Where the Wild Things Aren’t: Species Hierarchy and Hierarchy within Species

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Where the Wild Things Aren’t:
Species Hierarchy and Hierarchy within Species

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Senior Thesis
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Introduction

I had just finished watching the film Blackfish. This is a documentary about the cruel treatment of Orca whales in captivity at SeaWorld. As a Neuroscience student, I became fascinated by the way the film described the brains of Orca Whales. Neuroscientist Lori Marano explained in the film, “a part of their brain has extended out adjacent to their limbic system”, which is the part of the brain that processes emotion, giving them “a part of the brain that humans don’t have” (Blackfish). Furthermore, Morano stated, “these are animals that have highly elaborated emotional life” with a “sense of self, [and] sense of social bonding” that may be superior to the human’s emotional and social experience (Blackfish). I had two opposing responses to this. On the one hand, I was truly intrigued with the notion that whales could possess a higher emotional capability than humans. It made me think about how emotionally damaging it is for humans to spend their life in captivity, and therefore, how profoundly brutal this experience might be for whales based on their potentially more complex ability to perceive and experience emotion. On the other hand, I was disturbed by the fact that it required me to compare the whale’s experience and perception to a human’s experience in order for me to have sympathy for the whale. This made me think about how I have internalized beliefs about the inferiority of nonhuman beings. Furthermore, I became horrified by the thought that humans would treat other living-beings so horribly just for the sake of entertainment and capitalist profit.

Looking for someone to talk to about the film and these issues, I decided to approach my father who had not seen the film. I told him (and I paraphrase), “it seems ridiculous to me that we as humans keep animals in captivity just to pay to watch them perform for us.”
He responded, “Yeah, it does seem weird that we continue to keep these animals in captivity which is so clearly wrong when we now have the technology to observe and videotape them in their natural habitats on IMAX screens”.

My father’s comment suggests that the advent of technology should render zoos and aquariums obsolete because now we have the new ability to watch the animals in another more humane way. It did not even seem to occur to him that we should just leave the whales alone. Now, I mean no disrespect to my father, and, in fact, I think many people would share his point as an ostensibly reasonable response to my question. And that is exactly the point. There seems to be a universal assumption that of course we will continue to observe and learn about the whales. I thought: why do we see a type of supposedly non-invasive surveillance as the logical humane alternative to captivity? The answer, it seems is that humans, and specifically humans living in a Westernized context, feel we have a right, if not an obligation, to knowledge. When I probed my father more on the issue he said, “it is human nature to be curious about the world and to seek answers”. This was a fascinating response. As a Women’s Studies student, I am used to being skeptical of any question that is satisfactorily answered by invoking “human nature”. I have been trained to see the concept of “human nature” as a social construct that has stymied feminist and other anti-oppressive discourses for centuries. Furthermore, I began to understand the desire to sate curiosity as a continuation of a learned and long-lived colonial project in which certain bodies are subordinated as inferior and therefore liable to surveillance and critique.

This led me to Donna Haraway’s critical analysis of Crittercam, the National Geographic series. This series, not unlike the IMAX film my father had imagined, involves the attachment of a high-tech miniature camera onto the bodies of various animals in order to observe them in their ‘natural’ environment. Haraway explains, “through the camera’s eye, glued—literally—to
the body of the other, we are promised not just visual image, but the full sensory experience of
the nonhuman critters themselves” (Haraway 119-120). The animal is immediately made the
submissive Other, appearing to exist solely for the purposes of being observed by the Human
subject. Haraway describes the lures of the crittercam as providing the “unmediated experience
of otherness, inhabitation of the other as a new self, sensation as truth without any polluting
interaction” (Haraway 120). In other words, it is perceived that we, as humans, are allowed to
experience firsthand the existence of an individual of another species, without the supposed
bastardization of the experience through human intervention. It is framed dishonestly in that
humans are seemingly removed from the position of the experimenter, the captor, the colonizer,
and merely occupy the role of the benign and passive observer. But this is not the case. As
Haraway articulates, “the compound eyes of the colonial organism called crittercam are fully
articulated lenses from many kinds of coordinated, agential zoons” (Haraway 123). In other
words, the crittercams are the deliberate proxies of calculated human agents. Furthermore, the
attachment of a camera to an animal with the intention of capturing only the animals point-of-
view and not the filmmakers’ further conceals the fact that experimentation and human
intervention are what garner these images. What remains is the disguised and legitimized
colonial gaze, not unlike the male gaze, which we have seen repeatedly criticized within feminist
theory. The seemingly harmless passive observer narrative is one that ignores the larger and
ever-present oppressive implication of surveillance. Who has the power to observe and,
conversely, who is subjected to observation?

Humans are not merely the passive observers. They are observers hoping to gain
something through the act of watching the other species. Haraway adds, “Crittercam episodes
promise something else, too: scientific knowledge” (Haraway 122). Therefore, “a nifty
miniatu00000000re video camera is the central protagonist in both scientific research and popular nature television” (Haraway 119). Furthermore, she explains the “visual-haptic pleasures” and “voyeuristic revels” of viewing these critters move and live “would not hold me nor, I suspect, anyone else without the lure of learning something new” (Haraway 122). In other words, Haraway argues that the inherent pleasure one feels in voyeuristically observing another species would not be as satisfactory unless there was some sort of knowledge being gained. It seems to me that in the case of Crittercam the illusion of gaining some sort of scientific knowledge legitimizes the sheer voyeuristic thrill of surveilling animals. In other words, the subordination of these animals facilitated by humans’ belief that animals are inherently watchable or open to our interpretation is justified in the name of pursuing the lofty discipline of ‘science’. Although we could argue the validity of viewing scientific knowledge as a righteous or necessary endeavor, the fact of matter is that Crittercam is not truly about gaining scientific knowledge at all, but rather about marketing animals as objects of profitable consumption and fodder for humans’ entertainment.

Haraway explains the genesis of Crittercam came from a researcher named Greg Marshall’s “longing” fascination with a shark he encountered in the waters of Belize. As the shark swam away, Marshall spotted a remora fish attached to the shark; “an unobtrusive witness to the sharky reality” (Haraway 120). She continues, Marshall, “envying the remora its intimate knowledge of shark life,…conceived a mechanical equivalent: a video camera, sheltered by waterproof housing, attached to a marine animal” (Haraway 120). Haraway subsequently questions, “if we take the remora seriously as the analogue for the crittercam, then we have to think about just what relationship are being modeled between human beings and the animals swimming about with sucker cameras on their hide” (Haraway 121). This is a terrific point and
encapsulates what I hope to explore in this thesis. The remora, or suckerfish, is a ray-finned fish that lives the majority of its life attached to a larger marine host such as a shark, whale, or turtle. Its relationship to its host is largely one of commensalism, or even, occasionally, mutualism. Commensalism is the ecological term to describe a relationship between two animals in which one benefits while the other remains unaffected. Mutualism is the term in which both the host and the attached species mutually benefit from the arrangement. These relationships exist in stark contrast to parasitism in which the parasite benefits at the host’s detriment. I would argue that the relationship between humans and animals through the crittercam is not one analogous to mutualism or even commensalism.

Although the crittercam seems harmless enough, the framework used to justify it is insidious. It is a framework that views animals as existing merely to satisfy human curiosity and as mere objects for our consumption. According to this ideology, animals essentially exist at the whim of humans; for us to eat, for us to study, for us to wear, for us to dissect, for us to define, for us to capture, for us to crittercam. Therefore, even the seemingly more innocuous practices, such as Crittercam, which may be viewed as a welcome and humane alternative to captivity or zoos, remain conceptually and socially linked to the seemingly more harmful practices. As Haraway questions, “what is the semiotic agency of the animals in the hermeneutic labor of crittercam?” (Haraway 123). Although the methodology may be different, the harmful framework, which treats animals like fodder for human definition and manipulation, remains the same. We need to deconstruct this speciesist framework, which is so hegemonic that it appears natural.

Speciesism, of course, does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it is the product of Western colonial history and the belief that certain humans are rightfully superior to other humans and to
all nonhuman animals. Not only must we work to deconstruct and unlearn the normative speciesist schema, we must also recognize its roots in colonialism and therefore its connections to, and implications in, other systems of colonial oppression. This thesis aims to show how these systems of oppression rooted in Western colonialism, specifically, speciesism, sexism, and racism, all intersect at various points and inform each other in inextricable ways. As A. Breeze Harper, a black feminist, critical race theorist, and animal rights activist, writes in her piece “Speciesism, Racism, and Whiteness as the Norm”:

My work requires me to engage in uncomfortable—but necessary—“border crossing” in order to explore how critical race, critical whiteness studies, and postcolonial feminist theory can help us to understand the Western world’s unique, ongoing, systemic, racist beliefs and acts, in which whiteness, speciesism, and sexism are the norm (Harper 75).

We must engage in this “border crossing” to address how the feminization of land and animals, the naturalization of gender binaries, the dehumanization of nonwhite people, the objectification and animalization of women and specifically women of color etc, which permeate our culture are all linked in the transitive property of colonial white supremacy and patriarchy. As Harper states, “It’s simple: it’s all connected” (Harper 76).
“Two years he walks the earth. No phone, no pool, no pets, no cigarettes. Ultimate freedom. An extremist. An aesthetic voyager whose home is the road. Escaped from Atlanta. Thou shalt not return, 'cause "the West is the best." And now after two rambling years comes the final and greatest adventure. The climactic battle to kill the false being within and victoriously conclude the spiritual pilgrimage. Ten days and nights of freight trains and hitchhiking bring him to the Great White North. No longer to be poisoned by civilization he flees, and walks alone upon the land to become lost in the wild.

