In Genie's scene, Aladdin

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[111] See Neal A. Lester, "Disney's The Princess and the Frog: The Pride, the Pressure, and the Politics of Being a First," *The Journal of American Culture* 33, no. 4 (2010): 294-308; Sarita McCoy Gregory, "Disney's Second Line: New Orleans, Racial Masquerade, and the Reproduction of Whiteness in *The Princess and the Frog*" *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (2010): 432-449; Ajay Gehlawat, Ajay. "The Strange Case of *The Princess and the Frog*: Passing and the Elision of Race," *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (2010): 417-431; Richard M. Breaux, "After 75 Years of Magic: Disney Answers Its Critics, Rewrites African American History, and Cashes in on Its Racist Past," *Journal of African American Studies* 14, no. 4 (2010): 398-416.

[112] Sarah E. Turner, "Blackness, Bayous and Gumbo: Encoding and Decoding Race in a Colorblind World," in *Diversity in Disney Films*, 84.

himself does not appear, nor is he mentioned. Although Genie addresses "a master,"

given the staging of the show, viewers are, in fact, more aptly positioned as the

addressees who have three wishes and who therefore are positioned as actor-actants who

can define other, different narrative trajectories. In this position, however, viewer-actants

are also positioned to define what constitutes racial, ethnic, and cultural difference. The

apparent finality of the Jasmine and Aladdin magic carpet scene removes those two main

characters from the picture, allowing Genie's relationship with the audience of "World of

Color" to take center stage. In this way, the wonder of the show rests in its surprising

reversal of the *Aladdin* narrative, its critique of Disney's color-blind diversity, and in its

movement to open the film in a participatory way. In being addressed by the Genie in this

scene, the audience is again enjoined to further define and articulate their desires for the

show's introductory opening on "what wonders can be" and for what color and difference

means in lived experience.

 Aladdin here becomes reanimated to explicitly rewrite the narrative trajectory of

the film and to help reinvent what might be meant by a "Disney story." Indeed, in "World

of Color," the very forms of technology that created the conventional Disney narratives—

animated films—here become transformed into vehicles through which those narratives

and conventions are overthrown, re-animated, and reinvented. The extraction of film clips

from their broader narrative context in "World of Color" both invokes the known Disney

narratives and allows the characters, scenes, colors, and music to take on different

meanings and purposes, transplanted into a new environment and physical medium. This

dynamic in the show between familiarity and novelty structures the notion of imagination

Disney offers viewer-authors, inviting and empowering them to use familiar stories and places as the basis for their imaginative transformations and narratives.

X.   Flashback Interlude: Riding Nature's Wonderlands

The constant re-animation and reinvention of films, narratives, and mediums is one of the longest-standing practices of Disney wonder. The creation and opening of Disneyland and later Disney World were among the most radical instances of Disney reinvention as films (both cartoons and live-action) became transformed into three- and four-dimensional experiences. The "True-Life-Adventure" series and Disney's naturalistic leanings were among the earliest to undergo these material and narrative translations, as they became prime sources for theme park attractions in the 1950s. The "Jungle Cruise" (1955-present) in Adventureland and the "Rainbow Caverns Mine Train" (1956-1960) turned "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland" (1960-1977) turned "Thunder Mountain Railroad" (1979-present) in Frontierland are two examples of rides inspired by Disney's nature filmography that were reinvented to create new narrative experiences.

Before Disneyland opened to the public, the "True-Life-Adventure films" were, as I noted earlier, enlisted in the *Disneyland* television series to help sell and mythologize the park. Translated from the big screen for television, the films were woven into Disney's process of mythologizing Disneyland as a space of adventure and entertainment. In this capacity, the films offered a promise that the rides they inspired were subsequently meant to fulfill. "Jungle Cruise" and "Rainbow Caverns Mine Train" are located in the two regions of Disneyland dedicated to non-fictional, historical geographies infused with

mythical adventure, and both were based not just on films but on natural landscapes. Part of their allure rested in their re-creations of nature through technology in order to foster experiences of meditative appreciation and wonder. To return to my epigraph, in his June 1958 letter to the editor of *Nation* magazine Ray Bradbury, one of Disney's great defenders,[113] writes "The Jungle Boat ride…is an experience of true delight and wonder."[114] The boat ride takes visitors on a cruise through the "jungle," where a range of animatronic animals—from crocodiles to elephants—live and play. The ride creates a narrative travel experience inspired by the 1955 True-Life-Adventures film *The African Lion* and the 1951 filmic adaptation of C.S. Forester's *The African Queen* (1935), set in German East Africa at the beginning of World War I. The film takes place mostly aboard the river boat the *African Queen*, as its two main characters, played by Katherine Hepburn and Humphrey Bogart, travel to safety. Thus the ride is set in a colonialist Africanized milieu colored with adventure and a slight sense of threat.

When the Jungle Cruise first opened, the ride transported guests into the adventure space of the film as well as into the wilderness of the African jungle, giving the film a sensory dimension. As Marling writes, "What Disney's 'imagineers' added to the movie by transferring it in three dimensions to Anaheim was the missing quotient of 'reality': running water, gunshots, grinning crocodiles that swam and snapped their jaws to expose pointy plastic teach. If there were no mosquitoes… there was an abundance of convincing atmosphere to smell and to feel dripping down one's neck."[115] The ride

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[113] From its beginnings Disney animation and theme parks have garnered both intense criticism and praise—with many "highbrow" critics bashing the scripted and vulgar nature of Disney's narratives. Bradbury and such artists as Salvador Dali, who worked with Disney for many years, were among his most fervent defenders. For an account of the reception of Disneyland by middlebrow and highbrow critics of the 1950s, see Marling, "Disneyland, 1955," 172-4.
[114] Bradbury, "Letter to the Editor," in *Walt Disney Imagineering*, 19.
[115] Marling, "Disneyland, 1955," 173.

inspired wonder in transforming a passive viewing experience into a participatory, sensory experience, allowing visitors to imagine themselves in the film's narrative.

As some scholars have noted, over the past several decades, as the colonialist narratives underpinning such rides have been scrutinized and visitors are at an increasing temporal and cultural distance from the original context of the Jungle Cruise, the ride and its tone have undergone slight changes: "The Jungle Cruise remains, with much of its post-colonialist banter in place, but this former scion of athletic male workers now is home to women pilots, and the patter is delivered with complete irony; all jokes are supposed to be bad ones, the tone completely retro."[116] Thus, today, the Jungle Cruise creates a similar experience of transportation (sans the drama and gunshots) into the wild jungle of animatronic animals, but the journey is marked as a parodic comedy of traditional adventure narratives, a modern, post-colonial version of Washington Irving's *A Tour on the Prairies*, discussed in chapter one, a deliberately anti-wonder narrative that nonetheless continues to play off the appeal of the "almost real."[117]

Not unlike the extraction of scenes from Disney films in "World of Color," the ride presents a selective experience of the movies it draws from. In contrast to the show's use of film excerpts for narrative reinvention, however, the selective experiences in "Jungle Cruise" and other rides are condensed, summary versions of the films. Other rides go further in creating summary experiences not just of films but of whole landscapes. "Rainbow Caverns Mine Train"/"Mine Train through Nature's

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[116] Shelton Waldrep, *The Dissolution of Place: Architecture, Identity, and the Body* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), 58.

[117] Marling, "Disneyland, 1955," 174. Marling here further notes that although critics of Disney derided the plastic "vulgarization" of the parks, those like Bradbury, who experienced the Jungle Cruise and other rides as wonders found that: "The tension between perfection and reality, between the real and the more-or-less real, was a primary source of the visitor's delight."

Wonderland"/"Big Thunder Mountain" has been reincarnated three times with similar landscaping in all three iterations. First, "Rainbow Caverns Mine Train" (1956-1960) was a ride through the "Living Desert" of Frontierland, based largely on the True-Life-Adventures film *The Living Desert* (1953), except for the "Rainbow Caverns" section of the ride, which offered up a dark cave filled with illuminated pools and waterfalls.[118] The revised version of the ride that opened in 1960 under the "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland" title was built around the Rainbow Caverns experience, expanding the ride's landscape to include much more Pacific Northwest scenery (Figure 3.2.). Thus, in a different transportation medium from the Jungle Cruise, the ride took visitors through a set of American natural landscapes by rail, showcasing a dramatic waterfall, animatronic bears, beavers, and bobcats, a desert landscape, geysers, and bubbling mud pots. This revised "Mine Train" drew from such True Life Adventures as *In Beaver Valley* (1950), *The Olympic Elk* (1952), *Bear Country* (1953), and *The Vanishing Prairie* (1954).[119]
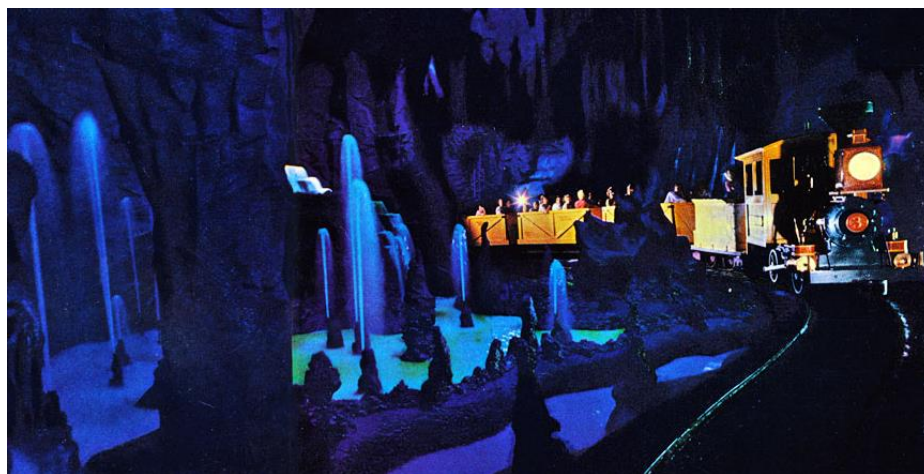
Figure 3.2. "Rainbow Caverns," Mine Train through Nature's
Wonderland, Disneyland's Frontierland, 1963.
Photograph by Thomas Nebbia, in "The Magic Worlds of Walt
Disney, National Geographic*, 200-1.*
Available on the web at: http://davelandweb.com/nw/.

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[118] Yesterland, "Rainbow Cavern Mine Train," http://www.yesterland.com/rcminetrain.html.
[119] Yesterland, "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland": http://www.yesterland.com/minetrain.html.

The ride, however, did not only emerge from the films. It was the very ride at the 1948 Railroad Fair in Chicago that first inspired Walt to create Disneyland. The exhibits at the fair, produced by individual railroads, as Marling describes, "recreated in convincing atmospheric detail some exotic vacation spot best reached by train." Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Burlington, for example, created a huge display that "aimed to replicate famous points of interest in the Rocky Mountain and Pacific Coast regions." Replete with a functional dude ranch, a massive mechanical Paul Bunyan statue, a rodeo, and a regularly-erupting replica of Old Faithful, the railroads' miniaturization of the "Wonderland" landscape they traversed was a quasi-blue print for Disney's subsequent "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland." [120]

Disney's attraction was more permanent than the ones at the railroad fair—and its aim was not the same. Where the railroads aimed to showcase their destinations in the hopes of boosting sales, Disney's attractions were about getting away from the city and every-day life and entering an imaginative realm without really having to go that far. The rides, therefore, were narrative re-animations of films, landscapes, and American history that seemed to allow Disney-goers experiential access to nature and some version of the nineteenth-century Wonderland railroad experience discussed in chapter one. Disneyland's reinventions of filmic and natural landscapes transported them physically and imaginatively through these "almost real" miniaturizations of natural wonderlands that represented alternatives to the urban and suburban environments of Southern California and the U.S. more broadly. In these amusement park rides, therefore, narrative theming renders transportation an imaginative act with potentially transformative powers.

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[120] Marling, "Disneyland, 1955," 181.

The imaginative promise in the experience of "Mine Train through Wonderland" and its animation of landscape, visitors are equipped with an imaginative model through which any form of transportation—outside the park as well as inside—can become this kind of imaginative journey.

Several years after Walt died "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland" became the thrill ride it is today: "Big Thunder Mountain." Still a landscape that draws on the histories and geographies of American "wonderlands," the roller-coaster train traverses a landscape based on the famous rock spire hoodoos of Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah (Figure 3.3.).[121] Thunder Mountain offers riders a dramatic ride that uses the

wonder of nature as a background for the fearful, jerky thrill of a roller-coaster ride through the mountains during an earthquake (or tsunami or flashflood in Tokyo and Florida, respectively), a disaster that is cosmic retribution for the mining of gold in a land, sacred to Native Americans.[122] Although the mood is less meditative than it was in previous iterations of the ride, "Big Thunder Mountain" presents a new iteration of an enchanted landscape, revised to be a wonderful, thrilling adventure.


Figure 3.3. "Thunder Mountain," Disneyland's Frontierland.
Personal photograph.

The "Mine Train" exemplifies Disney's practices of using narrative and material reiteration and reanimation to create new attractions that enable new narrative

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[121] The versions of this ride at Disney World in Florida, and the Disney parks in Tokyo and Paris are additionally modeled after Arizona's Monument Valley.
[122] See Walt Disney Company, "Big Thunder Mountain Railroad," *Disney.com*, https://disneyland.disney.go.com/au/disneyland/big-thunder-mountain-railroad/.

experiences. This consistent re-animation of narratives, landscapes, and rides creates a kind of systematization of Disney wonderscapes through reproductions with differences. Although Thunder Mountain is still very much in existence, another reinvention of the "Mine Train through Wonderland" ride has opened in the Disney California Adventure park. There, off highway 66 in the California desert, you can strap into a blue or red convertible, and just as the engine revs and the car surges to take off, a voice comes over a speaker in your headrest: "Now go out and enjoy beautiful Ornament Valley, nature's wonderland!" The car first accelerates around a bend and then slows as a waterfall appears. Somehow this land is both an arid desert and a bountiful valley that, over the course of four minutes, delivers a part scenic, part speed-inspired ride in the park's "Cars Land," one of the newest U.S.-based Disney theme park attractions. This ride, "Radiator Springs Racers," opened on June 15, 2012 to so much anticipation that in its first month of operation, guests waited up to six hours for the chance to experience one of Disney's latest technological wonders.

The voice in "Radiator Springs Racers" that tells riders to enjoy their ride through "nature's wonderland" belongs to the Sheriff in the Disney-Pixar film *Cars* (2006).[123] The Ornament Valley of the ride is the setting for most of the movie: a beautiful, dramatic landscape surrounding Radiator Springs—a small desert town off route 66 that has nearly become a ghost town after the construction of a super highway that allows traffic to bypass the town and its inhabitants. "Radiator Springs Racers" is both a transformation of the *Cars* movie and a creative allusion to Disneyland's "Mine Train through Nature's Wonderland," this time with a new vehicle of transportation. The ride

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[123] The voice is, in fact, that of the popular Route 66 historian Michael Wallis.

plays up the valley's status as a natural wonder that inspires awe and delight, but it also fosters an experience of emotional thrill and adventure through the technology of the car.

