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GEOGRAPHIES OF RECLAMATION: WRITING AND WATER IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN, 1855-2009

by

Chad Duane Wriglesworth

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

July 2010

Thesis Supervisors: Associate Professor Laura Rigal
Professor Christopher Merrill

ABSTRACT

Generations of literary critics have claimed that geography plays a prominent role in the production of Pacific Northwest literature; however, no one has meaningfully interpreted the literary and cultural history of the region in relation to United States water policy and the Bureau of Reclamation's transformation of the Columbia River Basin. This dissertation argues that the literary and cultural history of the Pacific Northwest becomes coherent only when the environmental, cultural, socio-economic and generational histories of this watershed are placed at the center of scholarly inquiry.

The project maps and traces ways that local and national narratives from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century worked alongside the federal government to transform the Columbia River Basin into an awaiting "Promised Land" of socio-economic progress, while writers and activists since the 1960s have used bioregional prose and poetry to spark a revival of localized counter-reclamation that stresses the importance of social activism and the attempt to find more sustainable methods of inhabiting the Pacific Northwest. The role that literature has played in the federal claiming and local reclaiming of the Columbia River Basin is argued and illustrated through an interdisciplinary and site based approach to literary studies that draws from conversations in environmental history, religious studies, cultural geography, visual arts, and Native American studies.

The chapters investigate canonical and virtually unknown sources of regional literature, while offering historically and geographically informed investigations of key sites within the Columbia River Basin that were transformed by the federal government over a one hundred and fifty year span of time: the Yakima Valley (1855-1920s), Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works (1930s-1940s), and The Dalles Dam and Celilo Falls (1950s-1960s). The project concludes by revisiting these sites through recent prose and poetry (1970s-2009), tracing how the poetic line, in particular, has been used by regional writers to document the socio-economic, environmental, local and

international consequences of the federal reclamation process. After mapping historical and geographical links between selected poems and places throughout the watershed, I explore how site specific installations of poetry as public art on the Methow and Spokane rivers have been used by local community groups to transform and re-create stretches of water in large tributaries of the Columbia River Basin.

By putting the environmental, cultural, socio-economic and generational histories of the Columbia River Basin at the center of my investigation of Pacific Northwest literature, this dissertation ultimately invites readers to actively reclaim and transform the Columbia River Basin on intellectual, local, and practical levels, not only for a more complex understanding of the Pacific Northwest's literary and cultural history, but in order to find more localized and sustainable methods of inhabiting western watersheds.

Abstract Approved: ______________________________
Thesis Supervisor

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GEOGRAPHIES OF RECLAMATION: WRITING AND WATER IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN, 1855-2009

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Chad Duane Wriglesworth

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English in the Graduate College of The University of Iowa

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Professor Christopher Merrill

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The University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

PH.D. THESIS

This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

Chad Duane Wriglesworth

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in English at the July 2010 graduation.

Thesis Committee: ______________________________
Laura Rigal, Thesis Supervisor

____
Christopher Merrill, Thesis Supervisor

____
Linda Bolton

____
Adalaide Morris

____
Malcolm Rohrbough

To
William D. Wriglesworth
(1945-1997)

Languages meander like great rivers leaving only oxbow traces over forgotten beds, to be seen only from the air or by scholars.

Gary Snyder, *The Practice of the Wild*

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Over the years, many members of my family have offered financial support and places to stay in the Pacific Northwest during visits to archives and sites in the Columbia River Basin. I appreciate their support, generosity, and hospitality. My deepest gratitude is extended to my wife Crissa, and our two children, Luke and Hannah. Their support, sacrifices and ongoing encouragement for my work have proven to be immeasurable and go beyond words. I am truly grateful to be a part of their lives.

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INTRODUCTION

Generations of literary critics and historians have claimed that geography plays a prominent role in the production of Pacific Northwest literature. The popularity of reading the region's literature in relationship to place was evident at mid-twentieth century, when Stewart H. Holbrook (1893-1964), a self-proclaimed low-brow historian of the Northwest, gathered prose and poetry for *Promised Land: A Collection of Northwest Writing* (1945). The anthology was distributed by the McGraw-Hill Book Company and contained work from dozens of writers from Washington, Oregon and Idaho -- an "immense and sparsely populated" corner of the West that Holbrook insisted was "the least known subdivision of the United States" (xiii). For easterners curious about life and landscape in this vast and remote territory, Holbrook was certain that the region's mountains, rivers, tidal flats, forests, deserts and wheat fields were best described by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century settlers who arrived to claim and later write about the Pacific Northwest as "their Promised Land" (xiii).

In decades that followed, literary critics, historians and publishers continued to depict and market the Pacific Northwest as an edenic place where geography and imagination co-mingle to produce a unique literature grounded in the land itself. In 1968, for example, Robin Skelton gathered work for *Five Poets of the Pacific Northwest: Kenneth O. Hanson, Richard Hugo, Carolyn Kizer, William Stafford, David Wagoner*, and noted how these writers were all "deeply affected by their physical environment" which made it increasingly "obvious that, in this area, the landscape must have a powerful influence upon the art created within it" (xvi). The following year, paying homage to Holbrook and his popular anthology, journalist Ellis Lucia gathered work for *This Land Around Us: A Treasury of Pacific Northwest Writing* (1969) and proclaimed that an unexamined and "fertile region of big sky, tall timber, high mountains, rushing rivers and pounding seacoasts" had produced "the most literate section of the continent" (xviii). In subsequent decades, writers and cultural critics such as William Everson

(1976), Roy Carlson (1979), Edwin R. Bingham (1983), Sanford Pinsker (1987), Lars Nordström (1989), Bruce Barcott (1994), Paul Hirt (1998) and Nicholas O'Connell (1998, 2003) all continued to insist that geographic features and climate uniquely influenced the way that Northwest writers work within and imagine place.[1] In fact, after interviewing twenty-two writers for *At the Field's End* (1998), O'Connell confidently concluded that "landscape and the human response to it served as the unifying feature of this literature" (*Fields* 8).[2]

While critics and historians since the mid-twentieth century have insisted that geography and climate defines Pacific Northwest literature, no one, until very recently, has moved beyond highly generalized or aesthetically framed investigations to even attempt to identify *specific* geographical locations that have catalyzed the region's cultural identity. For decades, critics have claimed that tall timber, rushing rivers and rugged mountains have shaped the region's literature, but a lack of critical consensus on any prominent or unifying features of the landscape was evident as early as 1946, when more than a dozen well-known writers from the Pacific Northwest met at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, for an event titled: A Writers' Conference on the Northwest. The participants, comprised of leading historians, literary critics and journalists of the day, gathered to identify the defining features of the region's place-based literary culture;

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[1]William Everson, *Archetype West: The Pacific Coast as a Literary Region* (Berkeley, CA: Oyez, 1976), Carlson, Roy, ed. *Contemporary Northwest Writing* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 1979); Edwin R. Bingham, "Pacific Northwest Writing: Reaching For Regional Identity," in *Regionalism and the Pacific Northwest,* William R. Robbins, Robert J. Frank and Richard E. Ross, eds. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 1983), 151-174; Sanford Pinsker, *Three Pacific Northwest Poets* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1987); Lars Nordström, *Theodore Roethke, William Stafford and Gary Snyder: The Ecological Metaphor as Transformed Regionalism* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell Interna, 1989); Bruce Barcott, ed., *Northwest Passages: A Literary Anthology of Pacific Northwest Poetry from Coyote Tales to Roadside Attractions* (Seattle, WA: Sasquatch Books, 1994); Paul W. Hirt, ed., *Terra Pacifica: People and Place in the Northwest America and Western Canada* (Pullman, WA: Washington State U, 1998); and Nicholas O'Connell, *On Sacred Ground: The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 2003).