--Alexander Supertramp, May 1992

Chapter 1: The Revolution will not be “Wild”

We need to address something that is going on in gender studies and in the queer and trans movements. In our attempt to be transgressive and to fight gender norms, heteronormativity, sexism, racism, and transphobia, we must not end up reenacting the colonial practices and frameworks that we claim to reject. Queerness is meant to be a radical rejection of oppressive practices and norms. As Cathy J. Cohen writes,

> Queer politics, much like queer theory, is often perceived as standing in opposition, or in contrast, to the category-based identity politics of traditional lesbian and gay activism...At the intersection of oppression and resistance lies the radical potential of queerness to challenge and bring together all those deemed marginal and all those committed to liberatory politics. (Cohen 440)

However, as a cis, queer, able-bodied white woman who is always trying to recognize my privilege and situate my identity, I am concerned about how whiteness and white privilege permeates this discipline and goes unchecked in the very spaces that demand an intersectional approach to feminism. More specifically, I would like to critically challenge Jack Halberstam, a noted white transmasculine author and queer theorist, and their upcoming manifesto “The Wild” which was recently presented in a talk at the 2014 American Studies Association conference.

In their talk, Halberstam calls for a new queer agenda: “our new goal is disruption, chaos, the wild” (Halberstam). More specifically, they are calling for a rejection against “assimilation”, “to find other tracks”, “break with academic formulae”, and “leave the beaten path behind” (Halberstam). They exclaim, “LET’S GO WILD!” (Halberstam). Halberstam describes the wild as “another iteration of the queer”: “random”, “silly”, “incomprehensible” “unrestrained,
uncivilized, ferocious” presumably a space where queerness could be liberated and
unencumbered by the status quo (Halberstam). What Halberstam is implying is that queerness
needs to continue to resist assimilation from dominant culture and thus find its own way
independently through the wilderness. This might sound tempting: fun, adventurous even.
However, in this moment of seemingly queer radicalism, Halberstam risks reinstating ableist,
masculinist, and imperial values and ignoring the very voices they claim to celebrate. When one
makes a declaration to go into the wild, one reinvokes a new form of Manifest Destiny; a concept
built on principles of colonization, genocide, heteropatriarchy, white masculinity and white
supremacy.

Now, on the one hand, I understand Halberstam’s point. They are attempting to express
the need for queerness to resist assimilation into dominant society, to resist heteropatriarchal
values and embrace a kind of unchartered territory. Halberstam argues that the new queer
movement should embrace wildness rather than embracing “respectability and order”
(Halberstam). I, of course understand what Halberstam is intending to say especially considering
the recent and rightful criticism leveled at the increasingly hegemonic nature of the gay and
queer movements. From the overwhelming political focus on gay marriage to the rise of
homonationalism, many feel that the gay movement has been systematically whitewashed and
defanged to become palatable to the mainstream and, perhaps more insidiously, to exclude
certain bodies and identities in order to reinforce the status quo. When Halberstam calls for a
rejection of “respectability and order” and to “untrain, unthink, unbe” one could read this as a
rightful call for queer and other marginalized communities to reradicalize and resist hegemonic
deflection (Halberstam).
However, we must be careful. When Halberstam continues to argue that “our method” to resisting hegemony should be “wildness” or “a wild journey through a random archive”, I take pause (Halberstam). This is the type of language and ideology that legitimized and continues to legitimize colonialist projects. Halberstam, themself, recognizes this fact. They state “we recognize that the wild only takes on meaning in a colonial context...by which some people...are cast as wild only because others are cast as orderly, true, right, and proper” (Halberstam).

Halberstam argues that to practice anticolonization we must hold on to terms that have “now and then signified non specific spaces of refusal and hence the wild” (Halberstam). They add, “there is no dispute about [this history]...but we claim the term anyway as queer Canadian indigenous artist Kent Monkman does” (Halberstam). However, pointing out how much one knows about colonial history does not exempt one from being a colonizer if one stubbornly continues to utilize the colonial toolbox. Furthermore, is this not a form of cultural appropriation? Kent Monkman is a contemporary Canadian First Nations artist of Cree and Irish descent. Much of his work deconstructs the representations of Native Americans in white Western art through a satirical lens. His work aims to recognize and center the erasure of Native perspectives in art and in history by creating new images and flipping the colonial narrative of white discovery.

Halberstam’s comparison of their reclamation of the term “wild”, as a white queer person, with Monkman’s reclamation of the term in the context of creating satirical Indigenous art and to promote Indigenous survivance¹ is highly inappropriate. Is this rhetorical appropriation really any different than other types of less-intellectualized appropriation Native cultures constantly...

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¹ Survivance is a critical term in Native American Studies. It was first defined by Anishinaabe theorist Gerald Vizenor in his book *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* as “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name. Native survivance stories are renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry” (Vizenor vii).
face such as the hippies co-opting stereotypes of native dress and ideologies in the name of environmentalism?

We must cease fetishizing the wild as something pure and outside the realm and boundaries of harsh civilization. On the contrary, “the wild” or “the wilderness” is actually a Western socially constructed trope that speaks more to the state of our civilization than the state of “nature”. As William Cronon states in his piece “The Trouble with Wilderness”, “there is nothing natural about the concept of wilderness. It is entirely a creation of the culture that holds it dear, a product of the very history it seeks to deny” (Cronon 5). Furthermore, “to gain such remarkable influence, the concept of wilderness had to become loaded with some of the deepest core values of the culture that created and idealized it: it had to become sacred...One might meet devils and run the risk of losing one’s soul in such a place, but one might also meet God” (Cronon 2). In his article, Cronon reminds us of the history of the concept of the wilderness: that it is not a static, empirical idea as many people perceive it, but rather, it is a historically constructed notion that has shifted with the times. For example, Cronon describes how before the wild was revered in Western culture, it was reviled through Judeo-Christian Biblical narratives:

The wilderness was where Christ had struggled with the devil and endured his temptations: “And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness for forty days tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.” The “delicious Paradise” of John Milton’s Eden was surrounded by “a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides /Access denied” to all who sought entry.” When Adam and Eve were driven from that garden, the world they entered was a wilderness that only their labor and pain could redeem. Wilderness, in short, was a place to which one came only against one’s will, and always in fear and trembling. Whatever value it might have arose solely from the possibility that it might be “reclaimed” and turned toward human ends—planted as a garden, say, or a city upon a hill. In its raw state, it had little or nothing to offer civilized men and women (Cronon 1-2).
However, by the nineteenth century this view of nature in Western culture dramatically shifted. While once considered a space of satanic evil, existing outside the garden of Eden, the wilderness eventually became recognized as a space for the divine and of Eden itself. Many believe this about-face occurred in reaction to the Industrial Revolution when Western thinkers began to view nature as sublime and unscathed by human hand. This shift toward Romanticism interestingly maintained the god-fearing aspect of the Judeo-Christian biblical view of nature although now the belief was that God rather than Satan was to be found in nature. Cronon explains:

In the theories of Edmund Burke, Immanuel Kant, William Gilpin, and others, sublime landscapes were those rare places on earth where one had more chance than elsewhere to glimpse the face of God. Romantics had a clear notion of where one could be most sure of having this experience. Although God might, of course, choose to show Himself anywhere, He would most often be found in those vast, powerful landscapes where one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one’s own mortality. Where were these sublime places? The eighteenth century catalog of their locations feels very familiar, for we still see and value landscapes as it taught us to do. God was on the mountaintop, in the chasm, in the waterfall, in the thundercloud, in the rainbow, in the sunset. (Cronon 2).

Furthermore, this Romantic idea of the wilderness as sublime heavily influenced the colonial concept of Manifest Destiny and the masculine entitlement to traverse and claim land. This is especially apparent in the construction of the myth of the frontiersmen as the ultimate masculine symbol. Cronon cites Theodore Roosevelt as writing with great nostalgia about the “fine, manly qualities” of the “wild rough-rider of the plains” (Cronon 4). It was widely believed that the comfort of civilized and domesticated life was emasculating to real men who were meant to be free on the frontier where they could enact their destiny as rugged, conquering individuals.

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2 As William Cronon explains, “wilderness had once been the antithesis of all that was orderly and good—it had been the darkness, one might say, on the far side of the garden wall—and yet now it was frequently likened to Eden itself” (Cronon 2).
Cronon adds, “among the core elements of the frontier myth was the powerful sense among certain groups of Americans that wilderness was the last bastion of rugged individualism” (Cronon 4). The wild became a site for liberation and individualism where a man was ‘free’ to express his true manhood outside the feminine confines of civilization and domesticity. As Cronon too recognizes, the great irony of all of this was that it appears the very people who benefitted most from this constructed patriarchal society (wealthy white men) were the ones who most sought to escape its supposed debilitating effects.

The myth of the ‘wilderness’ as the sublime Eden has also had grave effects with regard to the colonial conquest of Native American peoples and their land. Native scholar Andrea Smith writes:

Both Stannard and Kirkpatrick Sale argue that colonizers, in attempting to escape the horrors of their violent society, expected to find ‘Eden’ in the Americas, ‘a place of simplicity, innocence, harmony, love, and happiness, where the climate is balmy and the fruits of nature’s bounty are found on the trees year round. Many of the early colonial narratives describe the Americas as an idyllic paradise. However, as Sales argues, colonizers approached ‘paradise’ through their colonial and patriarchal lens. Consequently, they viewed the land and indigenous peoples as something to be used for their own purposes” (Smith 393).

Due to the socially constructed concept of ‘the wilderness’ as a rightful gift from Judeo-Christian God, colonists viewed American land as being rife for the taking. This perpetuated the persecution of Native peoples and the theft of their lands.