In its technological and narrative reinvention of the wonderland of "Mine Train," Ornament Valley is a metonym for the California Adventure park. Through its California-based theming, the park posits a new "nature's wonderland" of technologized wonder that, in effect, offers a twenty-first-century transformation of Disneyland in a new material and thematic framework. Disney California Adventure is itself a re-animation of Disneyland through a lens that has shifted from celebrating America to celebrating California. "World of Color" is a major marker of that transformation, offering a highly technologized spectacular light show that builds off of Disneyland's traditional fireworks display but reinvents it as a colorful aerial technological narrative based on Disney films of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

I argued in chapter one that Yellowstone and the wonderlands Northern Pacific promoted created a narrative through which visitors to the region could perform a form of wonder citizenship. In chapter two, I discussed zoos' wonder practices and their use of zoogeographic designs in fostering a fantasy of transnational zoopolitanism. Disney's parks and the imaginative transformations visitors experience in them and that Disney purports to offer in the form of "magic," "dreams," and "wonder" are not just about individual imagination and transformation. In imagination, defined through magic, dreams, wonder, we find a safe and desirable form of a radical reinvention of the relationships between nature and technology.

At Disney, as should be clear by now, there is no way to speak of nature as separable from technology and vice-versa. What we have are techno-natures, and part of

the imaginative act visitors to Disney theme parks participate in is a revisionary one in which we become citizens of this techno-natural world that is no longer definable in national terms. Disney California Adventure is, on the surface, a park celebrating a state in the United States, but in celebrating California, the park is also celebrating a state that has often been not just defining but redefining the nation—through its natural and technological wonders. Boundary-pushing and redefinition may be the state's and the park's true sources of adventure and wonder.

XI.   "World of Color": *Pocahontas* and Anti-Colonial Wonder

Aladdin's Genie is the main boundary-pusher and redefiner in "World of Color." I have noted that he highlights the show's technological and contextual re-invention of Disney narratives and characters, but his performance also serves as a spectacular interlude and bridge to the second half of "World of Color," in which different types of characters and narratives are showcased. When Genie vanishes, the stage is dark and silent, and a wind-like sound comes over the speakers as a slow, ambient music comes on. Blue, bubbling jets light the stage from right to left, until the whole bay-platform is bubbling. For the first time, under-water lights come on and bring out a greenish color in the water. Green jets spray in the distance, waving back and forth, until they fade into an image of the main character from *Brave* (2010), Merida, with a focus on her red hair. Her face emerges on the water-screen above the bay, surrounded by butterflies. We are, at last, on land, though Merida's face soon turns into *Fantasia 2000*'s (2000) Spring Sprite, accompanied by multi-colored flower petals scattered across the sky. The Sprite appears to open the stage's curtains onto a forest, which unfolds in the sky before our eyes. Just

as Genie pulled away the screen in the *Aladdin* clip, here the scene resembles a theatrical curtain moving across an aerial stage. A new act is beginning.

The revelation of vibrant green trees and grass (the most intense manifestation of green to this point) is a little over a minute in coming, and when it arrives, the music marks it through orchestral fanfare. Until this point, the scene has been set to instrumental music, but as we get a full view of the forest, the Spring Sprite makes her final appearance and then fades into the forest as the voice of *Pocahontas* (1995) comes on singing "Just Around the River Bend." In a new narrative tempo, we have weaved in and out of three movies in the span of just over a minute, before arriving at last on land in a forest that places us in another "whole new world," not of the ocean, the sky, or exotic Arabian desert, but of first-encounter "native" America of the seventeenth century.

Another female protagonist, counter-part to Ariel, gives us a new perspective on water, as Pocahontas sings "...you can't step in the same river twice." She pauses, and the forest opens onto a water fall; the green lighting in the lagoon turns blue: "Water's always changing, always flowing." In tandem, the blue jets that represent the river begin swirling around, changing directions, and splashing, as Pocahontas wonders "what's around the river bend?" Her canoe goes careening down the waterfall and river in a display of adventure and risk. The whole stage turns blue in the splash that marks her landing and then remains a turbulent splash under her paddling. The scene's unicolor brings out Pocahontas's color—her dark skin tones against her clothing, in addition to her jewelry—again highlighting color's associations with racial and ethnic differences.

Just as this focus on Pocahontas's skin draws attention to her as non-white, a rainbow appears across the sky from left to right, seeming to frame the moving image of

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her on the river. The rainbow, of course, is not just an emblem of wonder and rare natural experiences; it is a symbol of diversity and multiculturalism—an alternative vision to that of the miscegenation of the "melting pot" through which difference is erased. The rainbow image and the clip's focus on Pocahontas as a strong and independent female protagonist, the first in "World of Color" to appear on scene not yearning for or attached to a man, counter some of the criticism Disney's film received in the late 1990s. Leigh Edwards, for example, argues that Disney's *Pocahontas* is fundamentally about racial mixing and miscegenation, which define the film's "particular version of multiculturalism": "The film takes America's first interracial love story and deflects the racial mixing involved in the historical narrative into a visual figure of multiethnicity: it prevents actual interracial mixing from occurring while it explicitly makes Pocahontas's animated body visually multiethnic…. Ultimately, it attempts to associate miscegenation with multiculturalism."[124] In "World of Color," however, *Pocahontas* is not invoked to focus on the titular character's relationship with John Smith or European peoples.

Pauline Turner Strong writes that *Pocahontas* is frequently "dismissed as a commercial product through which Disney's powerful marketing machine has revived and exploited the U.S. public's fascination with playing Indian."[125] Although the movie incontrovertibly participates in this fascination, the history of which I discussed in

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[124] Leigh Edwards, "The United Colors of 'Pocahontas': Synthetic Miscegenation and Disney's Multiculturalism," *Narrative* 7, no. 2, Multiculturalism and Narrative (May, 1999), 148. *Pocahontas* is, perhaps unsurprisingly, one of the Disney films to have received the most critical attention. See Gary Edgerton and Kathy Merlock Jackson, "Redesigning Pocahontas: Disney, the 'White Man's Indian,' and the Marketing of Dreams," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 24, no. 2 (1996): 90-98; Pauline Strong, "Animated Indians: Critique and Contradiction in Commodified Children's Culture," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 3 (1996): 405-24; Ziauddin Sardar, "Walt Disney and the Double Victimisation of Pocahontas," *Third Text* 10, no. 37 (1996): 17-26; Kiyomi Kutsuzawa, "Disney's Pocahontas: Reproduction of Gender Orientalism and the Strategic Construction of Racial Harmony in the Disney empire," *Asian Journal of Women's Studies* 6, no. 4 (2000): 10; Brenda Ayers, *The Emperor's Old Groove*.
[125] Strong, "Animated Indians," 411.

chapter one, the movie also "makes a serious statement about ethnocentrism, androcentrism, commodification, and exploitation as barriers to the dream of interethnic harmony that Smith and Pocahontas represent."[126] Strong argues that when taken seriously, the film's dialogue and songs offer a broad and "devastating cultural critique… of the commodity form itself, albeit one that is, itself, consummately commodified."[127] The film situates Pocahontas against European colonialism and its attendant, emerging capitalist commodification of nature, goods, and people.

The focus in "World of Color" on Pocahontas builds audience identification with her in the face of the colonial power we know is there, despite its absences on scene. Pocahontas sings "you can't step into the same river twice," advancing an understanding of ethnic and cultural difference defined neither by essentialist notions of race and ethnicity, nor by fantasies of effacing difference through the "melting pot." Rather, Pocahontas here voices an ideal of difference based on personal, cultural, and historical experience. You can't step into the same river twice, because you are not the same person the second time—because of personal, biological, and historical circumstances. But the correlative there is that no two people can experience one river in the same way. This is neither the color-blind multiculturalism Sarah Turner argued was at the heart of *The Princess and the Frog*, nor is it the fantasy of a homogeneous miscegenation.

Rather, the iteration of experience-based difference in a scene surrounded by a rainbow articulates what we might call a sort of rainbow multiculturalism that thematizes the show's larger reflection that experiences of Disney films and narrative trajectories are marked by contextual, experiential differences. In re-animating *Pocahontas* here, "World

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[126] Ibid., 412.
[127] Ibid.

of Color" shows not just that "you can't step in the same river twice," but that "you can't step into the same film or narrative twice." Every river, every film, every narrative, every circumstance is different the second, third, and fourth times, so that sameness is never the same. But, perhaps even more importantly, "World of Color" exemplifies an ethos of re-vision that recognizes the need to re-invent and re-animate pasts, presents, and futures in narrative. This ethos, in effect, banishes the notion of a singular "Disney version" of stories and histories in order to advance a plurality of voices, histories, and narrative possibilities. If it is not possible to step in the same river twice, that is not just because "you" change; so, too, does the river/film/narrative, both by virtue of cultural and historical forces and by virtue of active re-writings and re-animations on the part of Imagineers, as well as visitor-actants.

As the rainbow and river fade, a dramatic instrumental rendition of *Pocahontas*'s famous song "Colors of the Wind" begins. If Pocahontas's first appearance links color to racial and ethnic difference, the transition from the rainbow scene into "Colors of the Wind," marks a nuancing of rainbow multiculturalism. With both the rainbow and the song, color is again associated with biological nature. "World of Color" again reveals color as both natural and cultural. In this context, race and ethnic "color" are first markers of experiential, lived differences and next functions of genealogy and biology. Disney's rainbow multiculturalism, like color itself, is staunchly bio-cultural here.

Blue and red jets emerge from below, enacting the wind's abstraction and colors in fast-moving transitions, alternating between blue, red, and purple jets that first appear in linear formations, then in circular formations, and then in scattered, swaying formations. These motions of coming together and scattering parallel the movements of

"World of Color" as a whole, bringing stories together like the leaves in brief clips and movements that then scatter to make new formations and trajectories. Blue and purple become the dominant colors as the music climaxes; they then turn to red, before the jets shoot up intermittent colors that look like blobs of paint, as Pocahontas reappears on the left of the stage, her hair flapping in the wind, colorful fall leaves wafting by.

John Smith, as a figure of colonialism, has to this point been entirely absent from the scene, but as the clip reaches its culmination, Pocahontas's hand appears mid-screen, in a male hand. In the final seconds of the scene, the embracing couple's image appears center stage, between explosive blue jets that echo John's blue clothing, beneath a bright white light that echoes the earlier rainbow. This closing is confusing in its apparent replication of *Aladdin*'s love scene. If Genie destabilized expectations around that earlier love scene, *Pocahontas* now seems to suggest that its "new world" is really just more of the same, but in a different setting and with different characters. The "changing" waves and winds of *Pocahontas* are difficult to grasp. The radical shift in colors—the vibrancy of the green landscape meant to affirm the newness of the narrative and the story it depicts—now seems to be a distraction, setting a scene that looks very different but that follows a similar narrative. Instead of *Aladdin*'s Orientalist exoticism, in *Pocahontas* we see a neo-colonialist fantasy of untouched nature and humanity.[128]

The dominance of blue—the color of the river, water, and John Smith—in the final moments of the clip, however, suggests a different reading of the scene. The scene begins in green, the color of the forest, which is also associated with newness, immaturity, and inexperience, and a color that is associated with Pocahontas's

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[128] For a neo-colonial reading of the film, see Derek Buescher and Kent Ono, "Civilized Colonialism: Pocahontas as Neocolonial Rhetoric," *Women's Studies in Communication* 19 (1996): 127-54.

environment. But from that green, the rainbow emerges, along with a plethora of other colors that, over the course of "Colors of the Wind," slowly cede to the color blue, which is associated with John Smith and his clothing. The couple's seeming fulfillment in the scene's ending is marked by blue entirely eclipsing both Pocahontas's green environment and the rainbow. The couple disappears in a flash of exclusively blue lighting and jets. Somewhat ironically, then, given the song "Colors of the Wind," this is not a scene of union represented by differences maintained in multicolored diversity. It is not even a scene of "mixing" and miscegenation. It is a union marked by one color's—John's—complete dominion.

Again here, "World of Color" seems to come to end. The stage goes dark, and the audience applauds and cheers. But this sense of closure, too, is about to be reversed—this time not by a Genie, but by a storm. John Smith's appearance in *Pocahontas*, his looming colonial presence, and his eclipsing of Pocahontas are not just reproductions of neo-colonial celebrations of Manifest Destiny. "World of Color" clearly introduces John Smith in the *Pocahontas* clip as a foil to several earlier large, looming figures: the whale from *Finding Nemo* and Zurg from *Toy Story 2*. Like those larger-than-life characters, John Smith is here not just a threatening force but one that—unlike the whale and Zurg—is shown to succeed in overwhelming Pocahontas and her "Colors of the Wind." *Pocahontas*, indeed, is re-animated here in rather different terms.

In the *Finding Nemo* clip earlier, the small fish Dory and Marlin are comically depicted trying to communicate with a whale that is oblivious to them and threatens to consume them. The end of the *Pocahontas* clip animates an analogous relationship. Pocahontas works to communicate with John Smith and European colonists, who are

largely indifferent to Native Americans, and who swoop in to wipe them out. John Smith is hardly a figure of love-fulfillment here. He is a large, inescapable figure of destruction, homogeneity, and historical trauma. Pocahontas's "Colors of the Wind" and rainbow multiculturalism are positioned as anti-colonialist forms of wonder under siege by John Smith's homogeneous blue—the appearance of which is turbulent, as the chaotic water jets and blaring music mark the show's climax.

In the darkness after the couple's disappearance from the screen, some dimly lit butterflies appear, fluttering to woodwind instrumental music. Seconds later, blue bubbling jets come back on, and a red leaf appears just above them. Heimlich, the caterpillar from *A Bug's Life* (1998) turns out to be on the leaf, eating. The green colors associated with Pocahontas return, as we find ourselves not just on land but very much on the ground and in the earth's elements. The caterpillar turns to the audience, and in his characteristic German accent, laughingly says, "From here you all look like little ants!" The line comically reverses the scales, making us, humans, seem ant-like before a cartoon caterpillar.

This climactic joke comes to relieve the tension built up by the visuals and music in the *Pocahontas* clip. Heimlich self-consciously refers to the audience, making explicit their participation in the show and its narrative trajectories. But this moment also highlights our position as worker-consumers vis-à-vis the massive, looming figure of colonialism and neo-colonialism that John Smith represents. We are ants in a symbolic realm—as capitalist worker-subjects, who are under the dominion that John Smith and his all-consuming blue colors represent. Heimlich's appearance on screen is brief and transitional. His purpose is almost exclusively to point out this reversal of scales that

turns us into "ants" in a neocolonial system, subject to the very technology that makes Heimlich's image on screen possible. John Smith's blue returns as it begins to rain on screen, and Heimlich announces "It looks like a little rain... No... Big rain!"—a phrase that succinctly sums up the history of settler colonialism in the "new world." Colonists appeared to be a small force, no a huge force…. With Heimlich's utterance, a huge blue storm washes him, his leaf, and the rest of the scene away, just as John Smith's blue washed out Pocahontas's green colors moments earlier. The vibrant red and green of the caterpillar and his leaf disappear as the scene becomes defined by an absence of colors—except for the blue jets that rise increasingly higher, adding to the atmosphere of turbulence.