however, after three days of presentations, quarrels and rebuttals, they left the conference empty-handed, unable to agree on even a tentative list of features that shaped the artistry of the region.[3] The problem surfaced again in 1972, when Robert Cantwell, a well-known novelist and critic, concluded his cultural-historical study of the region titled *The Hidden Northwest* by stating that despite the popularity of attempting to ground writers in their environments, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century voices from the Pacific Northwest had failed to communicate "any sharply defined characteristics that identify them as belonging to the region" (280-281). A similar assertion was made the following year, when historian Richard W. Etulain participated in a symposium titled "The Pacific Northwest as a Cultural Region" (1973). While most historians continued to insist that Northwest writers from the nineteenth and twentieth century were and still are defined by place, Etulain claimed that "from the perspective of a *literary* historian" there was no past or present "group of writers in the Northwest whose writings reveal common characteristics which may be expressive of their regional background" ("Comment" 159).

While a cursory assessment of the reading and marketing of Pacific Northwest literature as a product of geography reveals some problematic trends and patterns, it also suggests that this interpretive tradition can be reclaimed, renewed, and reinvigorated with methodological approaches that are tuned to more materialist readings of regionalist literatures. Currently, the problems and limitations of claiming that Pacific Northwest literature is woven into geography in some supposedly unique way are strikingly obvious. First, despite there being more than fifty years of discussion on the relationship between Northwest literature and place, there remains a lack of scholarly consensus as to what *specific* geographical features even matter to people of the Pacific Northwest, or for that

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[3] The proceedings of A Writers' Conference on the Northwest were published as the following collection of essays: V.L.O. Chittick, ed. *Northwest Harvest: A Regional Stocktaking* (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1948).

matter, what environmental features might be or should be of interest to the writers of Pacific Northwest literary history.

Secondly, and more problematic, is the lack of literary critics who have sustained and contributed to ongoing discussions of Pacific Northwest literary history. Truth be told, in recent years, the most rigorous and meaningful attempts to read the region's literature in relationship to place have not been produced by literary critics, but by a wide variety of urban planners, environmental and regional historians. This pattern is evidenced by an array of literature infused works by Carl Abbott (2001), John M. Findlay (2006), Raymond D. Gastil and Barnett Singer (2010), and Katrine Barber and William G. Robbins (forthcoming, 2010), all of which use prose and poetry to support historical claims about the ongoing socio-economic and ecological transformation of the Pacific Northwest.[4] The dearth of literary criticism on the Pacific Northwest is perhaps best evidenced by Susan Kollin's recent article, "North and Northwest: Theorizing the Regional Literatures of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest," an essay written for the reference volume *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America* (2003). As expected, the article surveys selected writers from the region and offers a few suggestions about re-theorizing the literary Northwest; however, after drawing almost exclusively on the views of regional and environmental historians, Kollin insists that the Pacific Northwest still occupies "a marginal position" in North American literary studies (429). Indeed, when comparing the number of literary histories written about New England or the South, it is not difficult to concur with historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, who

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[4]Carl Abbott, *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); John M. Findlay, "Something in the Soil? Literature and Regional Identity in the 20th-Century Pacific Northwest," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 97 (2006): 79-89; Raymond D. Gastil and Barnett Singer, *The Pacific Northwest: Growth of a Regional Identity* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland and Co., 2010); and Katrine Barber and William G. Robbins, *Nature's Northwest: The North Pacific Slope in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson, AZ: U of Arizona Press, forthcoming 2010).

observes that most cultural critics still believe that western "regional history is where one goes for a nap" (84).

Literary histories of the Pacific Northwest have been produced and sustained almost entirely by regional historians, suggesting that literary critics have yet to explore the cultural significance of the region's history, or the way in which literary voices have been shaped by the industrial development of the Northwest's ecosystems.[5] Literary critics who write about the region's artistry still tend to focus on individual authors such as Theodore Roethke and William Stafford, or on the influence of prestigious creative writing programs, rather than on particular geographic locations that have somehow touched the lives and works of writers. Consider Nicholas O'Connell's *On Sacred Ground: The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature* (2003), the most recent study of the region's place-centered literature. The title of the work suggests that geographical inquiry has shaped his research; however, once readers move past a marketable title they are met with traditional categories such as the "Romantic Movement," "Realistic Writing" and "The Northwest School," gaining minimal insight into ways either geographic or historical transformation has affected the literary voices of the Pacific Northwest. While there is nothing inherently wrong with more traditional or author based approaches to reading a region's literature, recovering the historical and geographical reference points that have shaped the Pacific Northwest's diverse body of

---

[5]Two important works of literary criticism that emphasize the importance of geography and ecology in Pacific Northwest literature should be noted: Laurie Ricou's *The Arbutus / Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 2002), uses principles of bioregionalism to offer a series of "interpretive files" that map the geographic-cultural characteristics of this region. In addition, Timothy Gray's *Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim: Creating a Counterculture Community* (Iowa City, IA: U of Iowa P, 2006) maps and traces transnational influences between the West Coast and Japan to read Snyder's place-centered prose and poetry. Two recent anthologies are also worth noting: Craig Wollner and W. Tracy Dillon, eds., *A Richer Harvest: The Literature of Work in the Pacific Northwest* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 1999), and Judith Roche and Meg McHutchison, eds., *First Fish, First People: Salmon Tales of the North Pacific Rim* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1998).

place-based literature requires methods that are more attentive to the interplay of socio-economic, environmental, and cross-cultural changes that have taken place and continue to take place, in the Columbia River Basin -- the region's most contested and transformed waterway.

In recent years, the most thought provoking attempts to revise the reading of Pacific Northwest literature in relationship to place have come from regional historians such as William G. Robbins and Richard W. Etulain, followed more recently by a work of literary criticism from an emerging scholar named Hilary L. Hawley. In an article titled "Narrative Form and Great River Myths: The Power of Columbia River Stories" (1993), Robbins notes a dynamic linkage between federal watershed politics and regional literature. He tentatively asserts that the stories, speeches and journalism produced in and about the Columbia River have shaped and continue to participate in the ongoing economic, cross-cultural and environmental re-creation of the watershed. These speculations were then followed by thoughts from Etulain, who, twenty-five years after insisting that there were no unifying geographical features in Pacific Northwest literary culture, revised his claim in an essay titled "Changing Cultural Inventions of the Columbia River" (1999). In this important essay, Etualin surveys more than a dozen late-nineteenth and twentieth-century novels written in and about the Pacific Northwest and speculates that such works might be used as "barometers" to measure the "traumatic" socio-economic and ecological changes that have taken place in the Pacific Northwest since the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century (127). More recently, Hilary L. Hawley, a graduate student of English at Washington State University, has written a dissertation titled "Water/Power in the Pacific Northwest" (2006), which uses ecofeminist theory and writings from the environmental justice movement to interrogate the federal reclamation and management of the Columbia River as interpreted through a diverse collection of Native American and non-Native writers. By turning to the transformative history and geography of this watershed, these recent works reclaim and

recover both canonical and obscure texts of several genres by reconnecting Pacific Northwest writers and their works to the ongoing re-creation of the Columbia River Basin.