Therefore, not only does Halberstam’s concept of “going wild” or going “into the wild” invoke colonial parallels specifically with regard to the genocide of Native peoples, it also has come to represent a type of white male supremacist privilege of mobility and entitlement. When we consider the idea of going into the wild, we are immediately struck by the Westernized and

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3 Cronon writes that in ‘the wilderness’ “a man could be a real man, the rugged individual he was meant to be before civilization sapped his energy and threatened his masculinity” (Cronon 5).
American trope of the white male adventurer. He who valiantly leaves his family and civilization behind in search of greater wealth/truth/beauty/meaning depending on the time period or genre. This trope has persisted throughout the Western canon from Odysseus to Columbus to Kerouac. But who really has the privilege to traverse these landscapes? If going into the wild were really about radical liberation from oppressive society, why would the ones spearheading this ideology be wealthy white men? These obvious inconsistencies continue to support and fuel the observation that the wilderness is a construction of dominant hegemonic culture and not the antithesis or answer to it. Thus, Halberstam’s call to “go wild”, or to embrace our real unsocialized, uncivilized selves only works to bolster the myth of the valiant white male adventurer and its platform of privilege.

This idea of wilderness as a construction of culture can also clearly be seen in the development of National Parks. As Western civilization spread further across America and the mythic frontier dwindled, a new age of wilderness preservation ushered in. Not only was this concept of wilderness preservation largely perpetuated by the myth of the rugged masculine individual, so was the wilderness that was deemed worthy of preservation. Cronon encourages us to ponder the first and most famous American National parks—Yellowstone Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Rainier, Zion—and consider what made these spaces so worthy of national funding, protection, and pride. They all fit the historical, if not nostalgic, profile of the sublime or the powerful, spaces where strong men might encounter God. As Cronon writes, “less sublime landscapes simply did not appear worthy of such protection; not until the 1940s, for instance, would the first swamp be honored, in Everglades National Park, and to this day there is no national park in the grasslands” (Cronon 2). Grasslands and swamps are no less ‘natural’ or ‘wild’ than mountains or waterfalls, but they are considered less sublime and thus less worthy of
public attention. This is perhaps the most striking evidence of the Western construction of wilderness; it must fit a profile and it must reinforce certain myths about Judeo-Christian tradition and rugged individualism. The National Park, represented in dominant discourse as a form of anti-construction, actually works to actively build a false sense of national identity based on corrupt notions of colonialism and white male supremacy.

This myth of wilderness and its accompanying need for preservation also works to uphold strong ableist notions about who has a right to ‘experience nature’. As I mentioned earlier, the concept of the wilderness already implies and celebrates the idea of the white male adventurer who has the cultural privileges and social liberties to freely leave responsibilities behind. However, this adventurer also implies the need for a certain normative and masculine physicality in order to successfully traverse and explore these landscapes. Therefore, the concept of going ‘into the wild’ alone has clear ableist intentions as it does not take into account how only those with a certain fit and able-body would ever be able to survive or move freely outside of ‘civilization’. This ableist notion of who should have access to ‘the wild’ is also seen in the construction of National Parks and wildlife refuges. In her book *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, Alison Kafer discusses the resistance of wildlife refuge staffs in Rhode Island to build wheelchair accessible trails. Kafer writes, “according to their complaints, both the materials used in such a trail (in this case, crushed asphalt) and the users of such trails (presumably people with wheelchairs and other mobility aids) would be too noisy; birds that nested in that area would be scared away by the trail’s imagined new inhabitants” (Kafer 137). In other words, for the supposed fear of disrupting ‘nature’ too much, people with disabilities are not able to access wilderness trails. While obviously a deplorable policy, this unwillingness to accommodate
disabled people also serves to reiterate how conceptions of ‘the wilderness’ as a place of ‘freedom’ is so flawed as it has only ever been constructed to be a welcoming space for some.

Additionally, this construction of National Parks as the preservation of original, pristine, untouched, virginal land completely ignores, or renders invisible, the fact that peoples inhabited these spaces before white European settlers decided to “preserve” it. Not only do preserved National Parks perpetuate the false myth that before Europeans came the “New World” it was a vacant Eden available for the taking, they also often times require the physical removal of Native peoples from their land. As Cronon states, “the removal of Indians to create an “uninhabited wilderness”—uninhabited as never before in the human history of the place—reminds us just how invented, just how constructed, the American wilderness really is” (Cronon 5). The wilderness as represented through the preservation of National Parks thus represents not only an utter fallacy but also an active erasure of Native peoples and a form of violence against them. Cronon continues, “to protect wilderness was in a very real sense to protect the nation’s most sacred myth of origin” (Cronon 5). This myth of America’s origin story as a virginal open fertile wilderness that European’s discovered is a toxic, violent contagion. No matter how often Halbertstam’s imperative to “go wild” claims to make an anticolonial critique, the mere concept of the wild as an uncivilized space existing outside of Western colonial society accepts European ‘discovery’ as the legitimate origin story of the land now called the United States.

Furthermore, we must recognize that this mythical origin story remains pervasive today from the headlines of U.S. history books to the construction of the United States constitution. Andrea Smith offers an imperative Native feminist critique when she writes “the Constitution's status as an origin story then masks the genocide of indigenous peoples that is its foundation” (Smith 311). Furthermore, the Constitution employs the “colonizing trick”—“the liberal myth
that the United States is founded on democratic principles rather than being built on the pillars of
capitalism, colonialism, and white supremacy. In this way even scholars such as Butler and
Kaplan, who make radical critiques of the United States as an empire, still unwittingly or
implicitly take the U.S. constitution as their origin story, presuming the U.S. nation-state even as
they critique it” (Smith 311). Thus, even the unquestioned acceptance of the word ‘wild’ as it is
defined in the English dictionary by default utilizes these colonial ideas. Furthermore, it
masquerades as a form of conceptual neutrality that is actually several centuries in the making.
We have seen the ways in which the wilderness is a Western social construct that has shifted
with the times to promote white male individualism and colonial projects. Not only was the
concept of the wild, as it is dominantly understood, largely invented by Western culture, it has
also been manipulated to serve as a different cultural symbol at different moments in history.

The shifting perspective on nature and ‘the wilderness’, which disguises itself as a sort of
universal truth has also strongly influenced colonial ideas about gender, race, and human beings.
For example as we map the shift of the Western understanding of nature from “savage” to
“sublime”, we also observe the shift in view of Native Americans. While Native Americans
were condemned in the historical Western colonial canon as savage, demonic, subhuman, with
the explosion of the American environmentalist movement, the grandson of Romanticism, in the
1960s, Native peoples were romanticized and tokenized for what was perceived to be their one-
with-the-Earth Utopian cultures.

So when Halberstam calls for the queer movement to “Go Wild”, they are hardly making
the anticolonial statement they claim to advocate. On the contrary, Halberstam is evoking a
nostalgic social construction that bases its entire premise on the myth of the virgin, untouched,
uninhabited wild landscape. Furthermore, they in effect accept as their origin story the very
history they claim to defraud. Not only does this remarkably ignore the histories of Native Americans (no matter how often Halberstam claims to center them), it also encourages the use of a privilege of entitlement and mobility generally only afforded to wealthy white able-bodied men. Who truly has the privilege to go “into the wild”? While this act may be viewed in the Western canon as the ultimate masculine sacrifice or adventure, it actually it is the ultimate privilege. Only those who have the ability to leave home, to abandon responsibility, and to physically maneuver through space at liberty are capable of even entering “the wild”. Thus, by romanticizing this adventurer trope, Halberstam centers white masculine privilege and promotes the identity of a white, able-bodied, wealthy, colonial male who feels entitled to knowledge and space that does not necessarily belong to him. Therefore, the wild can never succeed in being the space of “queer anarchy” that Halberstam hopes it might be. For “the wild” can never be a space for anticolonial revolution.
“If a lion could speak, we could not understand him”--Wittgenstein

Chapter 2: On the Origins of Colonial Thought: Speciesism/Racism/Sexism and the Feminization of Land

There is a notion in Western thought that humans are the superior species. Moreover, there is a belief in a natural hierarchy among the animal kingdom of which humans remain at the apex. This ideology can be traced back through Greco-Roman antiquity and through Judeo-Christian doctrine. Specifically, the Greco-Roman tradition valued humans over animals because of man’s “intellectual superiority” (Newmyer 514). Steven T. Newmyer writes,

One such early assertion that man differs fundamentally from other species in the nature of his mental capacities is attributed by Peripatetic philosopher Theophrastus to the physician Alcmaeon of Croton. Most famous for his researches on the human senses, Alcmaeon was apparently the first to maintain that while the human being understands (xuniesi), other species merely perceive (aisthanetai) but do not understand, these two capacities being, Theophrastus goes on to note, quite distinct (Newmyer 514).

In other words, early Greek philosopher Alcmaeon stated that since animals could not understand and reason like humans, they were not capable of being equal. Newmyer insists, “it would be difficult to overestimate the significance of Alcmaeon’s observation [of man’s superiority to other animals] in the history of ancient philosophical speculation on animals” as this ideology has persisted well beyond antiquity (Newmyer 513). Perhaps most famously, Alcmaeon’s assertion can be seen directly paralleled in The Old Testament:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:26).