Heimlich's brief scene plays a crucial role in explicitly interrogating the colonial, corporate environment of technologically defined imagination "World of Color" and Disney more broadly offer viewer-consumers. In Disney's—and global corporate—techno-natures, Heimlich comically reminds us that we are little more than "little ants." But in *Pocahontas*, her rainbow multiculturalism, and her embrace of plurality and diverse "Colors of the Wind," "World of Color" advances the multi-dimensionality of color—in its many bio-cultural forms—as a potential form of anti-colonial imagination and wonder. The ironies in this Disney moment run deep. On the one hand, Disney has long been a major corporate force in the production of capitalist, neo-colonial techno-natures in which most humans are little worker-ants, citizens of a techno-natural world whose complexity and magnitude are not only no longer definable in national terms but difficult to define and grasp at all. On the other hand, the Disney promise of imaginative transformation through experiences of magic and wonder are about providing openings

and models for re-imagining, re-writing, and re-animating the world and our worker-ant positions in it differently. "World of Color," built around the many roles and sources of color in California and in our worlds, suggests that the only way to counter large, seemingly all-consuming forces like corporate capitalism is through colorful fragments that do not resolve into linear narrative trajectories precisely because those linear trajectories are the dominant cultural narrative paradigms against which the show and its Imagineers are working to define alternatives. The plurality of color and its presence in nature and in culture, its role in artistry and imagination make it a technology of wonder that has the potential to create pathways towards new perspectives and narrative trajectories. And because we, too, are all implicated in color(s)—as racial and ethnic beings, as aesthetic beings, as inhabitants of techno-natures—our bodies and our minds are themselves technologies of wonder through which transformative re-invention is possible for us as well as for Disney.

XII.   Flashback Interlude: Electric Wonders

Although Disney is one of the greatest emblems of techno-natures today, the "World of Color" is a reminder that the company's techno-natural visions are not exactly new. In the colorful nighttime spectacular, Disney is not just re-animating and reinventing Disney narratives and technologies. It is also reimagining several different histories of electric wonders and techno-natural movements. One of the major features of California Adventure's boardwalk by Paradise Bay, which provides a backdrop to "World of Color," is the Ferris wheel "Mickey's Fun Wheel," which sports an image of Mickey's face, superimposed on sun-like rays, an image that resembles the opening of

the United Artists-era *Silly Symphonies*. The fun wheel is set next to the "Silly Symphony Swings" along the water.[129] The backdrop evokes Disney's filmographic history, along with the era of early twentieth-century California boardwalks. But it also reaches back to a historical inspiration for the Disney empire that extends well before the twentieth century, Walt Disney's birth, and the foundation of Disney Studios. The boardwalks that inspired Paradise Pier lined the coasts of California in the first half of the twentieth century; they were often modeled after such resorts as Coney Island (built in the 1840s), as well as the exhibits at the World's Fairs of the nineteenth century, which were hubs for displaying technological innovations and developing technological amusements.

The first Ferris wheel was developed for the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Mickey's Fun Wheel was more specifically inspired by Coney Island's "Wonder Wheel," the center piece for "Deno's Wonder Wheel Amusement Park" in 1920.[130] The Wonder Wheel was unique at the time of its construction, because in addition to its eight, standard cabins, it featured sixteen swinging cabins that glided towards and away from the center of the wheel as it turned. Mickey's Fun Wheel is a full-sized replica of this historic landmark. Although guests in the California Adventure park cannot ride the Fun Wheel during the "World of Color" show, its position at the water's edge mirrors the position of the first Ferris wheel built for the World Columbian Exposition, overlooking the Exposition's major electrical innovations.[131]

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[129] From 2001 to 2008, the Ferris wheel was named the "Sun Wheel." The change came with the extensive renovations to Paradise Pier that brought the Silly Symphony Swings and "World of Color" to the park.
[130] "About the Wheel," *Deno's Wonder Wheel,* 2014, http://www.wonderwheel.com/history.html.
[131] The Ferris wheel in Chicago was never intended to be permanent. It operated for four months on the Exposition's Midway, but after its final ride, a riot broke out as people "demanded that such a wonderful amusement stay with them longer." Over ten years later a Ferris Wheel was built at a White City amusement park in Chicago. Jones and Wills, *The Invention of the Park*, 94. The current-day Ferris wheel on Navy Pier in Chicago was built in 1995.

The legacy of the World Columbian Exposition inheres throughout "World of Color" in both clear and subtle ways. Walt's father Elias Disney, a carpenter, moved his family to Chicago in 1890 so that he could get work building the Exposition grounds. Although the 1876 World's Fair in Philadelphia had featured some "electrical wonders," as an 1893 article in *The Popular Science Monthly*, explains, the Chicago Exposition was a world premiere of sorts for the explosive, imaginative power of electricity—as displayed in the Ferris wheel, the illumination of all the buildings at night, and, most spectacularly, the innovation of the "electric fountain." [132] As historian David Nye describes: "At Chicago, fountains shot water high into the air and wove complex patterns against the night sky. To further dramatize the scene, the spotlights were fitted with filter systems that permitted the operators to create symphonies of color. Two giant electric fountains... spewed 44,000 gallons of water a minute into kaleidoscopic variations."[133] The best views of this nighttime spectacular were from the top of the Ferris wheel, that other "technological marvel," which was "...itself studded with light bulbs."[134]

For a decade and a half, electricity had been one of the major draws of World's Fairs. As of the late 1880s, less than one percent of American homes had electric lighting, and as Nye suggests, "each exhibition attempted to outdo its predecessors in producing new man-made wonders."[135] The advent of electricity changed the ways in which the expositions could be experienced, drawing huge crowds after dusk. Chicago's electric

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[132] Charles Lungren, "Electricity at the World's Fair," *Popular Science Monthly* (October 1893), http://www.popsci.com/archive-viewer?id=OSsDAAAAMBAJ&pg=721&query=electricity+at+the+worlds+fair&dom=PSC&loc=recent&lnk=1&con=electricity-at-the-worlds-fair.
[133] David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), 148. Nye notes that these electric, theatrical spectacles have largely been overlooked by historians, "Perhaps because the photographic technology of the day could not capture these displays."
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid., 146.

fountains were not the first of their kind. The International Electric Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1884 featured "a fountain, 30 feet in diameter, whose fifteen jets were periodically made the center of attention as all other illuminations were extinguished and special electric lights, both colored and filtered, were trained on the streams of water."[136] Thus, in the mid- to late 1880s, engineers began to realize the "artistic" potential of electricity—and its ability to elicit reactions of delight and wonder. In 1888, William Hammer, an "illuminating engineer," who had worked with Thomas Edison in devising a system for distributing electric lighting in the 1870s, was charged with the electric design for the Centennial Exposition of the Ohio Valley and Central States. As Nye describes, local news called Hammer's work "marvelous," its "most impressive effect...an electric fountain beneath the dome of the main building that shot water 60 feet into the air, illuminating it with colored lights."[137]

The electric wonders of the Exposition and of the second half of the nineteenth century were highly sophisticated and institutionalized versions of what Fred Nadis has called the "wonder show," a performance that brings together showmanship, science, and spirituality. Among the most well-known showmen in this genre are P.T. Barnum, Thomas Edison, and Harry Houdini.[138] Nadis traces the beginnings of the wonder show in the U.S. to the 1830s and suggests that the dawn of electricity, which was invested with a "quasi-magical force," popularized wonder shows and invested them with a growing commercial power.[139]

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[136] Ibid., 146-7.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Nadis, *Wonder Shows*, 19.
[139] Ibid.

Since that time, at least, technological innovations have earned the title of "wonder," beginning, perhaps, with railroads, which seemed to shorten distances and gave more people access to more distant places. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, technology, in addition to nature, increasingly became central to defining the "Wonders of the Universe." For instance, an 1885 book that chronicles *The Wonders of the Universe: Things Wonderful and Marvelous in Nature, Science, and Art*, notes that as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth, the previous order of wonders was turning into a new age of wonder—largely because of scientific and technological advances:

> We are passing from the age of Steam into that of Electricity; and the change expresses a great deal, the meaning of which is only beginning to be fully understood. It may be said, however, that the extraordinary advances made, through patient observation and experiment, in our knowledge of the secrets of Nature, have had two principle effects upon the imaginative faculty. On the one hand, what were once called 'marvels' have largely ceased, merely as such, to excite the same vulgar wonder as formerly known in the human mind. But on the other hand, it is felt more and more that the whole world around us, and what we have called 'natural' forces and phenomena, are themselves crowded with marvels such as our fathers never imagined. This is not only true of the infinitely great, but of the infinitely little.[140]

In this passage, although it is very much "Nature" that remains a wonder, science and technology's abilities to render knowledge and first-hand experience of nature more accessible are responsible for turning "the whole world" into a wonder. This wonder has to do with a greater appreciation of scale—the understanding of the vastness of the universe and its intricacies, as well as the apprehension of micro-existence. By bringing electricity into the wonders of nature and the universe, the text here shows an emerging sense of the inseparability of nature and technology in a nascent techno-natural world.

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[140] *The Wonders of the Universe: A Record of Things Wonderful and Marvelous in Nature, Science, and Art* (New York: Cassell & Company, 1885), 1.

By the late nineteenth century, alongside natural wonders (animals, California's trees, dust explosions, etc.), and historical cultural monuments (China's Great Wall, the Catacombs, hieroglyphs, the ancient sculptures of Central America, etc.) in the presentation books discussed in chapter one, technology (electricity, dynamite, railroads, etc.) emerged as a major inspiration of wonder, particularly because of its role in facilitating different ways of envisioning and experiencing the world. Some scholars, like Fisher, argue that the late nineteenth century was a moment that marked a transition from the pervasive appeal of the "sublime" to that of "the experience of wonder," because of the availability of new materials in the age of industry, the development of new technologies and "…building techniques that made possible…the construction of things never before seen on earth."[141] Among these wonderful things are skyscrapers, arches, and bridges that also created a "new aesthetics of the city."[142]

Although Fisher does not discuss such spectacular new technologies as the Ferris wheel or electric fountains, these, too, would be among the technological re-imaginings of the city. Electricity, in particular, radically altered people's experiences of space and technology, seeming to invest material culture with mythic/fantastical auras and affects. Theodore Dreiser's *Newspaper Days* (1920) recalls the "color and romance" of the landscape at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, first as he walks through the pavilions representing the world's cultures: "It was…. as though some brooding spirit of beauty…had waved a magic wand quite as might have Prospero in *The Tempest* or Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*, and lo, this fairyland, this dream out of the Periclean Age of

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[141] Fisher, *Wonder, the Rainbow, and the Aesthetics of Rare Experiences*, 3.
[142] Ibid.

Athens."[143] Dreiser's description of the fair draws heavily on the sense that neither he nor

the rest of the civilized world could have imagined such a triumph of beauty and

technology in the Midwest. It is clear from his impressions that the architectural and

technological displays at the fair seemed to invest Chicago—and perhaps the U.S. more

broadly—with the cultural significance of Athens' golden age and Shakespearean literary

traditions. Dreiser sees the entirety of the fairgrounds as a dreamy "fairyland," but he also

specifically describes his experience of the fountains:

> One night, gliding in and out of the various lagoons… a feeling of the true
> dreamlike beauty of it all came to me, at first only as a sense of intense
> elevation—not wonder, but elevation…. It was all so lofty, so murmurous of joy,
> and yet so serene! The lights! the water! a summer moon! the mystic whiteness of
> the buildings! From somewhere over in that gay polyglot region known as the
> Midway came the sounds of those muffled oriental drums and cymbals so
> characteristic of the East…. At first, as I say, only a sense of intense elevation
> held me as from a narcotic. Then followed an abiding wonder at so much beauty,
> a deep and exquisite feeling of contentment at having seen it, so that one might
> say 'At last! At last!'… a sweet, calm expansion of the spirit, a sense of the
> complete unimportance of all dull everyday struggling…. Here and now were
> color, light, the ultimate significance of sound and charm. We drifted deliciously
> for an hour or more in this world of glorious sights, an hour or more of dreaming
> over the arches, the reflections in the water, the statues, the shadowy throngs by
> the steps of the lagoons moving like figures in a dream. Was it real? I sometimes
> wonder, for it is all gone.[144]

For Dreiser, wonder goes beyond the "intense elevation" of beauty. It entails contentment

and a kind of total eclipse of the "dull everyday." But the wonder of the experience is

also about its temporariness and the sense of having experienced something that is

difficult to grasp, so much so that one can only wonder if it even happened. For Dreiser

that feeling of uncertainty about the reality of the experience derives from the

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[143] Theodore Dreiser, *Newspaper Days* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 310.
[144] Ibid., 309-10.

temporariness of the exhibits, which—with the exception of the Ferris Wheel—were long gone by the time he wrote these reflections.

The opening of wonder for Dreiser derives from the experience's temporariness and his sense of uncertainty about the "reality" of the sights. It also, however, emerges from electricity's capacity to open up within the city a space of imagination that evokes Shakespearean literary wonders and transports Dreiser and his companions into a world that seems unreal, fictional. Today, perhaps, we might describe such an experience as being "like a movie." In the late nineteenth century, therefore, we see already in electricity and technological wonders the capacity for imaginative transformation and transportation that deeply influenced Disney and that Disney sought to re-animate and re-invent in the twentieth century for new audiences.

XIII.   "World of Color": Color and the Dark Violence of Wonder

Disney's "World of Color," like most Disney attractions, plays on the temporariness of the extraordinary experience it offers. The ephemeral nature of a show like "World of Color" is part of what makes it difficult to grasp, a difficulty which is part of its allure. In "World of Color," of course, Disney has reinvented the electric fountains of the late nineteenth century as a narrative performance, rather than as an atmospheric wonder. During "World of Color," the theme park is partially arrested. The audience stands or sits along the shores of Paradise Bay, engulfed in/with the technological performance. Other parts of the park remain open, but visitors do not "glide" through the set in the way Dreiser wafted through the fairgrounds.

In "World of Color," the rain's arrival in Heimlich's scene, following John Smith's climactic take-over and the stage's turbulent atmosphere, transforms the show into a dark and foreboding environment. The earlier threats of the whale and Zurg are here fulfilled. Disney does not merely replicate the celebratory history of World's Fairs and their technological innovations; it shows that color, technology, light, water, etc. as instruments of colonialism can be instruments of destruction. The famous windmill from Disney's 1937 *The Old Mill*, a *Silly Symphony* film in which a major storm overtakes a picturesque scene, appears on screen, harkening back to Disney's Technicolor era. The windmill's appearance is not about the picturesque; rather it serves as a visual cue that displays the storm's intensity, as an unsettling, instrumental version of *Bambi*'s (1942) "Little April Showers" plays. In a single flash of the windmill on screen, it is clear that the wonderful, perhaps even picturesque qualities of "World of Color" to this point are about to be overturned.

Bambi's invocation indicates the tragedy of human domination (over nature) and colonial peoples. The sky flashes red, green, and blue lightening as the wind and water swirls, until the mill turns into a vortex or black hole, around which green, red, and blue colors swirl, opening onto a new narrative trajectory: Disney's "dark side," marked by the appearance of Captain Jack Sparrow of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series of films (2003, 2006, 2007, 2011). With the arrival of pirates on scene, we are introduced to another function of color—as a marker not just of race but of social margins. Pirates are "colorful" characters, a euphemism for drunkenness and debauchery, as well as for a life lived outside of social norms.