My dissertation, "Geographies of Reclamation: Writing and Water in the Columbia River Basin, 1855-2009," builds upon this incipient historical-literary turn to the Columbia River Basin by more fully mapping and demonstrating how the literary and cultural history of the Pacific Northwest becomes coherent only when the socio-economic, environmental, cross-cultural and generational histories of this massive and radically transformed watershed are put at the center of critical inquiry. In chapters focused on highly specific historical moments situated in localized space, I trace ways regionalist and nationalist writings and writers, from the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, worked alongside the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers to support and celebrate the transformation of the Columbia River Basin into an irrigated and electrified Promised Land -- even as a diverse range of Native American and Euro-American writers and activists, in a steady and often recursive process, have used prose and poetry to expose the consequences of federal reclamation by calling readers to actively reclaim and restore the health of the watershed through more localized and sustainable methods of inhabiting the Pacific Northwest.

The Columbia River is the largest and most expansive geographical feature of the Pacific Northwest. It is typically thought of as a single body of water that begins in the Canadian Rockies and ends at the Pacific Ocean. Beginning in Canada, the Columbia does, in fact, descend through Washington State, where it joins the Snake River and turns west to the Pacific Ocean -- dividing the states of Washington and Oregon along the way. Thinking about the Columbia River as a single line of water that travels over 1,200 miles in route to the Pacific Ocean may be normative practice, but it fails to consider how rivers actually work within a larger matrix of currents, more often described as a bioregion or a drainage basin. When mapped from a bioregional perspective, the

Columbia River begins at 2,650 above sea level and descends an average of two feet per mile, gathering water and energy from hundreds of tributaries and creeks en route to the Pacific Ocean. Together, this network of rivers, creeks and vessels drains 259,000 square miles of land and delivers more water to the Pacific Ocean than any other river system in North America. From this perspective, then, the Columbia River is not a single current, but an immense source of ecological and cultural power that is sustained by a massive and transformative web-work of lines that define the region's ecology, economy, politics and sense of artistry.

In the early-twentieth century, the Columbia River Basin's steep descent and immense flow caught the attention of the Bureau of Reclamation (1902), an extension of the U.S. Department of the Interior that was established to harness and distribute water for purposes of irrigation and settlement in seventeen arid and semi-arid western states. Originally, federal water reclamation projects focused on irrigating lands west of the 100th meridian, where annual rainfall averages below 20 inches, the minimal amount required for farming without irrigation. Early in the twentieth century, the federal government saw economic potential in the volcanic-rich soil of semi-arid portions of Washington State and used tributaries of the Columbia River Basin to construct the Yakima Irrigation Project (1905) and Okanogan Irrigation Project (1905), a network of irrigation canals that pushed "back the desert with the magical touch of water" (Corning 302). Within a decade, the engineering efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation had transformed Washington into a so-called edenic space of settlement by manipulating water to re-create the semi-arid Yakima and Okanogan valleys into some of the most agriculturally productive regions in the United States.

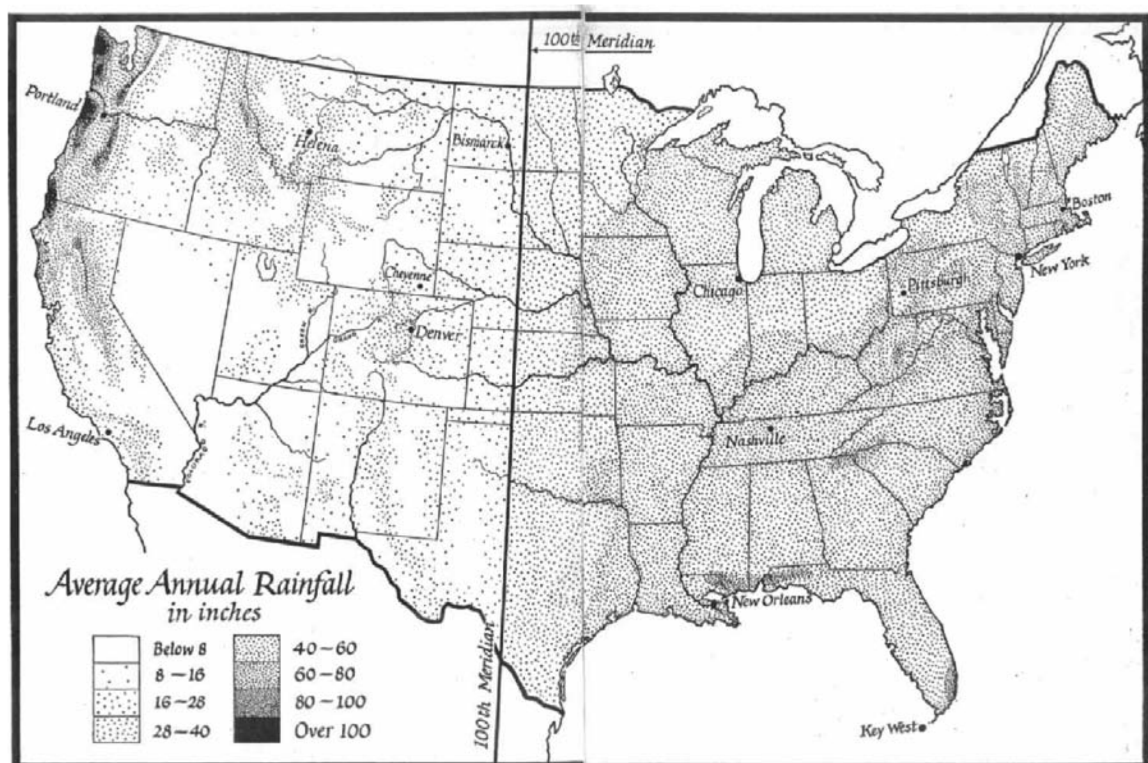

Figure 1. Map of Annual Rainfall in the West Beyond the 100th Meridian. Wallace Stegner, *Beyond the Hundredth Meridian: John Wesley Powell and the Second Opening of the West* (1954).

The Bureau of Reclamation also recognized that the Columbia River Basin is unique among western watersheds. It covers a massive area -- roughly equivalent to the size of France -- but it also occupies and contributes to a diverse ecological system of mountains, forests and deserts that receive anywhere from 6 to 110 inches of precipitation per year. By the 1920s, the Columbia River Basin's rapid decent and potential to provide a seemingly endless supply of water throughout an otherwise semi-arid landscape, caused the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers to revise the management plan for the watershed by calling for the construction of dams on the mainline river. In 1929, with the onset of the Great Depression, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed the construction of ten multi-purpose dams on the mainline Columbia, federal monuments of concrete that would use the harnessed river to irrigate

semi-arid lands, increase inland navigational routes, and most importantly, to generate hydroelectricity for regional and national economic interests.