Therefore, there is a long historicized ideology in the Western tradition that humans are superior to, and therefore entitled to rule, the animal kingdom. As Craig Williams argues, the boundary between human and animal “is a central theme in Western culture in general and its formative
Greek and Roman phases in particular. What is more, according to a perspective sometimes known as ‘human exceptionalism,’...humanity understands itself in contradistinction to “nature,” conceived as something to fear and where possible dominate” (Williams 201). Specifically, Greco-Roman classical thought promotes the hierarchical paradigm of the Gods then Man then animals. So where does that leave women? It would appear women lie somewhere between Man and animals along the classical hierarchy. Yes, women are human, but they are not viewed as possessing the intellectual superiority of reason for which the classical Greco-Roman man was culturally elevated. Historical lineage and longevity have legitimized this Western speciesist hierarchy which has, in turn, allowed for the continuation of justifiable exploitation of those deemed lesser than human or under man’s dominion.

Women in classical antiquity were viewed as inherently lesser intellectually and physically and therefore inherently violable. This can be plainly seen in Ovid’s retelling of the myth of Caenis, the title character is described as being justifiably penetrable simply because she is a woman. In the story Caenis, the beautiful daughter of Elatus, is raped by Neptune. After his brutal attack, Neptune tells Caenis he will grant her one wish in compensation. Caenis replies, “The wrong you have done me is great, so I’ll ask you the greatest of favours I can: let me never be able to suffer such wrong again. If you will make me a woman no more your promise will be fulfilled” (Ovid 474). Neptune grants Caenis’ request to cease being a woman so that she may never have to endure the trauma of rape again. Furthermore, Neptune “also bestow[s] an additional power” on Caenis’ body: “the new male body could never be wounded or fall at a sword’s point” (Ovid 474). In other words, Neptune not only turns Caenis into a male body to prevent even the possibility of future rape, but he also makes her male body literally impenetrable to any phallic weapon. As Jonathan Walters describes, in Roman times, “sexual
impenetrability [was] not afforded to everyone, only those who ha[d] the full status of men, 

*viri*” (Walters 37). The *viri* were at the top of the social hierarchy and able to penetrate nearly anyone of a lower status, specifically women, with impunity. Since the lower-class males, or *pueri*, were of a lower social standing than the *viri*, they were also susceptible to penetration by the dominant male class. The one exception was the *praetextatus* or the “freeborn male youth who is not yet an adult man”(Walters 33). Because the *praetextatus* would one day grow up to become a *vir*, they were “naturally desirable, but not to be penetrated” (Walters 34). Although Walters describes this Roman hierarchy “as much a matter of social status in general as it is of ‘gender’” we can still understand this hierarchy to be patriarchal in its structure and value-system (Walters 32). An example of this is that fact that *pueri*, were subjected to sexual penetration by the *viri*, this act was standardly described as “*muliebria pati*, that is, he was defined as ‘having a women’s experience’” (Walters 30). Furthermore, it would have been considered a “nightmare vision of [women] as sexually penetrating and thus dominating men” (Walters 33). In other words, although both men and women were subjected to penetration by the *viri*, the specific gendered and misogynistic language of the social order must be recognized. The *viri* represent the utmost reasonable and logical beings and therefore impenetrable which was held in stark opposition to femininity.

Due to women’s inherent reasonlessness, they are therefore, closer to animals according to Greco-Roman tradition. This can be clearly seen in the animalization of women that occurs in Ovid’s classical Roman text *Metamorphoses*. The text is categorized by countless transformations of humans and Gods into animals. However, there is a clear gender mark to these transformations. In many ways the male characters have some intentionality to their transformations. For example, they are Gods who choose to disguise themselves as animals, such
as Jupiter in the story of Europa. Or, furthermore, since animals represent the absence or loss of reason, when otherwise reasonable or noble men become too emotional or erratic, they are described as animals. Meanwhile, women are either turned into animals by another subject, or they are merely described as being inherently animal-like. Because women are considered inherently reasonless and beneath men in social hierarchy, they are already closer in relation to animals than men. These themes are clearly shown in Ovid’s tales of “Io” and of “Procne and Philomela”. In “Io”, the title-character is transformed into a cow by the God Jupiter to hide her, his mistress, from his wife Juno. Ovid states, “the god, however, anticipating his consort’s arrival, had changed the daughter of Inachus into a snow-white heifer. Even so she was perfectly lovely” (Ovid 36). She remains “perfectly lovely” or in essence practically unchanged by this event; she might as well have been a heifer all along. Her transformation, although an involved physical change, has done essentially nothing to alter the author’s description of her. Furthermore, “she could graze in the daytime, but after sundown [her caretaker would] pen her inside an enclosure and tie her innocent neck with a halter” (Ovid 36). As a heifer, Io is easily controlled by her rapist and his wife; she is under their complete dominion without any way of speaking out against her captors. She is reasonless, she is voiceless, she is an animal.

In the tale of Procne and Philomela the characters are simply compared to animals in a series of revealing similes. When Tereus rapes Philomela “she trembled and shook, poor girl, like a frightened lamb that’s been mauled in a grey wolf’s jaws but let go and is not yet sure of her safety; or like a white dove, escaped on her blood-drenched wings from a hawk, still shuddering, still afraid of the greedy claws that have gripped her” (Ovid 235). There are clear gender roles in the animals to which they are compared. Philomela is a passive and harmless lamb and dove whereas Tereus is a villainous wolf, or a predatory hawk. It is important to note
that before Ovid compares the character of Tereus to an animal, he first describes him as a “vile barbarian”, or as a Roman nobleman who has been overcome by emotion and lost his reason. Meanwhile, Philomela is already an object or a “virgin prize” before the animal imagery (Ovid 235). Regardless of her actions, she remains intrinsically othered, objectified, and therefore already an animal.

Furthermore, Ovid’s story “Orpheus’ Song: Myrrha”, the character of Myrrha envies animals and the wild and therefore is seen as sexually deviant and reasonless. Myrrha is described as a beautiful girl from Panchaea who is afflicted with the “terrible evil” of having incestuous love for her father (Ovid 398). Despite being very desirable, with men from all “over the East...flock[ing] to compete for her hand”, Myrrha only wants her father, and, thus, tricks him into sleeping with her (Ovid 397). When her father realizes what she has done, he vows to kill his daughter, and Myrrha is forced to transform herself into a myrrh tree to avoid death. Besides being an origin myth to explain the plentitude of myrrh trees in Panchaea, the story of Myrrha also has clear examples of the animalization of the feminine. For example, Myrrha is described as stating:

All other creatures can mate as they choose for themselves. It isn’t considered a scandal for bulls to mount the heiffers they’ve sired...and even a bird can conceive her chicks by a mate who happens to be her father. How lucky they are to do as they please! How spitefully human morality governs our lives (Ovid 398).

In this passage, Myrrha exhibits envy for nature and the animal world, which allows the type of deviant sexual behavior she desires. Here we see the animal world as being free from human reason or morality; it is lawless, it is the wilderness. Myrrha would rather live in this animal world than live in a civilization with such strict prohibitions. In a society that so highly valued reason and dominion over animals, as the classical Romans surely did, Myrrha would be an abomination; a woman too wildly emotional and free from discipline. This passage can also be
understood as a condemnation of women’s sexuality as being animalistic and therefore subject to control. Because Myrrha envies the animal world where apparently sexual deviancy and lack of rationality is the norm, she is dominantly understood as subhuman, and, therefore worthy of domination.

Not only is there a clear animalization of women in Ovid’s text, but also a distinct feminization of land and nature. This feminization of land is imperative to analyze especially when we consider the colonial context from which Ovid was writing. Ovid was born in 43 BC and grew up during the end of the Roman Republic and into the beginnings of the Roman Empire. This is a time categorized by great colonial and imperial expansion of Rome into territorial holdings in Mediterranean Sea, Europe, Africa and Asia. Because women were already understood as inherently reasonless, passive, and penetrable, the comparison of land to a woman is a clear colonial tool. If land is described and understood culturally as being similar to a woman in its beauty and fertility, then it is also logically similar to a woman in that it is available for the taking and open to colonial conquest.

For example, in Ovid’s story “Orpheus’ Song: Myrrha” land is metaphorically feminized when he writes, “the land of Panchaea may boast of her fabulous riches in balsam, cinnamon, spices, frankincense sweated from trees and her various scented flora, so long as she keeps her myrrh to herself” (Ovid 397). The land of Panchaea was a mythical Southern island described as existing somewhere beyond Arabia. In this story, however, the land is described as a seductive, glamorous, and fertile woman. We can understand the line “as long as she keeps her myrrh to herself” as referring to the character of Myrrah’s sexually deviant ways. In other words as long as Panchaea preserves her chastity and goodness, and does not share her sexuality, she will remain a beautiful land. This has clear connotations to the importance of feminine virginity as a
tool of eroticism. Panchaea was understood as a fertile, exotic, and untapped paradise. Therefore, it was also understood as a beautiful virgin woman rife for the taking. This language is no accident. It is a deliberate tool to incite colonial conquest of land through the analogy to the legitimacy of rightful sexualized violence against reasonless women.