Sparrow's image is followed by that of a pirate's skull, as *Peter Pan*'s (1953) pirate song "Yo-Ho" begins to play faintly in the background. A pirate ship moves toward the audience through the storm. It crashes into the waves, as the "World of Color" stage also throws up splashes of water. Shooting red jets dance on stage for a while in a combination of linear and circular arrangements, as "Yo-Ho" becomes *Pirates of the Caribbean*'s "He's a Pirate." At this point, fire erupts from the stage and Paradise Bay becomes a battle field. This is, it seems, a fight for the survival of plurality, imagination, and narrative diversity in a colonial corporate world. Red and white lights alternate illuminating the scene in choreographed explosions, accentuated with fire. In the audience, you can feel the heat. Blue and white lasers light the scene's background on Paradise Pier once more, acting as distant gunfire. Film clips take a back seat in this extended scene, as in Genie's showcasing of the spectacular nature of technology. The technologies and pyrotechnics become the main devices for producing the affective atmosphere of violence. The scene highlights the dangers of the wonders of technologies, the ways in which war becomes spectacle. From pirate battle, the scene flows into images of gargoyles from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), whose quasi-silhouettes of giant, dark bodies and yellow eyes hover menacingly above our heads.

As this three-minute "battle" scene comes to a close, fire takes over the stage, and the water jets are mostly stilled. White eyes hover in the sky; color has become not just a marker of social misfits, but the medium for violence, tension, and material conflict. That which has elicited wonder, awe, and delight, is now shown to be an instrument of war and destruction that instills fear. This is as Genie's song and dance suggested earlier, a very different kind of relationship between color and technology, ushered in by

Pocahontas's native America and its harkening back to an impossible pre-colonial moment. "World of Color" not only points to the impossibility of these untainted natures and cultures; it blows the fantasy of a return to an innocent past out of the water, pointing to the violence inherent in such fantasies of return.

The pirates, in this sense, are figures of cultural complexity that point to the need to live with the colorful, complex realities of the worlds we see in front of us, as well as the histories that are always there by association, although we cannot always see them. The show's re-iteration of *Pocahontas* within a new narrative trajectory calls upon *Pirates of the Caribbean* in pointing to Disney's own effacement of histories of colonial violence and the destruction of Native Americans, animals, and land. Color becomes about complexity and the irreduceability of historical violences and lives to single, dominant narratives. Wonder here, as Greenblatt suggests in *Marvelous Possessions*, is at least part of the complex dynamics of colonial desire and violence.

Through the set's darkness, the jets now begin to bubble lightly in a very different green, as Scar, the evil uncle from *The Lion King* (1994) jumps on scene, creeping towards the audience in the green light. In contrast to the *Pocahontas* scene in which green was a marker of spring and renewal, we now have a use of green that indicates Scar's envy of King Mufasa, his brother, and his nefarious intentions, and gloominess. The large, looming presence of threat is no longer lurking in the background as it was with the whale, Zurg, and John Smith. It is now center stage.

We are next brought into the scene of the stampede into which Scar throws Mufasa, who is trying to save his young son, the protagonist, Simba, from being trampled. Simba's terrified face appears on screen in the gorge, as the ground begins to

shake beneath him—and us. The stampede echoes Dory and Marlin's earlier flustered swimming for their lives among the krill being consumed by the whale. The green lighting has turned to red, as zebra stampede towards the audience, red jets marking the danger and impending death of Mufasa. Simba races through the stampede, dodging hooves breathlessly, as the music reaches its climax. As audience-participants, it feels as if we are among the stampeding animals, half a second from being trampled. Yellow jets alternate with red, until the scene turns dark, and we here Scar's final words to Mufasa before he pushes him off a cliff: "Long live the King." Simba cries, as Mufasa falls to his death on screen, which turns to darkness, amid audible screams from the audience.

XIV.   Flashback Interlude: the Yosemite Firefall

Mufasa's dramatic fall from the cliff in *The Lion King* signals the show's denouement. Although Paradise Bay and the pier surrounding it do not themselves have cliffs, the show faces the cliffs of "Grizzly Peak," part of the "Grizzly River Run" ride in the land that represents California's natural splendors. The African cliffs in *The Lion King* are a far cry from California's mountains and deserts, but nonetheless, the movie's topography and Mufasa's dramatic fall echo another historic light show that took place, not in an urban fair environment, but in one of California's great natural wonderscapes: the Yosemite Valley.

There, in 1872, a night-time tradition began: the Firefall. One night, a group of men on Glacier Point built a campfire, which they extinguished by pushing it over the cliff and into the waterfall. From a distance, the whole waterfall seemed to glow. Henceforth, at 9 p.m. on most every night, a master of ceremonies in the valley shouted

"Let the fire fall," and the fire's burning embers were sent over the cliff, turning the

waterfall into a firefall that delighted Yosemite visitors for nearly a century.[145] As early

as the 1880s, John Muir was one of the most vocal opponents to such spectacles, because

they threatened to deface the wilderness in Yosemite.[146] Although the firefall was halted

several times (first in 1897 when the entrepreneur and hotel owner James McCauley, who

started it, was evicted from the park), it was resumed by popular demand by David Curry,

another hotel owner in the valley. In 1913, the National Park Service banned the firefall,

but again it was reinstated in 1917, by which point it was an institutionalized ritual that

continued nightly until 1968. After World War II, growing concern over the environment

led George Hertzog, director of the National Park Service, to begin lobbying to end the

firefall forever. In 1968, when it did end, Hertzog noted that "the Firefall was an

unnatural spectacle more appropriate for Disneyland than a national park."[147]

This statement is worth dwelling on for several reasons. Hertzog is far from being

the only one to set up Disneyland as an antithesis to the national parks. The opposition is

a twentieth-century revision of the cautionary tales pro-conservation lobbyists told about

Niagara Falls during the early years of the national parks movement, and that I discussed

in chapter one. Yosemite, Yellowstone, and later other natural landscapes had to be

protected through government oversight from the commercial defilement of Niagara. But,

as I also showed in chapter one, that protection was not about the absence of "unnatural

spectacle;" it was, rather, about keeping some natural wonders free "for the benefit and

enjoyment of the people." In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most objections

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[145] "The Man-made Firefall," *Yosemite Firefall* (2014), http://yosemitefirefall.com/the-manmade-firefall-glacier-point/.
[146] See Duncan, *The National Parks*, 51-52.
[147] "The Man-Made Firefall," http://yosemitefirefall.com/the-manmade-firefall-glacier-point/.

to the Yosemite Firefall revolved around issues of crowd control, not the safe-guarding of

a particular idea of "nature." Hertzog's justification for abolishing the Firefall underlines

that the national parks' "nature" has been constructed since the second half of the

twentieth century in direct opposition to Disney's "man-made" techno-natures.

Yosemite was, of course, not the only site in the late nineteenth century to be

turned into a stage for light shows. Well before the late 1800s, Niagara Falls hosted

spectacles of all kinds as a highly commercialized tourist attraction. In 1860, a visit from

the Prince of Wales prompted a first attempt at illuminating Niagara with some 200 white

and colored lights. The lights were accompanied with rockets and fireworks.[148] For the

next several decades, as electricity became more widely available, the falls were one of

the most prominent sites for experimentation with spectacular illumination. The 1901

Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, NY drew enormous crowds to the area for a special

light show at the falls, and for the next several decades local entrepreneurial efforts

consolidated around seeking funds to install permanent lighting structures at the falls.

This push came to fruition in 1925 with the founding of the Niagara Falls Illumination

Board, a collective of interested businessmen who led the institutionalization of light

shows at the falls. The group runs the nightly illuminations of Niagara to this day and is

now funded by the City of Niagara Falls, New York, the City of Niagara Falls, Ontario,

the New York State Office of Parks, the department of Recreation and Historic

Preservation, Ontario Power Generation and the Niagara Parks Commission.[149]

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[148] "History of Niagara Falls Illumination," *Niagara Parks*, http://www.niagaraparks.com/niagara-falls-attractions/history-of-falls-illumination.html.
[149] Ibid.

Yellowstone National Park, too, in a much less dramatic way became a site of spectacular lighting in the early twentieth century. In 1904, a year after the magnificent Old Faithful Inn hotel opened its doors in Yellowstone, a naval spotlight was installed on the widow's walk to enhance nighttime eruptions of Old Faithful geyser. Six years later, a second spotlight was added to the hotel's rooftop to dramatize the "theatrical" nature of the hotel's namesake geyser and of the geyser basin more broadly. By the middle of the twentieth century, safety concerns caused the closure of the hotel's rooftop widow's walk and the dismantling of the spotlights. But for at least another decade, the National Park Service operated another spot light hidden in a nearby tree grove that illuminated Old Faithful at night. [150] Around the same time the Yosemite Firefall ended, the practice of illuminating natural wonders in national parks with spotlights also ceased.

XV.   "World of Color": Finale

Lightshows like the Yosemite firefall and the illumination of Niagara and Old Faithful were born of an era in which technology served to enhance and magnify the wonders and beauty of nature. The combination of water and light, in particular, beginning in the late nineteenth century seemed to take spectators' breaths away. They turned landscapes into fairy-tale settings, conjured worlds of literary imagination, as we saw in Dreiser—from ancient Greece to Shakespeare's enchanted forests. In "World of Color" Disney invokes those histories and practices, conjuring imaginative worlds populated by Disney characters and narratives, re-iterated and repurposed in a celebration

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[150] "Historic Old Faithful Inn Presence in Early Days," *Yellowstone Park*, http://www.yellowstonepark.com/2007/12/historic-old-faithful-inn/.

of a "world of color" defined by environmental, biological, cultural, and narrative diversity.

Having moved from the Euro-centric world of *The Little Mermaid* to *Finding Nemo*'s Australia to the Middle East of *Aladdin* to the Americas of *Pocahontas* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*, "World of Color" ends in an African geography that returns us, after several human-centered sequences, to a world of animals, albeit anthropomorphized. In *The Lion King*, King Mufasa's dramatic death is a launching point for Simba's coming of age narrative. In "World of Color," however, Mufasa's shocking death is the show's narrative denouement. In this heavy, breath-taking death-scene, the audience gasps at the seemingly radical shift we have undergone as viewer-participates moving from the light-hearted beauty of the "wonderful world of color" to the electric, burning weight of color's seeming antithesis: darkness, both literal and figurative. Everyone who has seen *The Lion King* knows that Mufasa dies, yet the scene still surprises, all the more so, because it comes so late in "World of Color." Death in Disney films like *Bambi* and *The Lion King* tends to come early in the narratives, defining the main characters' trajectories. Here, however, death arrives as an embodiment of wonder's power and violence.

Mufasa's falling turns the scene to darkness, and in that darkness, we hear a voice—Simba calling his father: "Dad!... Dad." Two sets of blue jets come on as the image of Simba, cuddling up to the dead Mufasa, appears center stage, and the song "So Close" from *Enchanted* (2007) begins to play. Mufasa's death here will not be resolved or repackaged. This is possibly one of the most surprising parts of "World of Color." In this filmic compilation, Simba will not come of age and overcome his evil uncle. He will simply cuddle up to his dead father and remember him. Indeed the closing movements of

"World of Color" shift from narrative action to the recollecting of experience, as the show moves into a nostalgic retrospective of Disney film history. This closing movement highlights the role of color in producing memories.

The closing song begins: "When you're in my arms, all the world is gone..." The sky lights up in blue and green tones that look like the aurora borealis, as memory-images from *The Lion King* of Simba and Mufasa's time together populate the screen. From these images, the show moves to scenes of recognition and reunion from *Bambi*, *Dumbo* (1941), *Pocahontas*, and *Lady and the Tramp* (1955). The final part of the narrative rests exclusively on visual and affective associations that traverse Disney films across time. Although the whole show assumes knowledge of the Disney corpus of films, this sequence especially relies on viewers' familiarity with the emotional tenor of the films portrayed in quick, colorful flashes aimed to drum up audience memories.

Of the clips, only the famous scene from *Lady and the Tramp* (in which Lady and Tramp accidentally kiss as they slurp the same piece of pasta) shows action over time. This micro-narrative returns us to the "World of Color" narrative, ushering in in Tinker Bell from *Peter Pan* and *Tinker Bell* (2008), whose spray of fairy dust signals the magical shift from scenes of grief and consolation to scenes of surprise and transformation. The first half or so of "World of Color" built towards the recognition that color and wonder are not just about positive affects and narrative possibilities; the flip side of those positive affects are negative affects and violent destruction. Here, violence and death are flipped again to reveal the transformative power of memory as a form of imagination. Tinker Bell's sparkling wand, a symbol for Disney wonder, triggers this shift. This the same flick of the wand has long introduced Disney's "Movies, Magic, and More" on the big

screen and on home video and DVD.[151] The sparkling wand is the instrument of Disney

magic and wonder and its transformative potential.

In shifting from grief and consolation to transformation, the sequential and

associational nature of the scenes is crucial, since it is the surprise of the *Lady and the*

Tramp kiss, which links the first sequence to the next: *The Princess and the Frog*'s

(2009) embracing couple appears on screen, followed by Belle's tears over Beast's body,

just before Beast transforms back into human form in *Beauty and the Beast*. That

transformation occurs before our eyes, as Paradise Pier once again lights up in the

background, flashing with the "magic" of the moment. These lights echo Tinker Bell's

wand, as if to suggest this time that it is all of California Adventure—guests included—

that has been transformed in the flash of light. In the quick flash of a range of different

kinds of transformation, what constitutes transformation is itself left to viewer actants to

define for themselves.

From Beast's transformation, we move to *Snow White* (1937), *Sleeping Beauty*,

and *The Princess and the Frog*'s transformational moments, as well as Cinderella's

transformation from maid to princess, after which the stage explodes with white lights

and lasers. These are all moments of people moving from a state of relative

powerlessness to agency: from animal to human, from spell-induced sleep to life, from

abject poverty to potential empowerment. The foreground lights turn blue briefly, before

the stage goes dark and silent. Although the second half of "World of Color" has been

populated by the darkness of color, it is, as Genie suggested in his performance, different

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[151] This logo appeared in the opening segments of Disney home videos and dvds in some form since the 1980s. For more on the history of Disney opening and closing film logos, see "Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment," *Closinglogos.com*, last updated June 26, 2014, http://www.closinglogos.com/page/Walt+Disney+Studios+Home+Entertainment.

forms of relationships, stories, and love that will transform that darkness—be it induced by death (*Lion King* and *Bambi*), separation through social and cultural difference (*Dumbo, Pocahontas*, and *Lady and the Tramp*), poison or curses (*The Princess and the Frog, Snow White, Sleeping Beauty*)—back into the "wonderful world of color." These transformations are, like the whole of "World of Color," associational rather than linear, imaginative and therefore unpredictable, rather than causal or scripted. This openness is part of the wonder of the show's narrative, for, along with the show's associational structure, it renders the wonderful world of Disney far less scripted and include viewers in its transformational matrix by association and though the celebration of the colorful diversity of nature-cultures constituted by people, environments, and technologies.