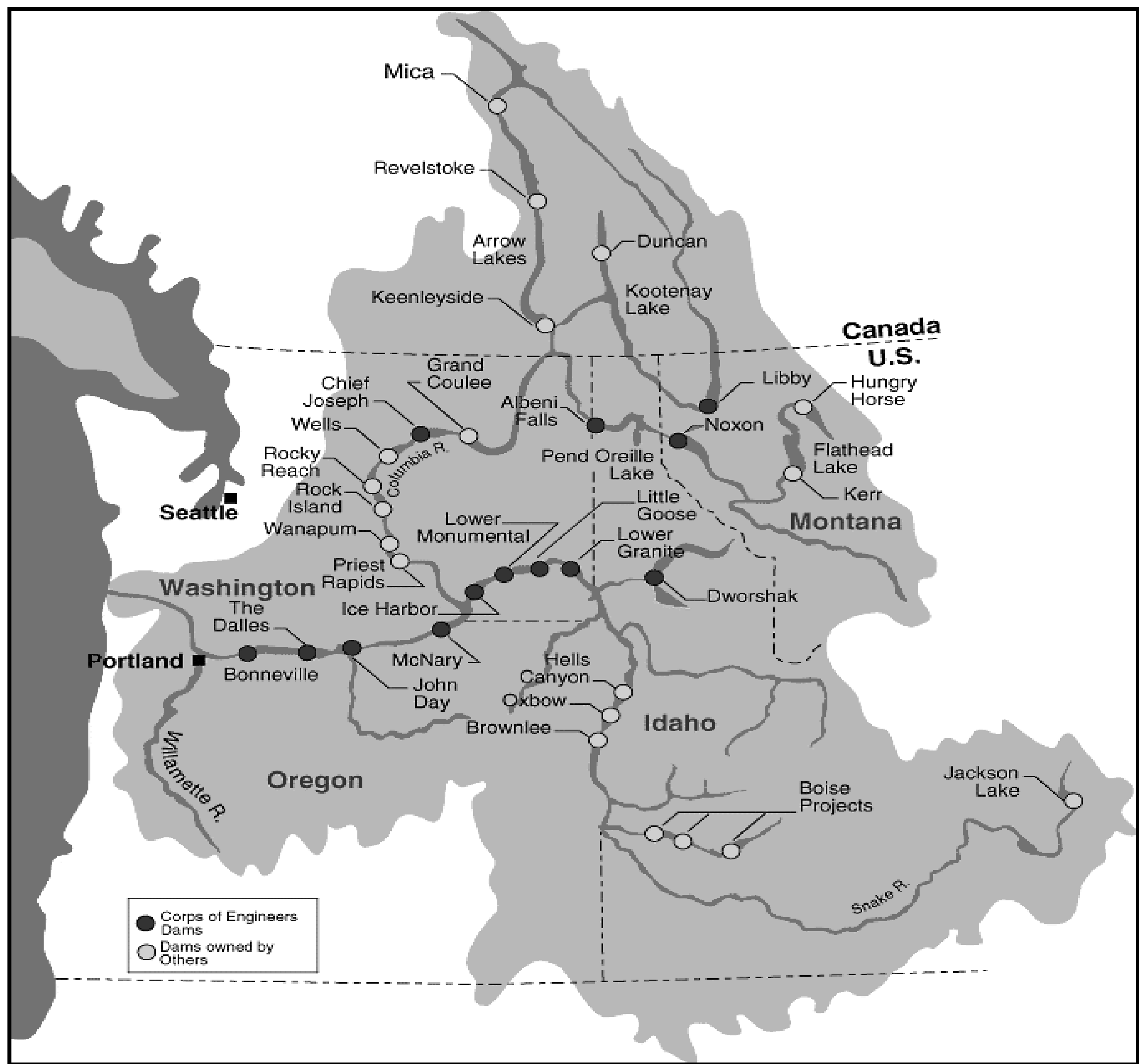

Figure 2. Map of Major Dams in the Columbia River Basin. Washington State Department of Ecology.

The construction of hydroelectric dams on the mainline Columbia began with Rock Island Dam (1929) and increased exponentially during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal Administration with Bonneville Dam (1937) and Grand Coulee Dam (1942).

These federal projects provided jobs to thousands of displaced Great Depression laborers and supplied irrigation and electricity to Pacific Northwest homes and industries. With the onset of World War II, however, followed by the Cold War era, the federal management plan for the Columbia River was revised again. Following the bombing of Pearl Harbor (1941), the U.S. Government used the power of the Columbia River to establish Hanford Engineer Works, a top-secret site of the Manhattan Project (1942-1945) that produced materials for atomic weaponry detonated on Japan in 1945. During the Cold War, federal reclamation efforts pressed onward when the Army Corps of Engineers called for additional nuclear reactors at Hanford, as well as McNary Dam (1954), Chief Joseph Dam (1955) and The Dalles Dam (1957). These were not the only projects completed. During the 1950s, hydroelectric and navigational dams were constructed along the mainline Columbia River and Snake River at a rate of one to three a year, the last of which were completed on the Snake River during the 1970s.

Today, with fourteen hydroelectric dams on the mainline Columbia River alone, the watershed has become what historian Richard White calls an “organic machine,” the most technologically manipulated river system in the world, a force of natural and human energy that produces more hydroelectric power than any other watershed in North America (*Organic* 108). Dams on the mainline Columbia and Snake rivers have changed the ecology, culture, and economy of the Pacific Northwest, but as environmental and legal historian Charles F. Wilkinson, author of *Crossing the Next Meridian: Land, Water and the Future of the West* (1992) explains, these dams are only “the tip of the iceberg” within a complex history of uneven socio-economic transformation that changed the Columbia River Basin from a free-flowing river system into a sequence of slack water reservoirs harnessed for power. Wilkinson writes:

> In the entire Columbia watershed, there are now seventy-nine hydroelectric projects with a capacity of 15,000 megawatts or more. Thirty of these are federal dams, which collectively comprise the federal Columbia River Power System. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Throughout the basin, counting dams for

> irrigation and other purposes, there are more than 450 dams, many of which have no fish passage facilities. The Columbia and Snake rivers have become the most highly developed river system in the world, supplying more than 80 percent of the Northwest's electrical energy. (198)

Federal reclamation projects such as Bonneville, Grand Coulee and The Dalles Dam have provided inhabitants of the Columbia River Basin with numerous benefits: including thousands of jobs, affordable electricity, irrigation, flood control and assurances of national security. However, the rapid and uneven development of the watershed has also come with high social and environmental price tags, particularly for Native Americans, who have depended upon key salmon fishing sites for biological sustenance, economic stability, and religious practices.

When the water intake gates of Bonneville Dam closed (1937), indigenous fisheries at Cascade Rapids were flooded; four years later, construction at Grand Coulee Dam (1941) blocked seventy percent of the Columbia's salmon spawning grounds, severing migrations to Kettle Falls and the Spokane River -- primary salmon fisheries for the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Spokane Tribe of Indians. Despite federal assurance that remaining Native American fisheries would be protected, Celilo Falls, the last and most productive indigenous fishery on the mainline Columbia was inundated by The Dalles Dam in1957. This ten mile stretch of channels and rapids was the central salmon fishery for the tribes and bands of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Indians, and a place recognized as one of the oldest continuously inhabited communities in North America. Dams on the Columbia and Snake rivers have not only dislocated indigenous peoples, inundated key cultural and economic sites of power, but they have also damaged the ecological health of the watershed, a fact evidenced by the "decline of the annual [salmon] runs from roughly 10 to 16 million in the pre-industrial era to 2.5 million by the late 1970s," with one species, the Coho, being declared extinct on the Snake River in 1986 (Lee 98).

The socio-economic, ecological, and cross-cultural consequences of reclaiming the Columbia River Basin for federal purposes have not gone unrecognized by Euro-American and Native American citizens of the Pacific Northwest. By the 1970s, only forty years after the federal reclamation of the Columbia River was revised to include the construction of hydroelectric dams and nuclear reactors, regional writers were starting to question and criticize the federal management of the Columbia River Basin. Indigenous tribes and bands of the watershed reasserted their treaty rights on the river while countercultural publications such as *CoEvolution Quarterly* (1973) and *Planet Drum* (1974) began to mobilize Euro-American and Native-American communities to reclaim and restore western watersheds damaged by the federal reclamation process. Turning to the image of indigenous peoples for cultural and political guidance, countercultural organizations -- led by white Euro-Americans -- became a spawning ground for bioregional theory and practice, a blend of social thought, artistry, and political action that insists people and places are not disconnected, but inextricably bound within the watersheds or “life places” they inhabit (Berg and Dasmann 218). While the federal government continued to define and map regions by state and national political boundaries, bioregionalists worked to reclaim regions locally by re-mapping the ecological and cultural lines of territories through the permeable boundaries of watersheds.