Land is again anthropomorphized in the story of “Europa”. In the story of “Europa”, the continent’s namesake, the princess Europa of Sidon is described as being raped and abducted and taken back to Rome by the god Jupiter disguised as a bull. Ovid describes, “Jupiter, gradually edging away from the land and away from the dry shore...bearing the spoils of his victory out in mid-ocean. His frightened prize looked back at the shore she was leaving behind, with her right hand clutching one horn and her left on his back for support, while her fluttering dress swelled out in the sea-breeze” (Ovid 90). In this myth, the character of Europa is a human but she is still metaphorically linked to the foreign land of Sidon, a land the Romans eventually conquered. Sidon was clearly culturally viewed as a desirable land open to Roman conquest and the myth of Europa works to legitimize the eventual conquest of this land. Sidon is described as “lush” and “golden” and Europa as a “prize” and a pleasure “he could hardly wait for” (Ovid 90). Therefore, the land of Sidon is feminized through its connection to its beautiful and inherently rapeable citizen; Europa. There is a clear connection between Jupiter’s rape and abduction of Europa and the desire to conquer the fertile land of Sidon. Europa represents a proxy for the land of Sidon; she is a beautiful and fertile woman who is captured and raped by a Roman God. Similarly, the land of Sidon is seen as a beautiful and fertile land that is eventually invaded and conquered by the Roman army. There is justification for the seizure of the land on the basis of the abduction and rape of Europa.
Although the “Europa” and “Orpheus’ Song” myths predate Ovid’s time, it is imperative to consider the way he tells them and the context in which they are being retold. In a time of great colonial expansion, what is the significance of characterizing foreign land as a woman? Furthermore, what is the significance of the rape of these women? I would argue that the feminization of land legitimizes its availability for capture and development. Since women are beneath men in reason and status, according to Roman logic, the comparison of land to a woman is politically strategic. The land becomes inherently beautiful and violable and open to the colonizer’s will; just like a woman. Furthermore, contemporarily, the continent of Europe is named after the figure of Europa and her image is currently printed on all European Union currency. Even today, the female character of Europa remains an anthropomorphized symbol for fertile, beautiful, and conquered land.

This ancient colonial tactic of subordinating women while also feminizing land is seen justifying and repeating itself again in the European invasion of the Americas. Like the land in Ovid’s myths, America is frequently likened to a woman, and more specifically, a Native American woman. In this engraving by Theodore Salle circa 1580 entitled America, the “New World” is depicted as a sexualized, nude, reclining Native Woman. This
woman is meant to be an allegory of America; beautiful, fertile, and available for the white man’s taking. This image clearly has a colonial agenda at its core; if the land is feminine, then it is rightfully controllable. This feminization of land is again observed in Ralph Hamor’s first-person account (ca. 1615) of the abduction of Pocahontas. Hamor was one of the first English colonists to ‘settle’ or ‘steal’ the land now called Virginia. In his account entitled *A True Discourse of the Present State*, Hamor writes his personal description of the New World and his encounters with Native peoples. First, Hamor describes the land of America when he states “I can assure you no country of the world affords more assured hopes of infinite riches” (Hamor 847). Hamor then describes the abduction of the native Pocahontas, the daughter of chief Powhatan, and how she was coerced onto a boat under false pretenses and held in English possession at ransom. Hamor states, “And so to Jamestown she was brought [and] a messenger to her father forthwith dispatched to advertise him that his only daughter was in the hands and possession of the English, there to be kept till such time as he would ransom her with our men, swords, pieces, and other tools treacherously taken from us” (Hamor 804). Not only was Pocahontas subjected to coercion and captivity; she was also subjected to forced religious conversion. Hamor describes, “Powhatan’s daughter I caused to be carefully instructed in the Christian religion, who after she had made some good progress therein renounce publicly her country idolatry…” (Hamor 845).

Through Hamor’s account we can understand Pocahontas as a more recent iteration of Europa. Like in the engraving *America* already suggests, Pocahontas, as a Native woman, was understood as a symbolic proxy for the land. She was subject to seizure and subordination just like the land was subject to theft and conquest. Pocahontas’ abduction by the Europeans can be

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4 It is important to mention that this account was meant to encourage English people to move to Virginia and therefore, can be understood as propaganda.
seen as a manifestation of classical representations of rape and conquest of land in Western European culture. Because Pocahontas was a woman, she was seen as subject to abduction for political gain. This is also fascinating to consider in the context of colonial America. Not only was land subject to seizure, but so were the indigenous women of that land. This can be viewed as a continuation of a long-standing trope of Western colonial force: from imperial Rome with the story of Europa, to colonial America with the story of Pocahontas.

Of course with the story of Pocahontas and the colonial conquest of America, it is not merely gender at play, but also race and racialized violence. Native peoples are constructed as Other and as again being set in opposition to white reason and white civilization. Hamor, in defense of the colonial project to steal land from, and subjugate, Native peoples, writes:

> For what is more excellent, more precious, and more glorious than to convert a heathen nation from worshipping the devil to the saving of knowledge and true worship of God and Christ Jesus? What more praiseworthy and charitable than to bring a savage people for barbarism unto civility? What more honourable unto our country than to reduce a far-disjoined foreign nation under the due obedience of our dread sovereign, the King’s Majesty? What more convenient than to have good seat abroad for our ever-flowing multitudes of people at home? What more profitable than to purchase great wealth which most nowadays gape after overgreedily? All which benefits are assuredly to be had and obtained by well and plentifully upholding of the plantation of Virginia (Hamor 839).

This language, though deplorable, is also strategic. By describing Native peoples as “savages”, and barbarians, white colonists can construct an idea of Native peoples as being subhuman, closer to animals, and therefore, rightfully subject to dominion.

These racist descriptions of Native peoples were also highly gendered. Strategic narratives were constructed about Native women to promote the colonial agenda. On the one hand there was the stereotype of the “Indian Princess”, exemplified by Pocahontas, who was
beautiful and would risk her life to save the white man she loved. On the other is the stereotype of the “squaw” who was ugly, “slavish and servile” behaving “just as savagely as their ignoble male counterparts” (Barbie 63). What emerged was a comparable version of the Christian virgin/whore dichotomy; “while Euro-Americans condemned squaws, they canonized Indian ‘princesses’” (Barbie 63). Due to the Christian patriarchal notion of women, “the reaction to the modern role of traditional woman tells us that she is not to speak, lead or have vision” (Martin-Hill 111). Western ideals of gender, beauty, and class were projected onto Indian women, and what resulted were reductive stereotypes that continue to marginalize and silence Native women.

The Western idea of rightful domination of animals and nature must not be validated as the inevitable result of ‘human nature’. Rather, this ideology must be contextualized as a specific and culturally constructed framework that we merely take for granted as a normative version of truth. It is useful to examine the depiction of animals in myths from different traditions to highlight the ways in which our cultural norms have been constructed and could have been constructed differently. Specifically, numerous Native American traditions stand in stark contrast to Western ideological approaches to animals and view animals as our kin. In other words, there is not this notion of a hierarchy of organisms in many Native nations traditions. Instead, there is a notion of interdependence and mutual understanding of nature on which the survival of humans depends. In this way, many Native American traditions were actually pursuing the mutualistic relationship that the inventors of Crittercam claimed to be pursuing. In certain Native American ancient tales, contemporary poems and novels, and a living oral tradition animals are represented “not only as our closest relatives but as powerful

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5 In reality, Pocahontas was not even a “princess” as “she grew up being trained to do the same jobs as all other women in Powhatan Indian society” (Rountree 16).
beings who deserve our respect” (Williams 202). Furthermore, in a Mohawk elder’s recent
telling of traditional stories concerning the foundation of the Iroquois confederacy, the figure of
Atata’hrho is depicted as “a mean man, a witchcraft man, a sorcerer,” one whose fundamental
spiritual problem was that “he wanted to control everything, even the animals” (Williams
202). Although Western culture has produced its fair share of its version of the ‘super villain’
whose goal was similarly world domination, the Western super villain’s fundamental problem
would never be described by Western culture as wanting to control animals. Controlling animals
would have already been a given, something not inherently villainous. This is a clear and
profound difference to the ways in which Western culture has constructed its animal-human
relationships as based on ideas of rightful control and domination.

In conjunction with, and perhaps because of this egalitarian view of species, ideas around
the status of women were also profoundly different in many Native cultures. Native societies
were largely egalitarian and matrilineal. As Leslie Silko describes, “because Laguna Pueblo
cosmology features a female Creator, the status of women is equal to the status of men, and
women appear as often as men in the old stories as hero figures” (Silko 70). Jaimes and Halsey
affirm that many “traditional Native societies were never “male dominated”” and that Native
women had an important “role in making key decisions, not only about matters of peace and war,
but in all other aspects of socioeconomic status” (Jaimes and Halsey 315-316). Gender was not
the only aspect of pre-contact life that differed. Concepts of morality and judgment of character
were also very different than the colonial understanding. As Silko explains the “old-time
people” believe “a person’s value lies in how that person interacts with other people, how that
person behaves toward the animals and the earth” (Silko 61). She continues to describe how
there was no stigma attached to sexuality and women were not condemned for it. She goes on to explain, “sexual inhibition did not begin until the Christian Missionaries arrived” (Silko 67).