On the far left of the stage, pink and yellow rings appear in the sky, as white jets begin to move in a serpentine motion across the lagoon. The musical introduction to "Wonderful World of Color" comes back on; Tinker Bell reappears, flicking her wand with a flash of pink and yellow jets that reignite the lagoon with the show's opening: "The world is a carousel of color..." Multi-colored jets take the stage once more, different groups of jets igniting in changing colors that then fold into one another: "...each dream that you chase, each wish you embrace can lead to a fabulous, far-away place..." Images from a wide-range of films flash against the water screen, the first of which is the Cheshire Cat from *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), opening a recap of the show's characters, who display a wide range of sometimes unusual relational and narrative possibilities: Sebastian, Dory and Marlin, Wall-E and Eve, Buzz and Woody, Aladdin and Jasmine, Genie (colored red this time), the Spring Sprite, Pocahontas. These flash images serve as a reminder of the diversity of stories, characters, natures, and cultures that make up "the

wonderful world of color." None of the "dark" or "bad" characters appear here, even

though the scene acts as a kind of curtain call. The screen then becomes a turning

kaleidoscope in the sky, as the refrain "a wonderful world of color...color...color"

continues. The foreground in the lagoon becomes a multicolored paint-like eruption

whose colors change to match those in the changing aerial kaleidoscope.

With a sudden flash of blue, the kaleidoscope turns into Sorcerer Mickey from

Fantasia (1940), whose red coat stands out against the sky and the blue water around

him. He is now shown to be the conductor of the paint-like water, much as he attempts to

conduct the brooms in *Fantasia* after he has appropriated his master's sorcerer's hat.

Mickey here is a figure for the Imagineers, as well as for audience-authors, those wearing

the illuminated Mickey Ears made specifically for "World of Color." Although Mickey

appears masterful, as the behind-the-scenes "maker" of the show, in control of its waters,

lights, lasers, and creative choreography, the invocation of Sorcerer Mickey is not as

masterful as it might seem. In *Fantasia*, Sorcerer Mickey is, after all, not just an

apprentice, but a radical failure at "magic." He is an apprentice who fails to follow orders

and fails to control the brooms he himself set in motion before falling asleep and flooding

his surroundings.

"World of Color" ends on a somewhat ambiguous note—not only with the still

resounding shock of Mufasa's death. Mickey offers a contradictory figure of "masterful"

magic use, because he is an amateur, experimenting with a magic technology. But

experimentation and amateurism are exactly the point. The closing scene celebrates

"World of Color" as a masterful work of technology, but it also hints at its association to

the ever-present risk that this mastery is a failed magic trick, an over-saturated flooding

of California Adventure's environment and of audience members' imaginations. Mickey's appearance as the sorcerer's apprentice also suggests that his imaginative work and that of "World of Color" are not the masterful work of elite engineers but the imaginative work of ordinary characters, even amateur apprentices to the art and creative wonders of techno-natural worlds. "World of Color" claims itself as experimental, amateurish in a way that continues to include viewer-actants in its experiment and empower them, too, to be such amateur imagineers. As in the opening epigraph, the show reaffirms the popularly accessible power of imagination as a form of personal and collective transformation.

As Mickey goes on conducting his orchestra of water, the song's words "the world of color" become "a whole new world of color," a merging of songs that enacts the "newness" it describes. In these closing lines, the show suggests that the experience of viewing "World of Color" has transformed guests, allowing them to see the world anew, now as a "whole new world." In this sense, "World of Color" posits wonder as a transformational technological experience that allows people to see and experience the world differently—as a techno-natural environment of biological, cultural, and narrative diversity that breeds the constant potential of imaginative transformation.

In this culminating movement of "World of Color," Mickey fades, and all the lagoon's jets come on in alternating colors, shooting up to their peak, as the Pier lights up again in the background. The jets turn to fire for several seconds, and the music quiets. The water jets splash on once more, and the show ends in darkness, save the projection of the show's title "World of Color" in rainbow-colored script appears in the sky. As the

park's lights come back on, so, too, do the bubbling jets in the lagoon, which kaleidoscopically change colors, running quietly as the crowd disperses.

XVI.   Coda: Disney's Techno-nature$

As "World of Color" ends, a great many visitors leaving the park walk out through the national park-like "Grizzly Peak." If you happen to have the money ($450/night excluding park tickets) to stay park-side at the Grand Californian, you can walk straight into the lobby from "Grizzly Peak," much as a guest at Yellowstone National Park's Old Faithful Inn would walk back to the hotel after a night-time viewing of the geyser. The Grand Californian, built in 2001, is modeled after the historic lodges built in U.S. national parks, beginning with Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn. In this sense, "World of Color" is not just Disney California Adventure's version of Disneyland's night-time fireworks and a twenty-first century rendition of Worlds Fairs' electric wonders. The show and the Grand Californian Hotel situate the park as a twenty-first century re-iteration of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century national parks, replete with their architectural and illuminated wonders. It is, as I advanced earlier, not just Ornament Valley of "Radiator Springs Racers" that is the new "Nature's Wonderland;" California Adventure as a whole re-animates late-nineteenth-century American wonderlands—especially Yosemite and Yellowstone.

The Grand Californian Hotel is the third hotel Disney modeled after the historic lodges built in U.S. national parks in the early twentieth century. It is the only hotel Disney built from the ground up at Disneyland, where, until Disney's 1988 purchase of

the Disneyland Hotel, the company had not built or operated any accommodations.[152]

Despite being the last hotel built at the Disneyland resort, the Grand Californian is the

flagship hotel in Anaheim, and its name refers to its sister hotel, the Grand Floridian

flagship hotel at Disney World, built in 1988. The Grand Floridian, in turn, is modeled

after the Victorian Hotel del Coronado in San Diego, the largest hotel in the world when

it was built in 1888. The Grand Californian (Figure 3.4.) thus references the distinguished

history of tourist resorts in California, while also celebrating the American Arts and

Crafts movement of the early twentieth century, invoking California's natural wonders

and the history of the national park lodges.

Figure 3.4. Grand Californian Hotel,
Anaheim, CA.
Personal photograph.

Figure 3.5. Ahwahnee Hotel,
Yosemite Valley CA.
Personal photograph.

In keeping with the park's California theme, the hotel's primary stylistic and

architectural inspiration comes from the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite National Park

(Figure 3.5.), which was opened in the Yosemite Valley in 1927. The Grand Californian

is based on the Ahwahnee, but Disney's "version" operates on a much larger scale: the

Grand Californian has over a thousand rooms, where the Ahwahnee has just over a

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[152] The Disneyland Hotel was opened in 1955 by Jack Wrather and bore the Disney name with Walt's consent. Disney finally bought the hotel in 1988 and eventually demolished and rebuilt it to make room for Downtown Disney and the Grand Californian.

hundred. Nonetheless, the Disney version is not just a "super-sized" edition of the Yosemite lodge. It is the result of a complex series of adaptations, transformations, and translations of Californian and national histories and aesthetics. The Grand Californian is in many ways a culminating testament to Disney's marriage of natural, technological, and historical elements in producing wonder experiences.

As Disney's third national park lodge hotel, the Grand Californian opened seven years after the completion of the Wilderness Lodge in Orlando and nine years after the opening of the Sequoia Lodge in Paris. The Sequoia Lodge was one of seven "American"-themed hotels built at Disneyland in Paris, all of them opening with the park in 1992, and it, too, was based loosely on the Ahwahnee. The Wilderness Lodge (Figures 3.6. and 3.8.) is modeled after the first national park lodge in U.S. history—the Old Faithful Inn at Yellowstone National Park (Figures 3.7. and 3.9.), whose history is bound up with that of Northern Pacific Railroad, which was responsible for underwriting the construction of Old Faithful Inn in the early twentieth century.

Figure 3.6. Wilderness Lodge,
Disney World, FL.
Personal photograph.

Figure 3.7. Old Faithfull Inn,
Yellowstone National Park.
Personal photograph.

The Sequoia Lodge, the Wilderness Lodge, and the Grand Californian Hotel are all landscaped to resemble Western and Pacific Northwestern scenery. The Wilderness

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Lodge is more specific in its references to Old Faithful Inn, including wooden walkways through its gardens, flanked with bubbling pools, one of which showcases its own faithfully erupting geyser. The lobbies of all three hotels, like Old Faithful Inn, are wide open spaces that showcase the buildings' structures of faux-wood and stone (Figure 3.8. shows the Wilderness Lodge lobby, and Figure 3.9. shows the Old Faithful Inn lobby). Native American art works and animal skins are placed sparingly on the walls and in display cabinets, as is the case at the Ahwahnee and other national park lodges. All three Disney lodges feature large stone fireplaces—the one at Wilderness Lodge is painted the colors of the different geological layers of the Grand Canyon—and large living room/lounge areas with couches and tables, with much of the interior decorating done by contemporary Arts and Crafts practitioners.[153]

| Figure 3.8. Wilderness Lodge Lobby, Disney World, FL. *Personal photograph.* | Figure 3.9. Old Faithful Inn Lobby, Yellowstone National Park. *Personal photograph.* |

The Grand Californian and the Wilderness Lodge were built by the same architect, Peter Dominick, drawing from national park lodge history and the Arts and

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[153] For more on the history of the Arts and Crafts movement, see Peter Davey, *Arts and Crafts Architecture* (London: Phaidon, 1995); Bert Denker, *Substance of Style: Perspectives on the American Arts and Crafts Movement* (University Press of New England, 1996); Rosalind Polly Blakesley, *The Arts and Crafts Movement* (London: Phaidon Press, 2006); Lawrence Kreisman and Glenn Mason, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Timber Press, 2007); and Peter Betjemann, *Talking Shop: The Language of Craft in an Age of Consumption* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

Crafts architectural movement that inspired the construction of the Old Faithful Inn. The

Old Faithful Inn remains the largest log building in the world. When it opened, it was

also one of the first hotels to have electric lighting and steam heat. These innovations,

coupled with the design of an open hotel lobby constructed around a stone-tower

fireplace, created a sense of being in nature, even while being indoors. It was almost

immediately dubbed "the wonder of all tourists."[154]

Likewise, in visiting the Wilderness Lodge or the Grand Californian Hotel, it is

difficult not to feel awe at the scale and beauty of the buildings' artistry, regardless of

how one feels about Disney. Part of the "wonder" of the Old Faithful Inn when it opened

in 1904 was its use of modern amenities, particularly electricity and steam heat, as well

as the building's appearance as "the rough produce of the forest," "…not a yard of plaster

in the entire building."[155] The wonder of Disney's lodges rests, similarly, in the hotels'

non-generic materials. Even if Disney is not using "real" logs, the artistry in the

architecture and design trumps the "artifice." Or rather, it capitalizes on the fact that all

architecture is artifice, but not all architecture is crafted with this kind of detail and care.

Old Faithful Inn struck its visitors because of its artistry and materials (no plaster!). And

the Grand Californian similarly stands against every ugly concrete hotel/motel anyone

has ever seen, providing wide open, hearth-like spaces, craftsmanship, and a scale of

construction one rarely encounters anywhere.

Thus, the Grand Californian hotel, like "World of Color," evokes a much broader

history of wonder, nature, architecture, and technology in the U.S. national parks. While

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[154] "Hotel All of Logs," *The Washington Post,* Jan 09, 1905,
http://search.proquest.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/docview/144616275?accountid=14667.
[155] Ibid.

the Yosemite Firefall was still operating, the Ahwahnee Meadows surrounding the Ahwahnee hotel were a prime viewing spot for the night-time show. Disney's theme park design offers up "World of Color" as a highly technologized analogy to that historic man-made firefall in the Yosemite Valley—a show of water, fire, and light. But it is not just that "World of Color" is a highly sophisticated re-making of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century light shows. Rather, in building the Grand Californian Hotel alongside the park, Disney suggests that the California Adventure park is a contemporary re-iteration of Yosemite and perhaps of the national park idea itself.

The Disney parks are built around the wonders of narrativized techno-natures that re-animate Disney's and the U.S.'s pasts and landscapes, their environmental and cultural diversity. As Walt Disney first envisioned Disneyland, the park was about creating a place, not unlike more traditional ideas of nature, into which visitors could escape first from Los Angeles and later more broadly from their every-day lives. Disney's parks were designed as places where visitors left their cars in the parking lot and embarked on nostalgic trains and boats or futuristic monorails and people movers as they wandered through uninhabited lands, with thousands of other people. Much as the national parks were avenues for getting away from increasingly over-crowded industrialized urban centers in the late nineteenth century, Disneyland was about getting away from the post-World War II metropolis, but instead of retreating into a construction of untainted "nature," Disney has offered an imaginative journey into techno-natures.

For many, it might be difficult to think about Disneyland or Disney World as an escape from the everyday, because of the disneyfication of much of Americans' daily lives. But, at a historical moment when traditionally-defined "nature"—the antithesis to

culture and technology—has been slowly waning in an age of managed wilderness, zoos, and wildlife preserves, Disney's national park lodges re-animate for its contemporary guests a nineteenth-century world in which (at least from our contemporary standpoint) wilderness seems to have been everywhere. When the Old Faithful Inn was built in the early 1900s, there were only six national parks. The success of the Old Faithful Inn became a model not just for subsequent national park lodges but for the growth of the national parks movement itself. By 1916, when the National Park Service was founded, there were twelve parks, and a more formal institution was created to manage this growing number of parks, which could no longer be left to railroads and commercial, corporate interests.

This history may render Disney's national park lodges ironic testaments to corporate triumph. It would be easy to see Disney's lodges as an ultimate symbol of the corporation's cooptation of nature and the cultural importance of the national parks. But that interpretation flattens many layers of historical complexity. Disney's national park lodges pose a "crisis" of language much as the American west first troubled its early Euro-American travelers, causing a search for terms to account for experiences of a "new" landscape, as I described in chapter one. Although Disney and its parks have been around for six decades, the analytical categories of "nature" and "culture," "real" and "fake," and so forth are inadequate to describe what Disney is and does, and they miss the complexity of the cultural and historical re-animations and transformations at play in Disney's films and parks. In considering the Grand Californian hotel and California Adventure's broader invocations of Yosemite and of natural and technological wonderlands more broadly, it is worth remembering that neither Yosemite nor Disney is a

static entity, and despite their important differences, their histories have crossed in a multiplicity of ways.

In examining Disney's "True Life Adventures" and their inspiration of some of the early rides at Disneyland, I showed that Disney's early successes coincided with and bolstered the national wilderness movement and its push to preserve wide swaths of forests. The more recent construction of Disney's national park lodges, however, emerged out of a very different national conversation. In 1987, both Old Faithful Inn and the Ahwahnee Hotel gained national attention as newly designated National Historic Landmarks. These designations coincided with a pro-recreation "wise-use" movement in the late 1980s that was influential in rethinking the administration of the national parks. The twenty-year plan, developed in 1980, included a "construction program that would maximize concession stands and accommodations in national parks, remove entry limits and bring in private firms experienced in people moving, such as—you got it—Walt Disney, to manage the parks."[156] By the time the Sequoia Lodge opened at Disneyland in Paris, Disney was advising the National Parks Service on issues such as lodging and transportation.

