

GWS 100AC

March 3, 2016

- Attendance today is taken with exams.
- Book review details will be posted next week: read a travel narrative and analyze it (book review). Call out the settler colonial logic. And maybe how it presents some other kind of thinking. Look for an adventure or nature travel memoir. Tells a story of someone's experience in the wilderness. Should be written in American POV, but does not need to take place in America. (e.g. *Into Thin Air* by Jon Krakauer)
- George Caitlin: painting was in a book and circulated, people were able to say, "hey, this is our empire!"
- Mark David Spence: Wants us to know that the national parks, which were introduced in 1916, operates on the sense of "these parks have always been here."
 - The idea of national parks was actually contested from the get-go.
 - Those tensions have not gone away.
 - **Trivia:** The Golden Gate Recreational Area is the most visited in the nation
 - **More trivia:** A hotel @ Yosemite is getting renamed. Story is nuts. Article will get forwarded to class.
 - Apparently, as an American, a thing we do is visit national parks as a right of passage.
- Promotional video on wilderness areas - "where the earth and its life are completely untrampled.", "where man himself is a visitor who does not remain", "where land retains its primeval character and influence"
 - Super patriotic video!
 - "This is us! Hell yeah!" -Barnes
 - A romantic idea of emptiness, pristineness, and primevalness that needs to be preserved. National parks go hand in hand with wilderness.
 - This is our's, because it's empty. And because it's our's, when we contact it, it impacts us.

- The critique of wilderness is very complex. There was a strong push to understand the value of having nature.
- We have been criticizing wilderness, but we still care about nature in some fashion.
- Is it possible to imagine wilderness without reinforcing dualistic settler colonialism logic?
- In the readings we have done this semester, we've been reading stories that either defend wilderness or call it into question.
 - Dispossession of native people
 - Only some people are rightful property owners
 - Shaped racism in America
 - Gender notions on who the proper American woman
- There was a huge violence associated with the formation of national parks.
- We go to national parks for a transcendent relationship with nature.
- In the first few chapters, Spence introduces a handful of characters - artists and writers that traveled to the West and represented it for people in the East.

It is our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experience of liberty and federated self-government entrusted to us.

John O'Sullivan

- In the 19th century, the United States was becoming more industrial.
- There was an anxiety of white men becoming feminized if they don't contact the frontier.
- Native Americans are considered the anti-Americans.
- Spence points out that because of many conditions, contact with native groups was more or less violent.
- Settler encroachment → ramped up violence → Plains Indians Wars.

- After end of Civil War, race was intensified. White supremacist establishment was threatened.
 - Jim Crow Laws established
 - Happened alongside the frontier wilderness decreasing
 - These events are huge threats to what it means to be an American
 - Turner’s thesis directly responds to this. He’s anxious.
- The West was the most diverse space. But nation still imagined it as empty.
 - The stories that get told about that place, they repeat and reinforce systematic silences and oppressions.
 - Frontier wilderness and national parks uses wide open spaces and particular landscapes to establish American national identity.
 - In the 19th century, media (photos, paintings, writings) played a huge role in this. Sublime + romantic images = connotation of progress and evolution
 - There is a way in which Americans can make the argument that they are the owners of these empty spaces because they know how to appreciate it. “We are more evolved!! We appreciate geysers!!”
- The majestic gaze - Albert Boime
 - Thomas Moran’s paintings capture this. (picture here)
 - Little human figures are the viewers.
 - We want something grand that represents us as a people.
 - “But Switzerland has no such groves on its mountainsides, nor has even Libanus...” (William Cullen Bryant, *Picturesque America*)
- Note that the places that became national parks became in a lot of ways, sacred sites for Americans. They are so revered that they cannot be disturbed.
- At the same time, the native people who used these places viewed them as sacred sites as well.
- Sacredness is understood differently between these groups.
- William Cronon: Wonders if there is a decolonizing way to view wilderness/imagine places worth protecting.
 - Think about this throughout the semester.