Proponents of bioregional theory and practice insist that watersheds damaged by the federal reclamation process can be restored through local activism, community building and attempts to realign or even supplant national management policies. According to environmental activists Michael Vincent McGinnins, Freeman House and William Jordan:

> The key role of bioregional restoration is the building of human community, the self-definition of which is extended to include the larger biotic community. Place-based ecological restoration can provide the shared experience, knowledge and ritual necessary to such an undertaking. This is not a solitary experience, but rather

> lends itself to group effort and even toward celebration and festival. Bioregional restoration must not only deal with the historical degradation of ecological process due to human practices but with the artificial boundaries that separate the inhabitant from his or her own local habitat, and with the variety of values represented by human residents. (215)

Pacific Northwest literature written since the 1960s has been defined by principles of bioregional theory and practice, ideologies that have emerged from the watershed in response to the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin. Since the late 1960s, the bioregional movement has evolved from a West Coast, grassroots, countercultural initiative, into a deliberate and well-organized attempt to reclaim western watersheds according to the concerns of local communities. By the 1980s, Native American and Euro-American writers and activist-artists were effectively using prose, poetry and non-traditional visual forms of artistry to work toward the ecological, cultural and economic restoration of the Columbia River Basin.

Given the cross-cultural, literary and environmental significance of the Columbia River Basin, one might conclude that scholarly investigations into the watershed are diverse and comprehensive. However, until quite recently, this was not the case. As historians William L. Lang and Robert C. Carriker observe, until the 1990s, the history of the Columbia River was characterized by decades of "bibliographic drought," consisting of a handful of books that could be kept "in a smallish bookcase" (3-4). This pattern changed, however, when regional and environmental historians began to delve into western watersheds, making the Columbia River a sudden and popular region of scholarly inquiry. Projects such William Dietrich's *Northwest Passage: The Great Columbia River* (1995), Richard White's *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (1995) and Carl Abbott's *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Culture in the Pacific Northwest* (2001), have surveyed the socio-economic, cultural, and environmental histories of the watershed from the eighteenth century to the present. At the same time, site based studies such as Paul C. Pitzer's *Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream* (1994), Katrine Barber's *Death of Celilo Falls* (2005), and Michele Stenehjem

Gerber's *On the Homefront: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site* (1992), have mapped the historical and geographical transformations of specific sites caught up in the federal reclamation process. On a more localized level, the growing significance of the Columbia River Basin is further evidenced by the establishment of the Center for Columbia River History (1990), a consortium of the Washington State Historical Society, Portland State University and Washington State University, Vancouver. Since its founding, the organization has worked to collect oral histories, promote public programming and collaborative research, which has led to several public conferences and publications such as *A Columbia River Reader* (1992) and *Great River of the West: Essays on the Columbia River* (1999). This growing scholarly and public interest in the watershed "comes directly from the realization that the [Columbia River] has been an extremely unifying feature in the Pacific Northwest" (Lang and Carriker 11).

In turning to the Columbia River Basin as my primary site of literary and cultural investigation, my intent is not to reclaim intellectual territory from regional and environmental historians, but to revise the practice of writing Pacific Northwest literary history by mapping and demonstrating how and why the federal reclamation and localized counter-reclamation of the Columbia River Basin has produced an unrecognized literary history of regional, national, and international importance. Tracing the reclamation of the Columbia River Basin through literary and historical sources requires an interpretive methodology that can trace and map the interplay between the watershed, writers, and cultural works produced in and about the region. In recent years, literary critics committed to exploring how prose and poetry are involved in the ongoing representation and re-creation of place have used maps to recover how literature is

embedded within a palimpsest of materialist history that not only documents places, but also transforms how regions are inhabited.[6]

Working from a geographically-centered perspective that focuses on the Pacific Northwest, historian Dan Flores notes the need for cultural critics to experiment with methods for writing localized and highly specific histories of place. In an essay titled "Place: An Argument for Bioregional History," Flores calls scholars to resist the traditional impulse to write "wide geographic generalizations in shallow time" and to experiment with bioregional methods that will enable critics to analyze" deep time in a single space" (40). As Flores explains:

> Bioregionalism as a modern social movement ought to be interesting to environmental historians in its own right. But it is not merely its focus on ecology and geography but its emphasis on the close linkage between ecological locale and human culture, its implication that in a variety of ways humans not only alter environments but also adapt to them, that ties it to some central questions of environmental history inquiry. Whereas the history of politics and diplomacy and (sometimes) ideas might may be extracted from the natural stage and studied profitably, the kinds of subjects that attract contemporary historical study – legal, social, gender, ethnic, science, technology, and environmental issues – literally cannot be examined without sophisticated reference to place. (35)

Narrative and poetic accounts of the Pacific Northwest make a tremendous contribution to studies of cultures, geography, and literary history, particularly when texts written about and emerging from the Columbia River Basin are read from a standpoint that is attentive to the progression of federal incursions into the Pacific Northwest, as well as to

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[6] For representative examples of this emerging form of scholarship see: Kent Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing and the Sense of Place* (Iowa City, IA: U of Iowa P, 1993); Rick Van Noy, *Surveying the Interior: Literary Cartographers and the Sense of Place* (Reno, NV: U of Nevada P, 2003); Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture to the American Landscape* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 2007); Thomas Lynch, *Xerophilia: Critical Explorations in Southwest Literature* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech UP, 2008), Robert T. Tally, Jr., *Melville, Mapping and Globalization: Literary Cartography in the American Baroque Writer* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2009).

the various histories that have produced a palimpsest of literary history written in response to the federal and localized reclamation of the watershed.

In an attempt to trace the literary history of federal and localized reclamation in the Columbia River Basin, the individual chapters of "Geographies of Reclamation" Writing and Water in the Columbia River Basin, 1855-2009," focus on specific time periods and sites, spanning a period of one hundred and fifty years. In each chapter, the literary history of a location is revealed, mapped, and illustrated through the work of three or four writers, whose writings exist in response to the federal reclamation of the Columbia River's land and waterways. The chapters argue and demonstrate the literary significance of the watershed through the prose and poetry of Native American and non-Native writers such as Theodore Winthrop, Raymond Carver, William Witherup, Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey, William Stafford, Elizabeth Woody, Gloria Bird, Ed Edmo and Sherman Alexie. However, like the watershed itself, which depends upon numerous sources of energy for its existence, the chapters do not situate writers as isolated entities, but as participants whose lives and works were and are embedded within a larger matrix of cultural texts and material artifacts that exist in relation to the federal reclamation and localized counter-reclamation of the Columbia River Basin.