In 2004, Disney launched "Adventures by Disney," a travel agency that takes travelers all over the world, but nearly all of its North American destinations are national parks and national historic monuments, including Yellowstone, Glacier and Banff National Parks in the Northwest, Denali in Alaska, and Sedona, Grand Canyon, and Arches National Parks in the Southwest. The movement towards the privatization of the tourist industry around the parks stems from the fact that the National Park Service, by

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[156] Mike Hudak, "The Disneyfication of Nature," *Earth Times* (August/September 2001), 1, http://www.mikehudak.com/Articles/Disneyfication0108.html.

law, is not allowed to advertise, making the question of on-going financing of the parks a concern for which the National Parks Service has been seeking more creative answers, especially as government spending on parks has been declining.

The increasing presence of private interests and money in administering public lands elicits concerns—many of them similar to the concerns the National Parks Service was created to address in 1916. But these layers of interrelationship also suggest that the construction of national park lodges at Disney theme parks in the 1990s and early 2000s is not just about Disney's cultural imperialism. It also reflects a changing cultural role and administrative ethos of the national parks: if the national parks are undergoing a kind of Disneyfication, so too is Disney undergoing a kind of "national park-ification." Disney's national park lodges may not just be re-animations of the past or enhancements of existing "historical" structures, so much as historical analogies that make a claim about what Disney theme parks are today—"national parks" for the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, showcasing our contemporary American highly technologized techno-natural "wonders."

In "Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons," Patricia Yaeger coins the term "ecocriticism$" in thinking about the inescapable intertwining of nature and capital in the twenty-first century, especially in analyses of water and the oceans. She explains her reasoning for shifting from "ecocriticism" to "ecocriticism$":

> [I aim] to remind us that the ocean as oikos or home rolls under, beneath, and inside the edicts of state and free market capitalism. We've left the possibility of wilderness or pastoral for the roller coaster of capital. On a recent safari in Kenya I sat in a Land Rover watching cheetah cubs frolic on the savannah. The photographer who'd organized the trip sang out, "This is real wilderness!" but as I looked to the right and left I saw rows of rapt Land Rovers stretching into the

distance. We were voyeurs in wilderness* or even wilderness$.... Ecocriticism$ is a prosthetic term that insists on the imbroglio of markets and nature.[157]

Disney's theme parks are, perhaps, among the places in which this "imbroglio" is most transparent. In the spirit of Yaeger's insight, I would propose the term "techno-nature$" as a way of beginning to account for the technological-natural couplings at work not only in Disney's creations. In their wondrous re-animations of Disney and national histories, such attractions as "World of Color," the Grand Californian, "Radiator Springs Racers"—Disney California Adventure as a whole—point to the perhaps less obvious fact that these techno-nature$ are not new and not even of Disney's own or exclusive making. Indeed, as I have sought to establish throughout this chapter, part of the wonder of many of Disney's creations is that they are re-creations as well as being forms of recreation, and that as such they allow us to see not only the "imbroglio of markets and nature" at work in contemporary (theme) parks and landscapes, but the genealogies of our contemporary techno-nature$ as they extend back at least several centuries. Disney's techno-nature$, for instance, render visible Northern Pacific Railroad's and the National Park Service's, among many others', participation in crafting techno-nature$ of previous generations.

That is, of course, not to collapse the very significant material, technological, socio-economic, and historical differences between the late nineteenth century and today, nor do I mean to undermine the many, varied ways in which techno-nature$ have changed over the course the past century and a half and continue to change. My analysis in chapter one grounded my argument that experiences of wonder in Yellowstone and the U.S.-American west fostered performances of what I called "wonder citizenship," an

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[157] Yaeger, "Sea Trash and Dark Pools," 529.

imaginative, experience-based form of citizenship that, in effect, sought to reconcile the

contested and privileged nature of U.S. citizenship at the time with ideals of democracy.

The wonders of Disney's techno-nature$, particularly in "World of Color," are, by

contrast, much less about a performance of national citizenship than they are about

negotiating the personal and collective narrative struggles inherent in individual worker-

consumer-actants' relationships to an inconceivably huge corporate-driven globalized

world that seems always to be threatening to swallow (as in *Finding Nemo*)—and

sometimes succeeding in swallowing (as in *Pocahontas*)—us whole.

   In "World of Color," when Heimlich, the caterpillar from *A Bug's Life*, appears

on the water-screen and tells us "you look like little ants," Disney, as I suggested earlier,

ironically reminds visitors of their positions as ants in a symbolic realm—as capitalist

worker-subjects—who are very much bound into a system of corporate-run global

capitalism. But, in the same breath—or rather, splash—Disney, a major corporate force in

the production of capitalist, neo-colonial techno-natures, deploys wonder and imagination

as forces of potential transformation, tools with which individuals can distinguish

themselves from the mass of ants and re-imagine, re-write, and re-animate their everyday.

"World of Color" here seems to echo Donna Haraway's call for cyborg writing to

"seize… the tools to mark the world that marked [us] as other."[158]

   In the face of a world defined by massive, looming global corporate capitalism,

"World of Color" reminds us of the bio-cultural multiplicity and diversity of worlds,

perspectives, and narrative potentialities built on fragments, associations, and partial

connections that make possible both personal and collective re-imaginings of our place in

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[158] Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 175.

this global corporate world. Indeed the show's reliance on a wide range of colors, worlds, characters, and narratives trajectories points to the fact that "the world"—be it defined by contemporary corporate globalization or any other major historical paradigm—is never just a singular, homogenous world or linear narrative. It is made up of millions of parts, perspectives, and other potential stories that need to be told, both for their own sake and for our sake. This multiplicity, color, and narrative potentiality feeds imagination and makes personal and perhaps cultural and global transformation possible. Disney, as an emblem of and a major player in, that looming corporate world, also points to its own cultural and historical contingency and the ways in which it, too, is made up of many different kinds of players, aims, stories, and cultural motives.

The Disney that emerges in "World of Color" and California Adventure more broadly is certainly not the Disney of Disneyland, nor is it the Disney of EPCOT, or of Euro-Disney. The Disney of "World of Color" is taking shape in part through popular and academic criticism of the corporation and its narratives. It is a Disney held accountable to globalized and techno-savvy guests, viewers, employees, critics, and fans. And it is a Disney that exists both in spite and because of Walt Disney and the Disney corporation's reception and critical portrayal as "the genial Uncle Walt" and the defaced "Evil Stepfather," as Doherty characterized Disney Studies in calling for a more three-dimensional approach to Disney.[159]

Around the world, people of all races, ages, classes, genders, and abilities sport Disney apparel: from the tee-shirts portraying favorite characters to the personalized mouse ears Disney-goers buy like candy. It is easy to see those artifacts as testaments to

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[159] Doherty, "The Wonderful World of Disney Studies."

Disney's status as a commercial enterprise with a particular gift at branding. But for those who sport these artifacts, they also signify first-hand participation in Disney's techno-natural wonders, a participation procured at great cost and often great effort. Wearing Mickey ears or a Pocahontas shirt is not just a marker of brain-washed consumerism. It can also be an indication of people's active valuing of what Disney offers and represents and a claim of belonging to a culture of transformational imagination.

Much as "wonder citizenship" in the late nineteenth century was grounded in a fantasy of experience-based citizenship that overlooked complex race, class, and gender dynamics at the heart of questions of U.S. citizenship, Disney's culture of transformational imagination and the kinds of techno-natural wonder and magic it creates and inspires—with the corporation's seemingly infinite resources—are built on the fantasy that imagination is "free," even as Disney experiences themselves are anything but free. The Disney promise is that you will go to the theme park; you will see its wonders, be inspired and transformed by them, and thereby be able to transform your own world, to see it anew, as a "whole new wonderful world of color."

Although imagination costs nothing, it is, of course, not the case that the vast majority of visitors have the resources to cultivate the kinds of imaginative wonders—Imagineering wonders—Disney experiences are about. This very fact is part of what makes Disney so successful and so desirable as a destination. For most people, the Disney vacation—and not what it may or may not inspire—is the apotheosis of a pleasurable, inspiring recreational experience, and the techno-natural wonder, imagination, and magic become contained within that experience. In this dynamic, it seems as if the only way to re-animate those feelings and qualities is to return to the park,

to create and re-create, consume and re-consume the experience, and collect souvenirs and memories of it, paraphernalia that, in effect, announces to the world something like "I have been touched by Disney wonder."

Within that cycle of consumption, there is still the potential at Disney for experiences that become not just memories but models and tools of imaginative transformation and re-vision. The techno-nature$ of the parks' design do not just offer up color, the world, technology, environments, etc., as possible sites of wonder. Disney's techno-natures extend to our bodies and our minds as technologies of wonder through which transformative re-invention is not only possible but inevitable, even if in ways we cannot discern. The recent publication of Ron Suskind's *Life Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism*, which recounts the story of a transformational use of Disney films, characters, and theme park visits in a family's struggle to deal with a boy's autism is one of the most significant recent examples of such unexpected, surprising, and even wonderful transformations through Disney's techno-natures and a child's imaginative re-animation and re-purposing of Disney stories.[160]

For the most part, though, such transformations are individual and idiosyncratic, perhaps not unlike the dream-vision in *Alice's Wonderland* with which I opened this chapter. In comparison to "World of Color," the 1923 short is almost quaint in its simplicity and straight-forward narrative. It has a main character—Alice—who experiences a new technology (the cartoon) is excited by it and inspired in her subconscious in such a way that the technology populates her dreams. She imagines a voyage to a faraway land—a cartoon wonderland—where she meets and plays with

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[160] Ron Suskind, *Life Animated: A Story of Sidekicks, Heroes, and Autism* (New York: Kingswell, 2014).

animated animals in a fantasy landscape. In some ways, the film is an uncanny allegory for the making of Disney theme parks and for re-animated wonders and the imaginative effects their experiences produce. Disney's cartoon studio did, eventually, lead to the dreaming up and creation of a concrete wonderscape in Disneyland. And today, it is less the cartoon studio that inspires visitors' dreams or wonderlands than visits to theme parks themselves.

Indeed, the seeming simplicity of *Alice's Wonderland*'s narrative may offer a map not only to "World of Color" but Disney's theme parks more broadly, for Alice's dream world in cartoonland is entirely associational, in addition to being populated by a plethora of different kinds of imaginative animals. The cartoon she sees in the studio is nothing like the cartoon landscapes and animals she subsequently traverses in her dreams. But the visual experience of seeing the cartoon studio at work creates the imaginative spark—wonder—that facilitates her dream's narration of a wonderland. Similarly, as I have argued, "World of Color" offers up visual associations that move sequentially to produce, on the one hand, a narrative that is about both the beauty and dangers of color and technological wonders, and, on the other hand, a series of narrative portals that—like Alice's visit to the cartoon studio—are meant to spark viewer-actants' appreciation of the multiplicity and diversity of the world's nature-cultures in defining their own narrative trajectories of "what wonders will be."

In *Alice's Wonderland* we see wonder as a mechanism of transportation both literally and figuratively: Alice gets on a train, which takes her to cartoonland/ wonderland. This dynamic is at work in Disney more broadly and it may partly explain the plethora of different transportation mediums in "World of Color" as well—the ocean,

outer space, the magic carpet, the canoe, the pirate ship, etc. In Disney's vast cultural and artistic corpus, wonder is a technology that transports visitors imaginatively and emotionally to alternate lands and/or worlds. Although most Disney narratives define those worlds pretty clearly through their characters, settings, and plots, "World of Color's" technologies of water, film, fire, color, and the multiplicity of stories and characters that populate the narrative, as well as its associational nature, leave the wonderscapes open to audience members' own imaginings and preferences. The show's movement from several different oceans, to outer space, to a child's bedroom, to the Arabian desert, to "native" America, to the African Sahara offers such a range of landscapes that it is difficult to imagine an audience member who wouldn't find an entry point into one of those spaces/clips. And if the contents of the film clips aren't appealing, then there are the spectacular movements of the lights, water, and fire.

The theme parks are, in this sense, "aggregates" of wonders in a techno-natural world, much as in the late nineteenth century, places like Yosemite and Yellowstone were framed as aggregates of wonders and museums of natural splendors. In Disney's contexts, wonder emerges as a technologized nature and a naturalized technology. Wonder is one of the affective experiences Disney promotes and guests seek as a symbol of the all-encompassing power of corporate capitalism and the transformative, imaginative force that can counteract the dulling homogenization of neo-colonial corporate capitalism. Disney wonders, then, point to the entanglements of affective experience and capital, nature and technology, and imagination and corporations at the beginning of the twenty-first century. These entanglements now structure the ways in which wonder gets deployed by such companies as Starbucks and Apple in promoting

experiences of consumption ranging from buying holiday coffee drinks (in Starbucks' "Create Wonder" campaign of the 2013-2014 holiday season) to buying iPads and iPhones (in Apple's recent "Filled with wonder" campaign of the spring 2014 season). In these ads, as in Disney's more elaborate travel experiences, wonder has become a marker of a desirable, creative difference or cultural status that hinges on imaginative innovation, albeit in corporate packaging.

In these contexts, however, wonder is not just an emotional experience and imaginative technology; it operates as rhetorical currency between marketers and consumers. Although some might suggest that this is merely empty rhetoric, the consistent animation and re-animation of wonder rhetoric in places like Disney, Starbucks, and Apple associated with technological innovation and imagination suggests that wonder, in fact, remains a very pregnant rhetorical currency in consumer culture: a lingering promise and hope, and/or a constantly revised and re-invented aspiration.

Conclusion

**The Whale in the Room:
Wonder, Waste, and Environmental Imagination**

"The great flood-gates of the wonder-world swung open."[1]

Chapter one of Herman Melville's 1851 *Moby Dick* introduces readers to a

nineteenth-century world seemingly defined by a land-water binary. In the novel's

opening lines, the narrator, Ishmael, presents the "watery parts of the world" as a remedy

for the boredom of life on land and in human culture.[2] The "flood-gates of the wonder-

world" in the epigraph above swing open as Ishmael sets sail on his first whaling

expedition. Aware that joining such an expedition might strike readers as ill-advised, if

not completely incomprehensible, Ishmael articulates his reasons for embarking on such a

dangerous voyage:

> Chief among these motives was the overwhelming idea of the great whale
> himself. Such a portentous and mysterious monster roused all my curiosity. Then
> the wild and distant seas where he rolled his island bulk; the undeliverable,
> nameless perils of the whale; these, with all the attending marvels of a thousand
> Patagonian sights and sounds, helped to sway me to my wish. With other men,
> perhaps, such things would not have been inducements; but as for me, I am
> tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote. I love to sail forbidden seas,
> and land on barbarous coasts.[3]

In Ishmael's motives for setting sail, *Moby Dick* defines a "wonder-world" of mysterious,

monstrous non-human elements, expansive and distant wilderness, danger, extra-ordinary

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[1] Herman Melville, *Moby Dick, or The Whale* (New York: The Modern Library, 1992), 8.
[2] Ibid., 1.
[3] Ibid., 7-8.

visual and sonic experiences, and a sense of the "forbidden," uncivilized, and/or "barbarous." Implicit in Ishmael's narration is also the fact that the "wonder-world" of the ocean and the pursuit of the whale are imaginative inspirations for his epic story.