Once Christian colonizers discovered Native peoples they “realized that in order to subjugate indigenous nations, they would have to subjugate women within these Nations” (Smith 378). Christian colonization is another key theme in the study of Native American peoples, and particularly Native American women. Native cultures were forced to change and “the transformation of matrilineal culture into a patriarchal culture was a gradual process, which began with European contact” (Martin-Hill 110). Andrea Smith describes the colonial indoctrination of Christian patriarchal values through the boarding school system in which “attendance was mandatory, and children were forcibly taken from their homes for the majority of the year” (Smith 379). In these schools Native children were encouraged, if not forced, to forget their traditional ways and adopt the accepted Western ideals. It is important to recognize that the purpose of discussing Native traditions is not to present a false sense of essentialized or exoticized utopia; but rather to provide a counter-narrative to a story we have all been largely submerged and complicit in. It is important to recognize that there are other modes of thought that do not believe in subordination as inevitable or natural. Here we can see again how the Western construction of the wilderness erased the narratives of Native peoples who occupied the land long before Western conquest. Furthermore, the invented fallacy of the wilderness also worked to silence any cultural value systems that opposed or differed from Christian values as they were seen to have been rightfully overthrown or conquered.
“Who painted though, the lion, tell me who?”--Chaucer

Chapter 3: Not Just a Piece of Meat: Animalization of Women in Popular Culture

The animalization and marginalization of women seen in Greco-Roman antiquity and later Western tradition prevails today in the ways we view women as objects for the male subject’s pleasure. In her book Pornography of Meat, Carol Adams critically analyzes the ways in which contemporary United States media reduces and objectifies women into literal pieces of meat. Adams specifically analyzes the dehumanization of women that occurs in American advertisements. She explains, “advertisements are never only about the product they are promoting. They are about how our culture is structured and what we believe about ourselves and others” (Adams 14). For example, in this Hustler cover from 1978, which is featured in Adams’ book, an image of a sexualized woman is stuffed into a meat grinder. Perhaps more shockingly, this image is meant to titillate rather than repulse its viewers. The image of womanhood is being shown as something that should be mechanically broken down and consumed for the pleasure of the male subject. Adams writes, “a subject is not only male but human” and “manhood excludes nonhumans and women” (Adams 40-47). Furthermore, “a subject is not only female, but not human” and “showing women with nonhumans or showing them as animals is one way to convey that women are animal-like, less than human, unruly, needing to be controlled” (Adams 46-47).

Because we live in a culture that views humans as superior to all other living species, there is a legitimized sense of natural hierarchy which justifies violence against those deemed lesser. Adams writes, “inequality is clearly a part of our relationships with the other animals, otherwise
we could not experiment upon them, display, hunt, kill, and eat them” (Adams 18). Furthermore, since women exist somewhere between white men and nonhumans on the Western traditional hierarchy, the purposeful conflation of women with animals allows us to be directly subordinated and reasonably controlled. Adams illuminates, “before someone can be consumed or used, she has to be seen as consumable as usable, as a something instead of a someone” (Adams 14). In other words the active animalization of women in the media can be seen as an intentional project to make women seem subhuman and therefore liable or worthy of unjust and violent treatment.

Pornography of Meat was published in 2003 but the same treatment of women in the media has prevailed throughout the successive decade and into today. This 2009 Arby’s ad features two hamburgers being represented as a woman’s breasts. This 2014 Playtex ad shows a beaver swimming with the caption “A clean beaver always finds more wood”; an obvious comparison of a woman’s vagina to a nonhuman beaver. Perhaps more baffling is this 2010 PETA ad featuring Pamela Anderson’s sexualized body and the caption “All Animals have the Same Parts: Have a Heart, Go Vegetarian”. What is fascinating about this image is it is purporting to support animal rights by simultaneously objectifying women’s bodies. Obviously PETA understands that sex sells and naked women get the masses’ attention, but doesn’t this message go completely against the notion of species equality the ad is supposedly promoting? How can we view species as equal when we still don’t view women as anything
more than sexual objects? In this moment it is clear that the subjugation of women in the Western culture in which we live is inherently tied to the subjugation of nonhuman animals. Although their statement claims to call for equal treatment of animals and humans, PETA through this image seems to be saying that cows are somehow more worthy of respect than women. This is a flaw in that organization’s logic. Obviously the ways in which we generate, legitimize, and protect hierarchies in species justifies the ability to subordinate members of our own species. The framework of animals as lesser can only be understood and dismantled in tandem with deconstruction of sexism. The two cannot be disengaged from one another.

Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize that the media’s dehumanization of women of color is even more violent as it is charged with racial stereotypes. Specifically, racial stereotypes about Native American women prevail today and plausibly contribute to the rates of sexualized violence against them. As described in the previous chapter, Native women’s bodies were the site of colonization and violence during the European conquest of America. Racialized stereotypes regarding Native peoples as savage, uncivilized, and subhuman were used to justify this type of violence and seizure of land. Today, the dehumanization and subsequent animalization of Native peoples, and specifically Native women, continues through the colonial and genocidal project. Native women are still depicted through the stereotypical princess/squaw dichotomy. They are either fetishized in the dominant consciousness as beautiful, exotic, sexual creatures or remained understood as lowly, dirty savages. Andrea Smith describes Native
Tongue (1999), a pornographic film framed as a documentary directed by a self-described Cherokee pornographic actress Hyapatia Lee. In this film, Lee exploits her own culture to conform to fetishized stereotypes of Native women as animals. Andrea Smith describes how Lee prefaces each scene with, “I’m mostly Cherokee Indian. I was taught to worship nature and honor my traditional religion. They knew [past tense] how connected everything is” (Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation” 103). She continues, “Because we don’t see ourselves as superior to animals, we can learn from them,” which is followed by a couple having sex “doggy-style”(Smith, “Spiritual Appropriation” 104). In this example, stereotypes about Native cultures being one-with-the-earth are reinforced and again condemned as deviant, while Native women are yet again set apart as animalistic and therefore subhuman. Not only does this work to turn Native cultures into fodder for ridicule, it also dehumanizes Native women, depicts them as hypersexual, passive, submissive, and therefore legitimizes violence against them.

These misrepresentations have had catastrophic effects on the lives and well being of Native women. Because Native American bodies have been depicted as submissive, reasonless, and compared to animals, they are considered “‘dirty’, sexually violable and ‘rapable’. Furthermore, as Smith writes, “the rape of bodies that are considered inherently impure or dirty simply does not count” (Smith, Conquest 10). In other words, because Native women are falsely understood to be primitive, passive, and sub-human, there is plausibly less of a stigma

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6 It is important to note that the use of the past tense to describe Native Peoples or Nations further implies the stereotype that Native peoples are antiquated, if not extinct. This belief that Native peoples only exist in the past helps to fetishize and romanticize them while also perpetuating the continued colonial erasure of Native peoples land and histories.
attached to violating them. Native American women are “twice as likely to be victimized by violent crime as women or men of any other ethnic group. In addition, 60 percent of the perpetrators of violence against American Indian women are white” (Smith, Conquest 28). Furthermore, as Smith describes, “within the United States, because of complex jurisdictional issues, perpetrators of sexual violence can usually commit crimes against Native women with impunity” (Smith, Conquest 31).

I would argue that contemporary racial stereotypes about Native women and these catastrophic rates of violence against them are no coincidence. Not only does the dominant media and culture encourage violence against Native women, when depicting Native women as inherently sexual and subservient, but loopholes in government jurisdiction also allow these crimes to occur without consequence. As Sarah Deer so rightly acknowledges “rape is more than a metaphor for colonization—it is a part and parcel of colonization” (Deer 150). She continues, “sexual assault mimics the worst traits of colonization in its attack on the body, invasion of physical boundaries, and disregard for humanity” (Deer 150). The categorization of rape as an agent of colonization implies that aspects that contribute to and encourage rape are also part of the colonial agenda. Therefore, it is apparent that stereotypes about “Nativeness” and “Native womanhood” are a part of a ongoing colonial project meant to misrepresent and exploit the identities of Native peoples and encourage violence against them. Whether the images include white women dressed up in sexualized versions of stereotypical Native costume or actual Native women playing up their “Nativeness” to the camera, the white dominant culture is given the agency to define Native womanhood. Through these popular images, tired and
reductive tropes surrounding Native women are perpetuated as ideals and sold as commodities. Therefore, Nativeness is turned into a sexual fetish for the white male gaze. This is a continuation of a colonial pattern that encourages sexual violence against Native women, and ultimately aims to erase Native culture.

Furthermore, while white women are often portrayed as passive pornographic objects or dead meat as exhibited earlier, women of color, and specifically Black women, are portrayed as aggressive wild beasts who need to be contained, controlled, and tamed through violence. As Cathryn Bailey explains:

Racist mythology about the greater physicality and emotionality of people of color was part of the rationalization for the enslavement of Africans, and part of what continues to justify various oppressive practices. It is expressed in stereotypes about the sexuality of women and men of color, and the supposed natural athleticism of Blacks. It is as apparent in the disproportionate attention to controlling the fertility of women of color as in the racist assumption of criminality of Latinos and Blacks. In short, almost wherever one locates racial stereotype one finds the assumption lurking that people of color are somehow more bodily, more emotional, further away from the reason that is said to distinguish "man" from animal. In fact, Alice Walker has argued that there is an important distinction in the sexist portrayals of Black and White women, "where white women are depicted in pornography as 'objects,' black women are depicted as animals. Where white women are depicted as human bodies if not beings, black women are depicted as shit" (Bailey 3).

As Bailey reminds us in her passage, it bears emphasizing that the rise of reason originally attributed to the Roman male specifically, is now culturally attributed to whiteness as well as maleness. It is imperative to recognize the intersecting oppressions that allow certain women to be viewed and treated differently than others and allow white
women to benefit from the subjugation of women of color. Whereas it is a cultural given that white women’s bodies are passive and pure, black women’s bodies must be actively and violently forced into submission. In other words, while white women’s bodies tend to be dehumanized through objectification and the comparison to nonhuman meat, black women’s bodies tend to be dehumanized as dangerous animals that must be surveilled and controlled. Therefore we get images of black women contained in cages like the bookcover of *Jungle Fever* from 1991, or depicted as exotic and dangerous “African” animals like this Suzanne de Lyon ad from 1993. When black women are not obviously being whitewashed in the media, they are depicted in images meant to reinforce and rejudge their blackness, their otherness. bell hooks writes, “Iman’s new image appeals to a culture that is eager to reinscribe the image of black women as sexually primitive. This new representation is a response to contemporary fascination with an ethnic look, with the exotic Other who promises to fulfill racial and sexual stereotypes” (hooks 124). A most jarring example of the ways in which black women’s bodies are rendered subhuman and meant to evoke harmful and stereotypical images of a wild jungle is in the 2009 Harper’s Bazaar fashion spread featuring Naomi Campbell entitled “Wild Things”. In it, Campbell is shown wearing animal print and paralleling the positionality of the actual animals in the photographs. Perhaps most disturbing is an image in which she is shown playing and relating with monkeys while a white male ranger figure stares on in apparent benevolent curiosity and
wonderment at witnessing, or potentially capturing, nature. Not only is Campbell’s body considered closer to monkeyness than white male humanness, but she and her nonhuman primate counterparts are represented directly as the fodder for the colonial white male gaze and curiosity.