Working from a bioregional methodology that has emerged both historically and geographically from the Columbia River Basin, the chapters embed writers and their works within a wide array of textual and geographic artifacts from within the watershed itself. While imaginatively traveling through the Pacific Northwest, readers will encounter oral histories, memorials, political speeches, local pageants and celebrations, scenes from historical and utopian fictions, pamphlets, promotional films, and snapshots of literary journalism -- all of which are used to situate writers within a cultural palimpsest that exists, historically, because of the reclamation of the watershed. At the same time, geographical reference points such as military forts, trading posts, indigenous salmon fisheries, petroglyphs, timber mills, hydroelectric dams, museums, parks and

installations of public art are used to construct an interpretive scaffolding that will enable readers to see precisely how and why the ongoing reclamation of land and waterways in the Columbia River Basin has produced one hundred and fifty years of prose and poetry that has been generated and sustained by the federal and counter-reclamation of the Pacific Northwest's most ecologically significant and culturally complex watershed.[7]

Chapter One, "Stepping into the Promised Land: The Federal Reclamation of the Yakima Valley, 1855-1920s" explains how a founding text of Northwest literary history, Theodore Winthrop's popular memoir *The Canoe and the Saddle* (c. 1853), worked alongside U.S. economic incursions into the Pacific Northwest to remap, rewrite, and ideologically reclaim the Pacific Northwest for federal water management projects. In 1853, on the cusp of The Walla Walla Treaty (1855) and subsequent Yakima War (1855-1858), Winthrop, a genteel New Yorker, traveled through the newly established Washington Territory expecting to find a lush paradise. Instead, on the eastern side of the Northwest Cascades, he descended into the semi-arid Yakima Valley and encountered a place he described as a purgatory in need of federal reclamation.

Hostile toward both the parched land and its Native American inhabitants, Winthrop spent a night at St. Joseph's Mission, where he met Kamiakin, a prosperous leader of the Yakama Nation who was irrigating and cultivating gardens along upper Ahtanum Creek. Envious of Kamiakin's ability to flourish in the rugged landscape,

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[7] This research methodology is consistent with critical trends observed by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005). Buell notes that eclecticism has become a peculiar and important feature within ecocritical and place-based approaches to literary studies. Rather than working from one particular discipline, Buell notes that ecocritics often set out on a "quest *for* adequate models of inquiry from a plethora of possible alternatives that offer themselves from whatever disciplinary quarter" (11). The eclectic and interdisciplinary nature of my approach to reading the Columbia River Basin is indicative of this emergent trend which attempts to find and utilize "correctives and enhancements to literary theory's preexisting toolkit" by presenting readers with a revisionary "menu of approaches" to interpreting texts that "have become ever more proliferate and complex" (11).

Winthrop declared that his irrigated gardens were unruly and unconstitutional. Two years later, the federal government identified Kamiakin as the "head chief" of fourteen Mid-Columbia River tribes and used the power of treaty making and warfare to banish him from the region. Together, these events relegated Mid-Columbia River Indians to reservations, opened space for Euro-American settlement, and set the cultural and geographical framework for the Bureau of Reclamation's extensive irrigation of the Yakima Valley, which transformed the semi-arid landscape into one of the most heavily irrigated and agriculturally productive regions in the United States. In the early-twentieth century, Euro-American citizens of the Yakima Valley would celebrate the federal reclamation of the region by memorializing Kamiakin's Gardens through the words of Theodore Winthrop's *The Canoe and the Saddle*. By the 1920s, the socio-economic prosperity of the newly irrigated valley would catch national attention and become a model for multi-use New Deal dams that would provide irrigation, navigational routes for commerce, and the production of hydroelectricity for regional and national development.

Chapter Two, "The Consequences of Our Labors: Fathers and Sons, New Deal Dams and Hanford Engineer Works, 1930s-1940s," turns to the lives Clevie Carver and Mervyn Witherup, two laborers who migrated to the Pacific Northwest to work at Grand Coulee Dam (1933-1942) and Hanford Engineer Works (1943-1945). Their stories are recovered and told through the prose and poetry of their sons, Raymond Carver and William Witherup, descendents of parents who came to the Pacific Northwest in search of a Promised Land. While Clevie and Mervyn were working in the Columbia River Basin during the 1930s and 1940s, federal reclamation efforts were supported by works of regional journalism such as Richard L. Neuberger's *Our Promised Land* (1938) and Murray Morgan's *The Columbia: Powerhouse of the West* (1949). Historical novelists Margaret Thompson and Nard Jones also made contributions to federal reclamation efforts with *Space for Living: A Novel of the Grand Coulee and Columbia Basin* (1944) and *Still to the West* (1946), works that envisioned regional prosperity through the

construction of federal dams. These texts are culturally indicative of the optimism that regional writers had for the federal reclamation process, but they say very little about the thousands of laborers who built Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works. By turning to prose and poetry written by Raymond Carver and William Witherup, I trace how the vision of a Promised Land promoted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal Administration failed to reach the lives of Clevie Carver and Mervyn Witherup, laborers whose lives can only be recovered through the counter-narratives of prose and poetry written by their sons.

The last section of Chapter Two turns to the early work of William Stafford, a conscientious objector to World War II and Civilian Public Service laborer (1941-1947), who arrived in the Columbia River Basin shortly after the war ended. While Clevie Carver and Mervyn Witherup were building concrete monuments that used the Columbia River to produce hydroelectricity and atomic weapons, Stafford was among 12,000 drafted objectors to the war engaged in alternative labor practices at Civilian Public Service camps scattered throughout the United States. After the war ended, Stafford migrated to the Pacific Northwest to take a job with Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Upon arrival in the late 1940s, the Midwestern poet, still nationally unknown, made a visit to Bonneville Dam and used his pen to question the federal management of the river, the dam's link to the displacement of Native Americans, and its contribution to the production of atomic weaponry at Hanford Engineer Works.

Chapter Three, "Labor and the Waterfall: White Masculinity, Native Rights, and the Making of Northwest Bioregionalism," turns to the construction of The Dalles Dam and the traumatic inundation of Celilo Falls (1957). In doing so, it calls for a reassessment of key texts by three Pacific Northwest writers: Gary Snyder's *Myths and Texts* (1960); Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962); and Raymond Carver's short story "Sixty Acres" (1964). These men, all white descendents of Great Depression laborers, identified with Mid-Columbia River Native Americans in their

youthful texts of the early 1960s. Each deploy representations of Yakama, Warm Springs and Celilo Indians to mount a socio-economic and environmental critique of the Columbia River Basin in response to the inundation of Celilo Falls, a place that anthropologists and archeologists recognize as one of the oldest continuously inhabited sites in North America and the most important salmon fishery for the confederated tribes of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce Indians. By placing the socio-economic and environmental histories of Celilo Falls at the center of my interpretive inquiry, traditional readings of these relatively canonical writers are questioned and revised in light of events that took place on the Mid-Columbia River during the 1950s.

Chapter Four, "Bioregional Poetics: Local Histories and the Living Lines of Watershed Reclamation, 1970s-2009," turns to recent expressions of direct resistance to the presence of federal reclamation technologies on the Columbia River Basin. A countercultural bioregionalism emerges, I argue, in popular works of journalism and utopian fiction such Oral Bullard's *Crisis on the Columbia* (1968) and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), both of which question the federal reclamation process by exposing the socio-economic and ecological repercussions of the hydro-electrification of the Columbia River Basin. In this chapter, readings of these innovative prose forms gives way to a more recent poetic remapping of Celilo Falls, Hanford Nuclear Reserve and Grand Coulee Dam, as traced through the writing of indigenous and Euro-American poets, Elizabeth Woody, William Witherup and Gloria Bird. My reading of these poets, considers, among other things, how water and textual prosody can merge together to form literary acts of bioregional reclamation that not only use the poetic line to document ecological and socio-economic changes to the Columbia River Basin, but also to work toward re-creating and restoring the ecological health of the watershed.