In this dissertation, I have traced the codification of wonder discourses in the nineteenth century, showing that wonder has been central to environmental discourses that have participated in defining environmental experience and affect in the U.S. and inspiring environmental conservation movements. In some ways, *Moby Dick*'s "wonder-world," defined by a sea-faring adventure into the unknown is still alive and well in a multiplicity of different forms of adventure narratives, leisure travel, and imaginative practices. In other ways, the national parks, zoos, and Disney's "worlds of wonder" are far more domesticated and contained than Melville's ocean, by virtue of their institutionalization and commercialization.

Ishmael's sea-faring journey is a commercial one. He is a hired hand aboard ship, but, as the passage above suggests, he is seemingly less interested in monetary gain than in the wonders of the whale, the ocean, the distant lands. In this sense, Ishmael situates himself in a long tradition of wonder travel that will allow him to collect wonder experiences and memories through the technologies of ocean travel and whale hunting. His narrative is, therefore, situated within the three primary genealogies of wonder I have articulated in throughout "Worlds of Wonder": wonder and travel, wonder and collection, and wonder and technology. In *Moby Dick*, these genealogies are inseparable, and although I have tried to separate them in my own analysis, the distinctions are somewhat arbitrary. All three of my chapters, after all, are implicated in histories of travel, collection, and technology. Each case study, however, has allowed me to privilege one of

these histories and genealogies of wonder in order to begin to analyze some of the ways in which wonder has come to define environmental experiences in the U.S.

In closing, I want to tentatively suggest what wonder, my mode of comparative cultural study, and its analysis of these genealogies and institutional histories together offer contemporary environmental thought. At the risk of over-emphasizing Disney, I want to begin by briefly extending the reach of the chapter three's genealogy of wonder and technology, defined primarily by light and electricity, to include more recent histories of science and technology. As products and instruments of corporate, global capitalism Disney's theme parks are "worlds of wonder" of a post-World War II, post-atomic era. As of the mid-1950s, Walt Disney was involved in the "naturalization" of the atom in every-day U.S.-American life.[4] In January, 1957, the *Disneyland* television show aired an episode "Our Friend the Atom," a "Tomorrowland" story of science and progress. The show opens with Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*, a version of which Disney had produced as a live-action Technicolor film in 1954. Walt Disney tells viewers that Verne's nineteenth-century fiction of a submarine powered by a magic force has today become a reality in atomic-powered submarines.

"The atom," Disney says, "is our future. It is the subject everyone wants to understand." This makes it "the most important topic for a 'Tomorrowland' program." At that point, he hands the show over to Dr. Heinz Haber, an atomic scientist hired to help tell the story of atomic energy. Haber begins by framing the scientific history of atomic energy as a fairy tale—one that resembles the story of "The Fisherman and the Genie" from *One Thousand and One Nights*, a story that "tells of the age-old wish of man: the

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[4] Elizabeth Walker Mechling and Jay Mechling, "The Atom According to Disney," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 81, no. 4 (1995): 436-453.

wish to be the master of a mighty genie that does his bidding." Haber suggests that humans have, for centuries, been seeking a "genie" in the pursuit of scientific knowledge, and we have finally found it in the atom, a magic power that was first harnessed to kill, but can also be a wish-granting source of good.

Disney, of course, was neither the first, nor the last to frame atomic energy in magical, wondrous terms. As Rebecca Solnit writes in *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West*, from very early on, the Atomic Energy Commission (a precursor to the Department of Energy) not only claimed that atomic energy was safe, but that seeing an explosion was a thing of aesthetic wonder: "You can look up and you will see the beautiful mushroom cloud as it ascends to the heavens with all the wonderful colors of the rainbow. It is a wonderful sight to behold."[5] Perhaps even more importantly, atomic physics on the whole, leading up to the development of the atomic bomb was defined by "wonder and leaps of imagination."[6]

Environmental historian Mark Fiege has argued that there exists an "alternative history" of the atomic bomb in atomic scientists' "cold logic of numbers" and its instrumental approach to nature coexisting with and deriving from a more subjective sense of wonder in nature that mirrored the natural wonder and pacifism of people like John Muir and Ansel Adams.[7] For Fiege, paying attention to the emotional and personal narratives and experiences of such major atomic scientists as Robert Oppenheimer, known as the "father" of the atomic bomb, reveals that "the combination of curiosity and

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[5] Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: a Journey into the Hidden Wars of the American West* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994), 151. The sight of atomic explosions is portrayed in similar terms in Mar Manning and Kurt Mitchell, "Atomic vets battle time," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 51, no. 1 (1995), 56. PDF e-book.

[6] Solnit, *Savage Dreams*,135.

[7] Mark Fiege, "The Atomic Scientists, the Sense of Wonder and the Bomb," *Environmental History* 12, no. 3 (2007), 579-80.

emotion generally called wonder prompted them to do the [scientific] work [of building the bomb]."[8]

In this historical narrative, wonder, of course, is not responsible for transforming scientific knowledge into a weapon of mass destruction. But the appearance of wonder rhetoric in scientists' descriptions of both the bomb and experiences of such natural landscapes as Yosemite points to one of Fiege's conclusions, that wonder and "reverence for nature…[were] precondition[s] to the bomb's production."[9] Wonder is not just a strong rhetorical impetus for the movement to understand and preserve nature, as I discussed in chapters one and two; it is an environmental emotion and scientific inspiration that led to and supported some of the biggest and most dangerous forms of violence, contamination, and destruction—against global environments and human and animal populations. In chapter one I argued that the production of wonderscapes in the American West was already participating in this dynamic through the "emptying out" of Yosemite and Yellowstone, the removal of Native Americans from park lands, in order to create a "safe" tourist space.

Solnit's *Savage Dreams* and its focus on the meanings of landscape draws on the history of Yosemite as a counterpart to the twentieth-century history of Nevada's nuclear testing sites. She notes the rhetorical similarity between Yosemite's historic construction as a wonder and the use of wonder rhetoric, beginning in the 1940s, to talk about nuclear explosions and the Nevada test sites. Her comparison of the two places is based on these similarities and others. She writes that her "juxtaposed cases serve to show the politics of landscape and nature, the ways in which one natural site is ignored and exploited as

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[8] Ibid., 584.
[9] Ibid.

'empty' and desert, and the other is celebrated for its emptiness and lushness."[10] This dynamic makes the national parks seem much less like "America's best idea," as Wallace Stegner claimed, and much more like a compensation, perhaps even a permission, to use—and abuse—non-park land.[11]

For Solnit, the history and development of the national parks is fundamentally about creating gardens, not unlike zoos, to protect landscapes. For her, protection is more about visual beauty and the ability to escape urban areas than it is about deep ecological concerns. As I suggested chapter one, the history and rhetorical contexts surrounding the foundation of the first national parks had relatively little to do with a desire to preserve nature for nature's sake. Rather, the parks movement was both initiated by railroads' capitalist interests and framed as a nationalistic, recreational pursuit. Experiencing wonder in Yellowstone in the late nineteenth century had much less to do with appreciating the complexities of the park's bio-diversity and geological rarities and much more to do with *feeling* American.

In that sense, the formation of the national parks and their protection from human harm is difficult not to read as a permission to harm other places. As Solnit remarks, to say "'This place shall we set aside and protect' implies 'all other places shall we open up and use.' So the national parks counterbalance and perhaps legitimize the national sacrifice areas, which in the nineteenth century meant mostly mining and timbercutting and now has grown to include waste disposal and military-use areas and places drowned

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[10] Solnit, *Savage Dreams*, 6.
[11] Solnit, *Savage Dreams*, 253. Stegner famously wrote that "The national park idea, the best idea we ever had, was inevitable as soon as Americans learned to confront the wild continent not with fear and cupidity but with delight, wonder, and awe." Wallace Stegner, *Marking the Sparrow's Fall: Wallace Stegner's American West*, ed. Page Stegner (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1998), 137.

as dams."[12] The rhetoric of wonder surrounding national parks, preserves, and other places of natural beauty belies a much less visible—indeed, deliberately invisible—production of waste and wastelands.

This dynamic may be attributable in part to the ways in which wonder has become central to certain kinds of aestheticized fantasy narratives, like the wonderland narratives of the national parks in chapter one, as well as the Disney narratives I discussed in chapter three. Figures and stories of wonder aestheticize techno-natures at the risk of glossing over or ignoring altogether their darker side. Fiege remarks that Isidor Rabi, an adviser to Oppenheimer and other scientists at Los Alamos, said that "physicists are the Peter Pans of the human race. They never grow up, and they keep their curiosity."[13] The narrative of perpetual childhood and wonderous curiosity, of course, masks both the real, material violence these scientists produce and their responsibilities in pursuing a science of mass destruction. It also espouses a fairy-tale notion of science, replete with the expectations of a happy ending.

Ironically, perhaps, although Disney's "World of Color" is engaged in aestheticizing technology, it not only recognizes but dwells on the fact that aesthetic wonder and wonder narratives are always also defined by darkness and violence—a contradiction that may seem impossible to fully grasp or reconcile. But the fact that Disney is willing to dwell in and with this darker side of wonder is encouraging, because it suggests an emergence of more complex narratives about techno-natures.

Of course, on the whole, with the significant exception of *Wall-E* and its portrayal of a post-apocalyptic earth humans have laid to waste and abandoned, Disney's natures

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[12] Solnit, *Savage Dreams*, 246-7.
[13] Fiege, "The Atomic Scientists," 585.

tend to be beautiful and pristine wonderscapes. What kinds of wastelands lie behind those wonders? Disney is criticized for a wide variety of cultural and political offenses. The construction of Disney's Animal Kingdom in the 1990s and the park's associated conservation aims have drawn renewed attention to the fact that Disney's parks are huge environmental manipulations. Building Disney World in Florida, in particular, required wiping out whole ecosystems in order to implant new ones. For a company whose history and reputation has rested on its portrayals—in films and themed lands—of environments, what kind of concern for environments does this total destruction show?

Most critics concerned with Disney's natures largely agree that "Disney co-opts environmentalism towards its entertainment ends…. [which] has little to do with social and environmental justice."[14] In Animal Kingdom, for instance, Disney uses narratives very similar to the Binder Park Zoo's colonialist "Wild Africa" and the Bronx Zoo's poacher truck playground. Although it is easy to see Disney as a capitalist entertainer and to discard any environmentalism as a publicity stunt aimed at making visitors feel better about their expensive Disney experiences and their consumption practices, Disney's Animal Kingdom is also one of the most well-regarded animal research and conservation institutions in the U.S. right now.

The Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, whose aim is to "protect the wonders of nature," is funded in equal parts by the Walt Disney Company and by donations made at kiosks around Animal Kingdom and on Disney's cruise ships. Since 1995, it has contributed $20 million to conservation projects around the globe.[15] This sum is almost

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[14] Scott Hermanson, "Truer Than Life: Disney's Animal Kingdom," in *Rethinking Disney*, 210.
[15] Walt Disney Company, "Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund," *The Walt Disney Company*, http://thewaltdisneycompany.com/citizenship/act-responsibly/environmental-stewardship/disney-worldwide-conservation-fund

negligible when compared to the company's billions in annual revenue, but it is not an insignificant contribution. It is more than many zoos can afford, and more than many corporations choose to contribute. But beyond conservation funding, Disney is also attracting scientists, researchers, and zoo keepers, because Animal Kingdom has become a leading animal research center, and it has the resources to fund staff research around the world and provide some of the best habitats for animals, making it one of the most successful breeding environments—"wild" or captive—in the world.

At the end of the day, the firm distinctions among Disney's for-profit corporate environments, zoos' not-for-profit statuses, and the National Park Service government-run parks are difficult to maintain. U.S. environments, indeed, are not just natures or techno-nature\$; they are institutions. The national parks movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was as much about institutionalizing nature as it was about protecting it. That institutionalizion has been and continues to be facilitated by wonder and wonderscapes that play a crucial role in defining how Americans think and feel about environments in the U.S. and abroad.

Wonderscapes, as I have shown in all three of my case studies, tend to be defined as distant "elsewheres," places of exoticism and techno-natural appreciation, places no one lives in but visits, primarily for recreational and/or educational motives. Nonetheless, because of the ways in which wonderscapes have been narrativized and institutionalized, despite their distance from most people's everyday lives, wonder rhetoric in these enclosed landscapes participates not just in shaping personal aesthetic experiences, but in shaping ideas of national and global citizenship. As I explained in chapter one, Northern Pacific's Wonderland campaign was part of a complex set of national negotiations about

what constituted an American citizen in the era of Reconstruction and helped articulate a notion of experience-based citizenship, defined around travel to Yellowstone. In chapter two, I argued that recent and contemporary zoos' affective collectives participate in making visits to U.S. zoos worldly environmental experiences that promote an idea of zoopolitan global environmental citizenship.

At Disney theme parks, which are more invested in individual experiences, ideas of citizenship are less obviously at play. But as Corinne Kratz and Ivan Karp have noted, the parks "seek to define the kinds of selves that visitors imagine and produce….by multiplying modes and experiences of resonance and wonder and condensing them into a single place."[16] Those selves are, then, defined both vis-à-vis and in terms of corporate global capitalism, as I explored in chapter three. In "World of Color," Disney's wonder practices are not only figuring potentials and processes of individual imaginative transformations, but ways of interacting with a global corporate environment that has a tendency to flatten difference and multiplicity and squash individual imagination. In an era of corporate personhood, Disney is valuing and promoting the active imagination of both human and non-human selves in the interests of sustaining the power and transformative potential of imagination.

Given contemporary global corporate politics and the state of environmental unsustainability, this emphasis on wonder as re-visionary imagination is, perhaps, one of the most important forms of environmental wonder in the U.S. today. As environmental scholars and historians of all stripes have suggested in recent years, "constrained imaginative capacities" are among the most significant obstacles to contemporary

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[16] Kratz and Karp, "Wonder and Worth," 41.

environmental movements.[17] Over the past ten years, as concerns over global climate change have become increasingly urgent, some scholars and activists have proclaimed "The Death of Environmentalism."[18] This death is defined by a failure to "generate a credible vision of the future or the political alliances that could bring progress about."[19] One of the biggest problems with this failure of vision is its reliance on a static and a-historical idea of nature alongside disempowered human agencies.

In the environmental humanities, scholars like Stephanie LeManger, are also calling upon artists, literary critics, and environmentalists to "power down and create smaller scale, post-oil economies with imagination and courage."[20] This more recent call for small-scale and local action echoes William Cronon's push in the 1990s for a more expansive geography of wonder that encompasses the tree on the street corner as readily as the California redwoods. Cronon advocates infusing local environments with the wonder and imagination with which we traditionally see more distant natures, like national parks. This move entails relinquishing the strange fantasy that humans and human cultures are separate and separable from a non-human nature. "Any way of looking at nature that encourages us to believe we are separate from nature," he argues, "…is likely to reinforce environmentally irresponsible behavior."[21]

If in 1957, Walt Disney could say that the atom was our future, the subject everyone wanted to understand, today we might say that global environmental sustainability (or its failure) is our future. On the one hand, as chapters one and two

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[17] Damian F. White and Chris Wilbert, *Technonatures: Environments, Technologies, Spaces, and Places in the Twenty-first Century* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 3.
[18] M. Shellenberger and T. Nordhaus, "The Death of Environmentalism: Global Warming Politics in a Post-Environmental World," *Grist*, January 14, 2005, http://grist.org/article/doe-reprint/
[19] White and Wilbert, *Technonatures*, 3.
[20] Stephanie LeManger, "The Aesthetics of Petroleum, after Oil!," *American Literary History* (2012): 1.
[21] Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 87.

defined, environmental wonder is often considered to be a condition for conservation and sustainability. On the other hand, although wonder is not to blame for environmental destruction, as Cronon suggests, its association with distant, pristine natural environments, like national parks, zoos, and nature preserves—for which, on the whole, we are not responsible in our daily lives—facilitates both the beliefs that our daily material practices do not affect those distant, wonderful places and that "real" nature is alive and well somewhere out there.