From this analysis it is clear that we must not only move away from the animalization of women, but we must also move beyond a mindset of human-centricness. Specifically, we need to not view humans, and specifically wealthy white male humans, as superior and entitled to access all other living things. This point goes back to my introductory thoughts on Donna Haraway’s analysis of Crittercam. Based on internalized Western Judeo-Christian cultural belief, humans consider ourselves at the top of a natural species hierarchy. Therefore, we feel entitled to surveil and control animals and ‘the animal world’ as we deem fit. Furthermore, these internalized ideas of natural hierarchy, affect the ways humans negotiate hierarchy within our own species. Furthermore, images are constructed to reinforce these hierarchies and keep certain humans under colonial control. While white men are often named at the top of the human hierarchy, we also have to recognize that white women too perpetuate, and benefit from, white racial supremacy. Although seemingly innocuous, images in popular media are responsible for large-scale cultural indoctrination. They are how ideas are ingrained and proliferated. We need to think about these images as deliberate cultural and colonial tools. And we need to realize who has the power to construct these images.
In the *Wife of Bath’s Prologue* by Geoffrey Chaucer, the Wife of Bath refers to the Aesopian fable of the painting of the lion. In this fable, a painter, using a live lion as a model, paints a picture of a man killing a lion. When the painting is shown to the lion, the lion objects and reminds the painter that there are many instances when the role may be reversed and the lion might kill the man. In other words, the lion would paint a very different portrait of a lion than a human would. The idea here, interestingly evoked by the Wife of Bath, is that whoever has the power to paint the picture has the power to shape perspective. The Wife of Bath exclaims, “By God! If women had written stories...they would have written more wickedness of men than all the men since Adam could put right” (Chaucer 89). In a moment of early feminist protest against the sexist climate of her time, the Wife of Bath compares women to the lion and states that if they had the ability and power to construct narratives, women would condemn men instead of the other way around.

In Kent Monkman’s painting *Artist and Model* (2003) we see this type of subversion of imagery. The painting, reminiscent of the style of 19th century romanticism, features a nude white cowboy pinned to a tree by arrows as an indigenous artist in a traditional headdress and pink heels paints him. Monkman is employing various levels of disruption and critique in his painting. He deliberately uses a painting style reminiscent of 19th century romanticism and the Hudson Valley School, a genre dominated by white male painters painting the ‘wild’ American landscape, and inserts his indigenous perspective. Instead of the white man painting the landscape and constructing images of
indigenous peoples, as has been the historical norm in Western art history, Monkman reverses the roles. Traditionally in American History we are taught about Native Americans through images constructed by white men. For example, George Catlin was a white American painter who famously created portraits of Native peoples and the “Old West”. Monkman is quoted as saying,

> Catlin and others were obsessed with capturing peoples who wouldn’t exist in the future. Museums have contributed to this idea...As a kid I would go down to this museum in Winnipeg and see indigenous cultures represented in this perfect state. This is what we were supposed to be. And then I'd step out onto the streets and see skid row and the fall out of colonization” (Brooks 1).

By the cowboy’s feet is fallen dry plate camera, having been broken from an apparent tomahawk attack. These were the types of cameras used by the likes of Edward C. Curtis⁷, in the late 19th century to ‘document’ Native peoples and the dwindling American frontier. By portraying the camera as destroyed, apparently by Native force, Monkman reveals the dry plate camera to be a white man’s colonial tool. Therefore, he rejects the dry plate camera as the normative historical standard of dictating and defining Native culture in favor of portraying a Native artist painting and constructing his image of a cowboy. In this way he occupies the colonizers space but reverses the encounter.

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⁷ Edward C. Curtis was a white American photographer and ethnologist famous for producing *The North American Indian* series, a compilation of nearly 40,000 photographs of Native American peoples in 1907
Furthermore, he plays with the cultural trope of Cowboys and Indians by queering the images of both. The white cowboy, while visually terrified, is also clearly sexually aroused by the male Indian artist. This can be read as an ironically humorous commentary on the compulsory heteropatriarchy white Europeans enforced unto Native communities. It is also perhaps a reference to the harmful colonial claim often made by popular media that oppressed groups like, or get off on, being dominated. The cowboy is trapped, and yet, he loves it (I swear!). Meanwhile, the Indian artist, otherwise known as Monkman’s alter-ego Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, is depicted as wearing a mix of stereotypical male Native dress and what appears to be performative Western feminine attire. The pink heels, although dominantly understood as gendered symbols of frivolity, appear dignified and empowered. In this way Monkman subverts a familiar image of Cowboys and Indians by centering femininity and reminding us how constructed the image really is.

Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, is a character featured repeatedly in Monkman’s artwork. He states,

I created her in my paintings 10 years ago...I was looking at a George Catlin painting, who, as an artist, was a flamboyant painter who'd paint himself into his work. I was addressing his work and thinking of ways to challenge this artistic persona, who was living inside these paintings and following traditions of the 19th century. I wanted to create an artistic persona that could rival that of Catlin. So [Miss Chief] was created to reverse the gaze. She looks back at European settlers” (Brooks 1).

Miss Chief is also meant to pay tribute to the Two Spirit tradition in some Native American cultures which embrace people who embody both masculine and feminine genders. Despite
being deeply respected in Native cultures, Catlin wrote in his journal about how Two Spirited peoples were “one of the most disgusting things he'd encountered” (Brooks 1). Monkman’s inclusion of Two Spirit references and queer iconography serves to disrupt colonial concepts of heteropatriarchy while also bringing Native narratives out of static history and into the contemporary. We are reminded that the images we are force-fed have a history of encouraging oppression. They are meant to perpetuate colonial and hegemonic ideas and actions. Kent Monkman’s paintings reveal how these ideas are not ‘natural’ or ‘true’ or even ‘inevitable’; they are colonially constructed. In this way, Monkman’s Artist and Model embodies what it means for the lion to paint back.
Conclusion:

There is something I need to confess: I do scientific research on animal models. *C. elegans* to be more specific. I am writing this because I am not sure how to feel about the fact that I have, in essence, written a thesis that challenges the notions of speciesism in our society and yet, I participate in work that actively privileges humanness over other animal existences every day. The research I assist with (through the lab of Dr. Kathleen Susman) is on the effects of fungicide (Mankozeb) exposure on the dopaminergic systems of the nematode *C. elegans*. *C. elegans* are essentially transparent microscopic worms. Basically, every week I knowingly expose these model organisms to varying doses of Mankozeb and essentially hope (for the purposes of my research and the potential of future publication) that the *C. elegans* display significant deficiencies in dopamine-mediated behaviors. In other words, I am basically giving *C. elegans* a version of Parkinson’s Disease. In fact, that is a large factor in why this research is funded in the first place: its implications for human illness and specifically for Parkinson’s disease.

The nematode *Caenorhabditis elegans* (*C. elegans*) has been established as an important animal model or surrogate for studying neurodegeneration in humans. This is because although *C. elegans* are, according to dominant culture, seemingly inconsequential organisms, they actually share 35% of their genome with humans. Furthermore, their neuronal systems are very simple and thus far more easily manipulated and studied than the human brain. Plus, and this goes without saying, due to their miniature (and non-human-like) status, humans feel far more comfortable allowing the performance of tests on *C. elegans* than, say, on humans or other mammal models. This leads us to a very important and relevant discussion on the ways in which anthropocentricism infects scientific, and specifically, biological fields. I do not mean to suggest
that I am necessarily against the use of animal models or animal testing in science. What I do mean to convey is that I believe that based on the Western colonial constructs and beliefs I have explored in this thesis, science tends to have an anthropocentric bias that often goes unquestioned. This is especially problematic in that science is dominantly understood to be objective and invested in empirical observations rather than bias and therefore, the biases of science are rendered culturally invisible.

I must first say that although I am a neuroscience student and a neuroscience researcher, I have no qualms arguing that the natural sciences, are a historically oppressive and colonial discipline. Besides being historically white male dominated, the natural sciences have also been used historically to justify white supremacy, gender inequality, and racialized violence. However, I think there is the potential for radical science that thinks critically about our world and the role of humans in it. This being said science and, specifically, neuroscience, as it exists today has a large problem with anthropocentrism. By this I mean the natural sciences as we know them today stem largely from Western Judeo-Christian tradition that believed in humans as the superior species with rightful dominion over all other animals. Therefore, despite the fact that these disciplines are ostensibly based off of objective empirical observations, they are in fact imbued with this pro-human bias. Furthermore this causes humans, and even human scientists, to

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8 As Steven a Farber writes in his paper “U.S. Scientists' Role in the Eugenics Movement (1907–1939): A Contemporary Biologist's Perspective”, “It was Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin, who coined the term “eugenics” in 1883 while advocating that society should promote the marriage of what he felt were the fittest individuals by providing monetary incentives...While initially this desire was manifested as the promotion of selective breeding, it ultimately contributed to the intellectual underpinnings of state-sponsored discrimination, forced sterilization, and genocide” (Faber 1)
drastically misunderstand evolution. Humans are animals and are therefore as much the product of evolution as any other species (yes, even *C. elegans*). As the evolutionary biologist Steven Jay Gould famously suggested, evolution is a bush, not a tree, or a ladder\(^9\). In other words, evolution does not represent a hierarchical structure of which humans are at the apex.