Building upon this speculative assertion regarding activism and artistry, Chapter Five, "Writing the Place of the Waterway: Revising History and Geography with Poetry and Pubic Art," explores how two public art installations on the Methow and Spokane

rivers, major tributaries in the Columbia River Basin, are working to revise the cultural history and physical space of the watershed. William Stafford's *The Methow River Poems* (1993) and Sherman Alexie's "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" (1993) are locally initiated public art projects that have recently been used by local community groups, environmental activists and state and federal employees, to revise regional land and water management policies in the Columbia River Basin. Their cultural and political presence, I argue, is indicative of ways that literary and visual art forms will continue to revise and reshape how the Columbia River will be remembered, portrayed and re-created by future generations of inhabitants.

"Geographies of Reclamation: Writing and Water in the Columbia River Basin 1855-2009," revises the literary history of the Pacific Northwest by focusing on the socio-economic, environmental, cross-cultural and generational histories of the Columbia River Basin through key moments in the deeply contested history of the federal reclamation process. It begins with the late-nineteenth-century irrigation fantasies of paradise in the Yakima Valley, moves through the New Deal and World War II construction of Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works, continues to the traumatic drowning of Celilo Falls, and ends, finally, with an assessment of the bioregional literary culture that has come to define the place-based literature of the region. By attending to the centrality of the Columbia River Basin in the place of literary and cultural history, my project calls upon readers to reclaim and revise understandings of Pacific Northwest literary culture, not only for future scholarly endeavors, but in order to work toward more localized and sustainable methods of inhabiting western watersheds.

CHAPTER I:
STEPPING INTO THE PROMISED LAND:
THE FEDERAL RECLAMATION OF THE YAKIMA VALLEY, 1855-1920s

In the late 1980s, while working as a Pacific Northwest correspondent for *The New York Times*, National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, Timothy Egan, made a pilgrimage up Mount Rainer, the highest mountain in the Northwest Cascade Range.[8] He was looking for Emmons Glacier, "the longest ice mass in continental America," but instead stumbled into Winthrop Glacier, a site that became the geographical starting point for his memoir, *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest* (1990, *TGR* 7). The story came into being shortly after Egan's grandfather passed away. Egan had inherited a cylinder of the old fisherman's ashes and was told to "just dump him into the Yakima River," but wanted a more symbolic location for the burial (*TGR* 3-4). He spent the remainder of the summer searching for an ideal site to put his grandfather to rest. After months of deliberation, Egan decided to send him down the White River, a glacial fed waterway that originates on Mount Rainer, before descending seventy-five miles west to the Pacific Ocean.

Later that fall, Egan and his wife, Joni Balter, left the urban sprawl of Seattle and made a Sunday afternoon trip to Mount Rainer National Park (est. 1899). They followed a trail eight thousand feet to the base of Emmons Glacier, opened a bottle of Chardonnay, and toasted to the memory of the old fisherman. With all expectations of a proper burial nearly met, Egan scanned the terrain for the origins of the White River, but could not find the "dawning trickle" of its source (*TGR* 6, 8). He retraced his journey on a map, which unfortunately told him that it was not Emmons, but a "lesser known" glacier named "Winthrop" that would carry his grandfather to sea (*TGR* 7). This did not sit well. Egan wanted his grandfather, who had "fished every stream of substance on both sides of the

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[8] In 2001, Timothy Egan won the Pulitzer Prize for his work on the documentary series, *How Race is Lived in America.* In 2006, he was awarded the National Book Award for *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005).

Cascade Mountains," to join with "a massive chunk of glacial anarchy" named after Samuel Franklin Emmons, the geological explorer who surveyed Mount Rainer in 1870 (*TGR* 4, 7). Instead, the old fisherman's "reunion of body and soul" would take place with "Winthrop Glacier," an inferior and "genteel" monument that Egan suspected was named after John Winthrop, the seventeenth-century Puritan minister and founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony (*TGR* 4-7). Disgusted by his cartographical misreading, Egan questioned how a Puritan minister could even be associated with Mount Rainer, a place with a deep history of Native Americans, mountaineers, and rugged individualists. However, at eight thousand feet there was no time to investigate. Besides, Egan needed closure and was determined to send the old man out to sea. With the sun falling on the horizon, the couple stepped to the edge of a dark chasm and tossed the grandfather's ashes into the wind. They watched the remains "shoot up and then curve down in a grand arc, a sepia-toned rainbow," which colored the canvas of sky in hues reminiscent of a nineteenth-century landscape painting (*TGR* 8).

The burial was complete, but the story of Winthrop Glacier was far from over. After returning to the comforts of Seattle, Egan did some investigating and discovered that Winthrop Glacier -- as well as a small town in northern Washington -- was not named after John Winthrop after all, but one of his descendents, a nineteenth-century New Yorker and Civil War hero named Theodore Winthrop, who penned *The Canoe and the Saddle* (c. 1853), a travelogue about a summer spent adventuring in the Pacific Northwest. The memoir, a founding text of Pacific Northwest literary history, documents life in the newly established Washington Territory (1853-1859), a region on the cusp of the Walla Walla Treaty Council (1855) and Yakima War (1855-1858), key events that dislodged and relocated fourteen Native American tribes and bands of the Columbia Plateau, and opened space for Euro-American settlement and the federal reclamation of land and waterways in the semi-arid Yakima Valley.

The national and regional popularity of Winthrop's *The Canoe and the Saddle* is a story in and of itself. When the New Yorker returned to the East Coast in 1853, no publishers were interested in his romantic tales of the Washington Territory and its indigenous inhabitants. All of this changed in 1861, when he became the first northern officer killed during the Civil War. Winthrop's death at the Battle of Little Bethel made him a national hero. Publishers who had rejected the young artist's work squabbled over manuscripts, novels, and memoirs. And the public consumed all of it. As literary critic Paul J. Lindholdt explains, after its initial publication in 1863, *The Canoe and the Saddle* went through eight printings in four years, and in the subsequent decade, a total of fifty-five editions of his writings went into print, making him one of the most popular writers of the latter nineteenth century (Introduction, xvii). Winthrop's national popularity faded by the turn of the twentieth century, but in the Pacific Northwest *The Canoe and the Saddle* continues to hold a position of prominence as a founding work of regional literary history. Since its original publication in 1863, local publishers, historical societies and Pacific Northwest writers have turned to Winthrop's account of the Washington Territory to understand their own histories and inherited identities, a process which has elevated the easterner and his memoir. In 1890, for example, the northeastern town of Winthrop, Washington, was named after the famed author, along with Winthrop Glacier, a site that local publisher, John H. Williams, claimed was named "in honor of the brilliant writer who first led his countrymen to appreciate their noblest mountain" (*CS* 1913, 331).

More importantly, in years following the Bureau of Reclamation's radical transformation of the Yakima Valley (1905-1910), Winthrop's memoir became a source of identity formation for settlers who used his travelogue to reconstruct and memorialize life in the Washington Territory before the Walla Walla Treaty and Yakima War. John H. Williams, a publisher from Tacoma, Washington, printed an elaborately illustrated fifty-year commemorative edition of *The Canoe and the Saddle* (1913), which included the first printing of the adventurer's journals, appendices of historical articles, as well as

fourteen color plates and over one hundred illustrations. This well-historicized edition was owned and consulted by prominent citizens and scholars of the Yakima Valley as a primary source of historical knowledge. After decades of silence, the memoir circulated throughout the Pacific Northwest again, when Binfords and Mort; the largest publisher in Portland, Oregon, issued a special Nisqually Edition of the memoir that coincided with the inundation of Celilo Falls by the Army of Corps Engineers' construction of The Dalles Dam (1957). This illustrated publication was followed by Robert Cantwell's, *The Hidden Northwest* (1972) and Timothy Egan's, *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest* (1990), more recent investigations of the region that draw heavily from *The Canoe and the Saddle* as a founding work of Pacific Northwest literary history.