But increasingly, we are seeing and understanding that even the distant, non-human "out there" is not only at risk, but already deeply compromised. This is, perhaps, nowhere more visible than in the largest and least known of earth's ecosystems: the world's waters—threatened by oil spills, nuclear accidents, over-fishing, and, of course, every-day trash. Since the spring-summer 2010 BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which unleashed somewhere between 500,000 and 630,000 tons of oil into the environment, the U.S. alone has had fifteen other oil spills, adding another 10,000 tons of oil to our waters.[22] Since Disney's "Our Friend the Atom" aired in 1957, there have been approximately 100 nuclear reactor accidents world-wide, with Japan's March 2011, Fukushima accident, triggered by an earthquake and a tsunami, being the most severe. Three years after the accident, nuclear debris and fleeing invasive species continue to wash up along the west coast of the U.S., particularly in northern California and Oregon.[23] Even before these accidents, for much of the past ten years, scientists and

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[22] Wikipedia, "List of Oil Spills," July 4, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_oil_spills
[23] "U.S. West Coast on High Alert against Tsunami-Washed Japanese Invasive Species," *RT.com*, February 3, 2014, http://rt.com/usa/japan-invasive-species-west-coast-587/.

scholars have been warning that by 2050, the world's salt water fish may be gone due to habitat destruction and overfishing.[24]

In recent months, however, one of the major trending images and stories on the web of the ecological collapse of oceans has involved exploding whales. Dead whales that wash ashore have always "exploded." As they decompose, methane and other gases accumulate in their bodies, which can bloat to more than twice their living size, eventually causing the body to, more or less, explode.[25] An exploding whale is likely an impressive sight in its own right, but this phenomenon has gained more widespread attention, because of what those explosions are revealing: massive amounts of human trash are compacted in whales' stomachs.

Seemingly healthy whales' dead bodies have washed ashore all over the world—Seattle, the Netherlands, South Africa, to name the most well-publicized. If the stench of the decomposing carcass was not strong enough, as the gases build up and the skin's integrity falters, the whales' bodies are spewing forth not just blubber and blood, but up to fifty pounds of human refuse: plastic bags, towels, ropes, sweat pants, house pipes, golf balls.[26] It does not, in fact, take that much trash to kill a whale. A single plastic bag has been known to do it. And for many whales who feed on squid, floating plastic bags look a lot like lunch.

Even when human debris does not resemble marine animals' food sources, trash makes its way into their bodies. *Finding Nemo* depicts a whale sucking in krill. Of

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[24] Sylvia Earle, "Ocean 2050: How to Sustain Our Biggest Ecosystem," *BBC.com*, December 6, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20131206-sos-save-our-seas.

[25] Svati Kristin Narula, "A Brief History of Exploding Whales," *The Atlantic*, April 30, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2014/04/exploding-whales/361444/.

[26] See Realnews 24, "Gray Whale Dies Bringing Us a Message," *Realnews24.com*, November 5, 2013, http://www.realnews24.com/gray-whale-dies-bringing-us-a-message-with-stomach-full-of-plastic-trash/.

course, just as Marlin and Dory nearly got consumed along with the krill, huge amounts

of water get ingested by whales and other sea creatures, along with their prey. With that

water comes trash. As Patricia Yaeger explains, "thrown-away plastic" creates "dense

amalgams" in the Pacific that "form an aggregate twice the size of Texas."[27] The

problem, the Ocean Conservancy explains, is that this ocean trash is "like a chunky soup

rather than a solid island of garbage you could walk across."[28] That chunky soup is not

just the habitat for marine animals; it is their food and, increasingly, their death. Human

trash is so pervasive in the ocean that "It is impossible to find a seabird without a little

product inside or a square foot of ocean without debris."[29]

For Yaeger, the disturbing reality of human relationships with the ocean today is

that they are defined by the subtraction of sea creatures and the addition of trash.[30] This

set of exchanges drives Yeager to call for the bestowing of "personified rights on the

ocean [that] would match our gift to corporations. Corporations possess legal standing

and recently acquired the right to free speech…. We can imagine a global protectorate for

oceans with the power to address problems ignored by nation-states and redress

environmental injustices left adrift in the ownerless sea."[31] Yaeger's argument is based in

part on Bruno Latour's *The Politics of Nature* and its argument in favor of granting

"human rights" to great apes. For Yaeger, the process of granting oceans—and other

forms of techno-natures—legal and political standing requires not just extensive scientific

and legal work. It requires extensive literary re-imaginings and re-narrations of oceans,

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[27] Yaeger, "Sea Trash, Dark Pools," 527.
[28] Ocean Conservancy, "The Pacific Garbage Patch: Myths and Realities," *Ocean Conservancy*, 2012, http://tocdev.pub30.convio.net/our-work/marine-debris/the-pacific-garbage-patch.html.
[29] Yaeger, "Sea Trash, Dark Pools," 528.
[30] Ibid., 530.
[31] Ibid., 540.

"the creative brandishing of new personifications, mythologies, and speech acts."[32] In short, it requires a large-scale animating and re-animating of both existing stories and new ones, in ways that are not entirely different from Disney's constant re-animations of techno-natures.

If wonder, as one of the major affective paradigms for the U.S. environment, has been part of a set of global processes and factors involved in both the institutionalization of U.S. wonderscapes and the correlative trashing of those environments' "others," wastelands, it is perhaps time to re-imagine a more dynamic, political wonder that builds upon aesthetic appreciation in forging active eco-political alliances. Disney's wonder practices are, in this regard, ironically perhaps potentially more environmentally useful than the more static visions of wonder and nature national parks and zoos have often promoted.

Yaeger's essay does not mention Disney, but it does recognize that in working towards new narratives, tropes, and personifications, artists, scholars, and environmentalists may need to cultivate a willingness to forge alliances with capitalist technologies: "although capitalist technology created the tragedy of the oceanic commons, concerned collectives seeking a solution will have to work with this technology. For fish to be protected, for cleanup to begin on a large-enough scale, government and businesses will have to take part."[33] By extension, concerned collectives will need not just to work with capitalist technologies, but to build alliances with corporate-capitalist entities.

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[32] Ibid., 541.
[33] Ibid.

Environmental activism and scholarship of the past several decades has often

focused on critiquing and seeking to dismantle the structures of environmental

degradation that corporate-capitalist interests have produced and enforced. But it may be

that if twenty-first century re-animations of environmental imagination have any chance

of succeeding, they will need to include and build alliances with corporations like Disney

in beginning to rehabilitate "imaginative capacities" on both national and global

scales[34]—not because Disney and other major corporations are innocent or particularly

commendable as businesses, but because they have global audiences and resources, and

far more capital and clout than any environmental group or movement has ever had.

The National Park Service's turn to Disney and other corporate resources in re-

organizing administration of the parks suggests a move in this direction, although the

NPS is itself a kind of corporatized government entity. We might call such strategic,

affective alliances "wonder alliances," both because of their collectivizing of unlikely

partnerships and because of their emergence out of complex histories of institutional,

environmental wonder. Such alliances would, perhaps, be contemporary re-animations of

late nineteenth-century wonder collectives between scientists, early environmentalists,

and railroad lobbyists that brought about the early national parks movement. But they

would need to be, like Disney's "World of Color," re-animations with very different

characters, ends, narrative trajectories, and audiences.

In her 1985 "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," Donna Haraway presents a critique of

identity-based politics in the Reagan era. Arguing for partial and situational political

alliances in the face of the fragmentation of global justice movements, she offers in the

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[34] White and Wilbert, *Technonatures*, 3.

cyborg a vision of coalition politics based in affinity, rather than identity.[35] One of the

major premises of her arguments—and of the cyborg figure, a through and through

hybrid of "nature" and "culture," human and technology—is the impossibility of

untainted or pure ideological and political positions. We are all, Haraway argues,

imbricated in global, capitalist systems of violence and injustice. Thirty years later,

Haraway's insights continue to ring true—all the more in the context of environmental

degradation. No one is innocent of using and misusing environmental resources, and in

the face of global ecological challenges such as climate change, the need for partial,

situational alliances remains crucial. But given the nature of global capitalism today,

those alliances may need to be built not only with affinity groups sharing a common

cause and purpose, but with government and corporate entities, on the basis not of

affinity, but of affect.

Affect may, indeed, be one of the few common experiences and aims of both

environmentalists and corporations like Disney, Apple, and Starbucks. Affective

experiences, like wonder, have, as I showed in chapter one, galvanized both

environmentalists and corporate interests in creating institutional environmental changes,

albeit for different reasons. The past several decades have shown that concern about the

environment is not likely to become widespread or serious, especially among corporate

entities profiting from resource-extraction, industrial waste, and lax environmental

regulations. But those same corporate entities do depend on *public feelings* towards their

enterprises, products, and projects. It is for this reason that such major corporations as

Kroger super markets, Kodak, and Walmart donate large sums of money to zoos around

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[35] Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," 70.

the country: their participation in local institutions demonstrates to consumers an

investment in nature's wonders and by extension their support of local communities.

These corporate donations, like the Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund, emerge out of

long traditions of corporate philanthropy, initiated in the late nineteenth century by

businessmen like Andrew Carnegie.[36]

On the whole, however, scholars, especially in the humanities, have shied away

from partnering with the likes of Disney. For instance, in 1993, Disney proposed building

"Disney's America," in Virginia's Prince William County, just over thirty miles west of

Washington, D.C. Not unlike Disneyland, but in a less allegorical mode, the park aimed

to become a form of simulated "heritage tourism" that would include "an Indian village

and a Lewis and Clark raft ride; a Civil War fort with reenactments; an Ellis Island

replica; a factory town with a ride through a blazing steel mill; a World War II airfield

with flight simulators; a state fair with a ferris wheel; a family farm with country

wedding and barn dance."[37] The project, as Michael Wallace describes, was widely

criticized and opposed by historians and environmentalists afraid that Disney would

"sentimentalize" American history in coupling education and entertainment.[38] Disney

listened to these critiques, revised the project, and sought the input of historians, most of

whom did not want to work with Disney. Eventually, an alliance among historians,

environmentalists, rival tourist businesses, and local residents formed a group called

Protect Historic America that, in drawing out the legal battle for the grounds of the park,

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[36] For more on this history, see Elisabeth S. Clemens and Doug Guthrie, eds. *Politics and Partnerships: The Role of Voluntary Associations in America's Political Past and Present* (University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[37] Michael Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History and Other Essays on American Memory* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996), 163.

[38] Ibid., 165.

eventually got Disney to back down. Protect Historic America won, however, by claiming "real" history and historical sites to be "sacred ground," imagining a pure version of history that is, as Wallace notes "troubling."[39]

The trouble with the "sacred ground" argument is not so different from the trouble with wonderscapes: there are relatively few places and histories that qualify for protection in this way, and therefore, a wide variety of other places (historians John Bodnar and Linda Shopes pointed to Pennsylvania coal fields and South Chicago) get excluded from this same kind of protection.[40] But, even more troubling to Wallace is opposition to Disney on the grounds that education and entertainment are inherently at odds. In the end, although, as Wallace suggests, there were alarmingly huge historical problems with Disney's proposed park, the ways in which it was opposed also raise questions about both corporate and scholarly responsibility: "Should historians work for Disney's America? Sure. But with their eyes wide open, aware of the constraints as well as the possibilities."[41]

When the stakes are environments and not histories, the terms of the conversation and alliances are somewhat different. After Disney abandoned Disney's America in the mid-1990s in order to "seek a less controversial site" upon which to imagine American histories and environments, it turned to land it already owned in California, across from Disneyland. Thus, "Westcot"/Disney California Adventure was born. This second Anaheim park, which aimed to represent California environments, rather than American

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[39] Ibid., 168.
[40] Ibid., 168. John Bodnar, "A House Divided: Historians Confront Disney's America," *OAH Newsletter* 22, n.3 (August 1994), 10-11; Linda Shopes, "Some Second Thoughts on Disney's America," *Perspectives: American Historical Association Newsletter* 33, n.3 (March 1995), 7-8.
[41] Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 173.

histories, was met with no resistance, but it also, as a result, had no scholarly

collaborators. In both the Environmental Humanities and the Public Humanities, scholars

do build alliances with community partners, usually of the non-profit variety. But even

given the constraints Wallace discusses in the context of Disney's America, there are no

compelling reasons why community partners should exclude—and many urgent reasons

why they should include—government and corporate businesses that also define "local"

communities.

Of course such strategic, affective alliances would inevitably be messy and entail

many flaws, over-sights, mistakes, wasted opportunities. Like all scholarly and

commercial enterprises, they would be experimental and provisional trials, open to

revision, reinvention, and change. But they would also, perhaps, like Ishmael's setting

sail in *Moby Dick* (re-)open a flood-gate on other possible worlds of wonder that might

help us forge new genealogies of wonder and better address environmental crises.

Filmography

Alice's Wonderland (Series: Laugh-O-Gram Films, 1926)

Silly Symphonies (Series: Walt Disney Productions, 1929-1939)

Midnight in a Toyshop (Wilfred Jackson, 1930)

Flowers and Trees (Burt Gillet, 1932)

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs (David Hand, 1937)

Fantasia (James Algar, Samuel Armstrong, Ford Beebe, Norman Ferguson, Jim Handley, T. Hee, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, Bill Roberts, Paul Satterfield, and Ben Sharpsteen, 1940)

Dumbo (Ben Sharpsteen, 1941)

Bambi (David Hand, 1942)

True-Life-Adventures (Series: Walt Disney Productions, 1948-1960)

Seal Island (James Algar, 1948)

In Beaver Valley (Jales Algar, 1950)

Cinderella (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, Hamilton Luske, 1950)

Alice in Wonderland (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske, 1951)

Peter Pan (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske, 1953)

The Living Desert (James Algar, 1953)

The Vanishing Prairie (James Algar, 1954).

Lady and the Tramp (Clyde Geronimi, Wilfred Jackson, and Hamilton Luske, 1955)

The Little Mermaid (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1989)

Beauty and the Beast (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1991)

Aladdin (Ron Clements and John Musker, 1992)

The Lion King (Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff, 1994)

Pocahontas (Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg, 1995)

Toy Story (John Lasseter, 1995)

The Hunchback of Notre Dame (Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, 1996)

A Bug's Life (John Lasseter and Andrew Stanton, 1998)

Toy Story II (John Lasseter, Ash Brannon, and Lee Unkrich, 1999)

Finding Nemo (Andrew Stanton and Lee Unkrich, 2003)

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WALL-E (Andrew Stanton, 2008)

The Princess and the Frog (Ron Clements and John Musker, 2009)

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