Furthermore, humans are not the achievers of any predestined evolutionary goal. They simply evolved to best fit their environment, exactly like *C. elegans* evolved to fit theirs. Furthermore, if evolutionary success is measured by how successful a species is at reproducing, then there are far more successful species than humans on Earth, evolutionarily speaking. So why do humans, and especially human scientists, who should conceivably know better, continue to center humanness like it’s some sort of superior ecological existence? Here, Cronon’s analysis of wilderness is again relevant. He wrote,

> This, is the central paradox: wilderness embodies a dualistic vision in which the human is entirely outside the natural. If we allow ourselves to believe that nature, to be true, must also be wild, then our very presence in nature represents its fall. The place where we are is the place where nature is not. If this is so—if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God’s natural cathedral—then also by definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us. To the extent that we celebrate wilderness as the measure with which we judge civilization, we reproduce the dualism that sets humanity and nature at opposite poles. We thereby leave ourselves little hope of discovering what an ethical, sustainable, honorable human place in nature might actually look like. (Cronon 5).

In other words, based on the construction of Western thought, of which science is a large part, humans fundamentally exist in opposition to nature and never as a part of nature. This explains why science has had such a hard time accurately situating humans in the ecological continuum:

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because dominant white Western culture simply views nature, and, thus, all other species, as the natural/logical other. Feminist scholar Donovan supports this notion when she states,

> From the cultural feminist viewpoint, the domination of nature, rooted in postmedieval Western male psychology, is the underlying cause of the mistreatment of animals as well as the exploitation of women and the environment...Carolyn Merchant recognizes that ‘we must reexamine the formation of a world view and a science that, by reconceptualizing reality as a machine rather than a living organism, sanctioned the domination of both nature and women (Donovan 47).

In other words, the question of science is integral to the question of cultural domination. This is because science is so dangerous in that it is seen as logical and as truthful by society. Therefore, the findings of science are largely accepted without question. Because science is, in essence, a discipline borne out of a specific Western cultural history, then its findings will no doubt support this history and bias. Therefore, if anthropocentricism is supported by dominant discourse, as we have seen, then it is subsequently supported and reinforced by science. And, thus, the cycle continues.

This anthropocentric bias in science is perhaps best investigated with regard to the concept of intelligence. It is a problem that comes up again and again in philosophy, sociology and neuroscience: what is intelligence? And who/what has it for that matter? Furthermore, how does our own conception of intelligence influence the ways in which we justify otherness? What we really need to unpack is that intelligence is a construction, in precisely the same vain as wilderness: it sets up clear threshold of “otherness” and privileges specific identities. This construction has allowed for intelligence to be defined by the dominant culture as pertaining exclusively to humanness. For example it has been argued in scientific journals that “learning speed cannot be used as a measure of intelligence--because the honeybee’s speed at colour learning is not just superior to human infants, but to all vertebrates that have been studied”
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(Chittka and Niven R995). In other words, learning speed, which objectively seems like a fair marker of ‘intelligence’ was essentially omitted from the scientific discussion of intelligence simply because honey bees showed superior learning speed skills to most vertebrates and even to human infants. As Chittka and Niven rightfully point out, there may be plenty of valid reasons to not include learning speed as a criteria for intelligence, but the fact that large-brained mammals do not, in fact, top the learning-speed-charts should not be one of them. Basically, intelligence is already expected to pertain mostly, if not exclusively, to humans and thus data is skewed to support this point.

We see this same kind of data manipulation with regard to defining and quantifying ‘intelligence’ within our own species. For example the IQ and SAT tests, two widely accepted standardized measurements of intelligence in the United States, have historically privileged certain individuals over others. For example, when the IQ test was made popular in the United States during World War I, Lewis Terman and Robert Yerkes, two executives in the American Eugenic Society, originally promoted it. Rich Gibson writes in his article “The Fascist Origins of the SAT test” that the IQ test of Terman and Yerkes “was designed to prove the genetic advantage of races they had already identified as superior” (Gibson 2). Furthermore, this type of biasing of results continues today. Intelligence remains constructed to largely reflect whiteness as the norm. As Native scholar Jack D. Forbes argues, “What standardized tests surely do is to force upon states, localities, and regions a collectivist ‘testing culture’ that negates the unique heritages, dialects, and values of a particular area” (Forbes 2). In other words, intelligence, as it is currently measured, is already constructed to reflect certain people from certain cultures and therefore exclude people who do not fit that profile.
I don’t mean to suggest that the concept of intelligence is problematic simply because it is a social construct. Of course we live in a world full of social constructs and many are arguably helpful to combatting injustices. In addition, I think some socially agreed upon marker of learning ability, often equated with intelligence, is not inherently harmful. Contrarily, I believe people with learning deficits or developmental disabilities, as decided by some marker, should be allotted extra support to help better facilitate their learning processes. However, what I am troubled by is the fact that intelligence is understood as a pure scientific “truth” rather than something culturally constructed. This is dangerous because intelligence is then understood as an even playing field, when it is clearly still working to privilege humanness and, specifically, white humanness. Therefore, anthropocentrism, or speciesism, as it is employed in scientific discourses supports and reifies colonial ideologies.

In short, the speciesist framework, which sets humans up as the superior species and therefore the rightful dominators of nature, ingrained in Western tradition, encourages and legitimizes colonial violence. Through understanding Greco-Roman myth as well as Judeo-Christian tradition we can begin to reveal parts of the origins of this belief and the ways in which contemporary culture remains steeped in harmful ancient ideas. We can investigate the ways in which Judeo-Christian beliefs and Western attitudes influence the ways in which the wilderness is largely understood in dominant culture today. We can understand how constructed conceptions of the wilderness as a space of freedom and discovery have strong colonial implications that promote ideals of white masculinity and white supremacy. Through analyzing Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, it is clear that the animalization of women has legitimized violence against them, and, additionally, that the feminization of land has deemed terrain available.

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10 For example, “child abuse” and “sexual harassment” are arguably useful and necessary social constructions invented in the 20th Century.
violable, and rife for the taking. We must develop a new cultural model not based on the promotion of a natural hierarchy of species, land, ability, race and gender. We must understand that Westernized tradition, though the hegemonic norm, is not the ‘natural’ or even inevitable way of thinking.

As Andrea Smith states, “ecofeminist theorists have argued that there is a connection among patriarchy’s disregard for nature, for women, and for indigenous peoples. It is the same colonial/patriarchal mind that seeks to control the sexuality of women and indigenous peoples that also seeks to control nature” (Smith 391). We have seen how the Crittercam, though seemingly harmless, stems from this same colonial/patriarchal mind that feels entitled to surveil and supervise nature. We have seen this colonial mind exhibited in the depictions of women as animals or pieces of meat in popular culture as ways to encourage ideas of women as being inherently sexual or inherently passive depending on intersecting racial stereotypes. We have also seen how dominant mythology and stereotypes of Native women as being closer to nature likely contributes to a culture that essentially allows catastrophic rates of sexualized violence to occur against them.

Smith continues, “one major complaint colonizers had of Native peoples was that they did not properly control or subdue nature” (Smith 391). Because Western colonial tradition dictated that humans, and specifically male humans, had the right to dominion over nature because of their intrinsic reason, cultures that did not view themselves as dominant over nature were subsequently dubbed reasonless. For example, John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts Bay from 1630-1634 declared, “America fell under the legal rubric of vacuuum domicilium because the Indians had not ‘subdued it’ and therefore had only a ‘natural’ and not a ‘civil’ right to it” (Smith 391). However, as Andrea Smith reminds us,
Unfortunately for the colonizers, nature is not so easy to subdue or control. As we find ourselves in the midst of an environmental disaster, it is clear that no one can escape the environmental damage. Colonizers attempt to deny this reality by forcing the expendable people, the Canaanites of this country, to face the most immediate consequences of environmental destruction” (Smith 391)

Therefore, it is not a coincidence that “100 percent of uranium production takes place on or near Indian land” (Smith 391). Furthermore, it is no accident that “Native reservations are often targeted for toxic waste dumps” and that “military and nuclear testing also takes place almost exclusively on Native lands” (Smith 391). In other words, what is now becoming undeniable, even to the staunchest supporters, is that this colonial mind that believes that humans have rightful power over nature is fundamentally wrong. Colonial subjugation of land, supported by capitalism and imperialism, all bolstered by white supremacy, has caused an immense ecological disaster. A disaster that, if continued, will likely have a profound negative impact on all of humankind. However, in the meantime, some humans are still being targeted, by the colonial mind, as more disposable and therefore more worthy to experience the brunt of the damage. And these seemingly “disposable” people are also the same peoples who were once mocked and brutally subjugated for honoring nature.

This continuation of thought that believes that humans have dominion over nature also necessarily believes humans, and specifically, white male humans, are the most evolutionarily fit of all species. Perhaps the most ironic aspect of all is that the supposedly most evolutionarily evolved and fit individuals according to the colonial mind, also, in essence, are in the process of ecologically destroying humankind. Evolutionary fitness is defined by proliferation, and adaptation, not destruction. Therefore, white supremacy, patriarchy and colonialism cannot logically represent evolutionary progress but rather maladaptive regression. Hence, colonial logic can be understood as evolutionarily and fundamentally unfit to survive the power of nature.
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Naomi Campbell in Harper’s Bazaar

Artist and Model (2003) by Kent Monkman