While researching the history of Winthrop Glacier, Timothy Egan purchased a copy of the easterner's memoir from a Seattle bookstore owner, who promised that the account "was not only one of the first ever written about the Pacific Northwest, but one of the best, to this day" (*TGR* 9). To his surprise, Egan discovered that Winthrop was no "Puritan" but a "renegade with the language," whose nineteenth-century voice "prophesied" that a new human order would "rise in the wilderness" to transform the West with "elaborate new systems of thought and life" (*TGR* 10, *CS* 91). One hundred and fifty years after Winthrop's travels, Egan surveyed the region again and wondered if the "clogging freeways" and "megalopolis" of the West Coast urban centers were results of the easterner's progressive vision (*TGR* 11). In an attempt to recover histories residing below a palimpsest of industry and commerce, Egan retraced Winthrop's steps across Pacific Northwest and wrote *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest* (1990), a travelogue that won the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Award (1991) and became a defining work of the region, evidenced by the fact that the *Seattle-Post Intelligencer* ranked it among "the dozen books that a well-versed Northwesterner should have read" (1997, Marshal D1).

In the midst of offering praise and honor to Theodore Winthrop, however, local publishers, historical societies, and contemporary writers have failed to recognize how *The Canoe and the Saddle*, in fact, prepared the way for nineteenth and twentieth-century federal incursions into the Pacific Northwest, which remapped, rewrote, and ideologically reclaimed the Yakima River Basin for the Bureau of Reclamation's federal water management projects at the expense of the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation. This interpretive lapse has left generations of readers and writers -- such as Timothy Egan -- consciously or unconsciously complicit in the reproduction of the nationalist ideologies that are enmeshed within *The Canoe and the Saddle*. The most enduring of these was the belief that the semi-arid landscape of the Yakima Valley was predestined to become a verdant American Eden of ecological and economic prosperity, a belief that came to pass and was physically enacted through the Bureau of Reclamation's transformation of the valley at the ecological expense of the land and the livelihood of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. [9]

From New York to the Promised Land:
Theodore Winthrop and the Search for Eden

Theodore Winthrop set foot in the Pacific Northwest in 1853, while traveling from Panama to the United States aboard the steamer *Columbia*. He had just resigned from a post as clerk for the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, a lucrative business that was established in 1849 to transport gold from San Francisco to Panama City. The

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[9] There is a variation in spelling between the Yakama peoples and the Yakima River Basin. In 1994, in an attempt to reflect a more accurate pronunciation of their tribal name, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation changed the spelling of their tribal name from "Yakima" to "Yakama." In order to honor that decision, this chapter uses "Yakima" to refer to the city and its surrounding valley, while "Yakama" will be used to refer to the indigenous peoples and the reservation. The Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation are located on a reservation in south-central Washington and consist of the following fourteen tribal bands: Kah-milt-pah, Klickitat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Oche-chotes, Palouse, Pisquose, Se-ap-cat, Shyiks, Skinpah, Wenatshapam, Wishram, and Yakama. For more on this see Robert H. Ruby, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1986).

company was owned by William Henry Aspinwall, one of the wealthiest merchants in New York, and a close friend to the Winthrop family (Cantwell 114-115). After graduating from Yale College in 1848, Winthrop went to work as Aspinwall's personal assistant, but was dissatisfied with the "minor personal tasks" and responsibilities he was given. After making numerous requests for professional advancement, Winthrop submitted a letter of resignation, but was quickly promoted to Panama City, where he took up responsibilities as a clerk. After six months of feeling slighted and bored by the Aspinwall establishment, Winthrop followed through with his resignation and intended to return to New York with a revised career plan: he would write book about the Columbia River Basin, a region he had been imagining through adventurous prose and the visual lens of Hudson River School landscape paintings.

As a gentrified New Yorker, Theodore Winthrop socialized with many Hudson River School painters and writers, all of whom shaped his understanding of the Northwest as an awaiting Promised Land. The light, water, peaks, and chasms of landscape paintings by Thomas Cole and Winthrop's close friend, Frederic Church, led the New Yorker to believe that all roads to paradise headed west. Winthrop's desire to find paradise in the great Northwest was further shaped by Washington Irving's *Astoria* (1836) and *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (1837), exciting accounts of John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Trading Expedition (1810-1813) and Captain John Bonneville's expedition through the Columbia River Basin (1832-1835). Like many self-proclaimed adventurers whose ideas were shaped by visual and print cultures of the mid-nineteenth century, Winthrop longed to head west, set foot into a real-life Hudson River School landscape painting and live out the words of poet, William Cullen Bryant, who professed that a man could lose himself "in the continuous woods / Where rolls the Oregon and hears no sound / Save his own dashing" (Bryant, "Thanatopsis" 52-54).

While making a trip for Aspinwall's company in 1853, Winthrop had the opportunity to see the Columbia River Promised Land, but illness and industry thwarted

his romantic expectations. When Winthrop disembarked from the *Columbia* he found himself in Portland, "a featureless town of two thousand people, with the stumps of big trees still standing in its muddy streets" (Cantwell 114). Wanting to escape the ugly realities of industry and development, he joined a military party and headed up the Columbia River to Fort Dalles (1850), a newly established military outpost near Celilo Falls, one of the most productive Native American salmon fisheries on the mainline river. Upon arrival, he set out to document the landscape of falls, a place that he claimed was "desolate and wild in the extreme" where nothing was "beautiful except the grandeur of the mighty rushing torrent" (*CS*, Williams 251-252). Here, however, while recording the features of the landscape and waterway, Winthrop collapsed and was diagnosed with small pox, a disease that was rampant in Northwest ports and trade centers. Recovering, some three weeks later, he boarded a Hudson's Bay Company boat and headed downriver to Fort Vancouver. Heading northward, Winthrop found additional industries scattered throughout the passageways of Puget Sound. As Paul J. Lindholdt explains:

> Lumber vessels loaded with fir trees to be sunk as piles to build San Francisco docks were already thronging the waters of Puget Sound. Miners were raking creek beds and hillsides for gold. Would-be cattle barons were carving out beef ranches. ("Introduction" x)

Winthrop spent the next two months traveling from southern Oregon to British Columbia, but as Robert Cantwell explains, after encountering the familiar face of American industry everywhere he went, the easterner headed back into the interior of the Washington Territory, hoping to set foot in "an unknown and unspoiled wilderness" that was untouched by the workmen and trading posts that lined Puget Sound (122).

With this fantasy in mind, Winthrop staged a final journey deep into the Washington Territory. The trip began on August 23, 1853, at Fort Nisqually (1833), the site of the largest and most productive Hudson's Bay Company trading post in Puget Sound. He purchased horses, hired an Indian guide, and spent the next ten days taking notes on his encounters with landscape, Indians, missionaries, and U.S. soldiers on the

Naches Trail. Traveling at a relentless pace, Winthrop crossed the Northwest Cascades at Mount Rainer, descended into the Yakima River Basin, sought refuge at St. Joseph's (Atinam) Mission (1852), and finally returned Fort Dalles (1850) -- all in less than two weeks. From Fort Dalles, he joined an eastbound military party and returned to the East Coast before the onset of winter. Then, from the comforts of Staten Island, New York, he began organizing the travelogue that would become *The Canoe and the Saddle*.

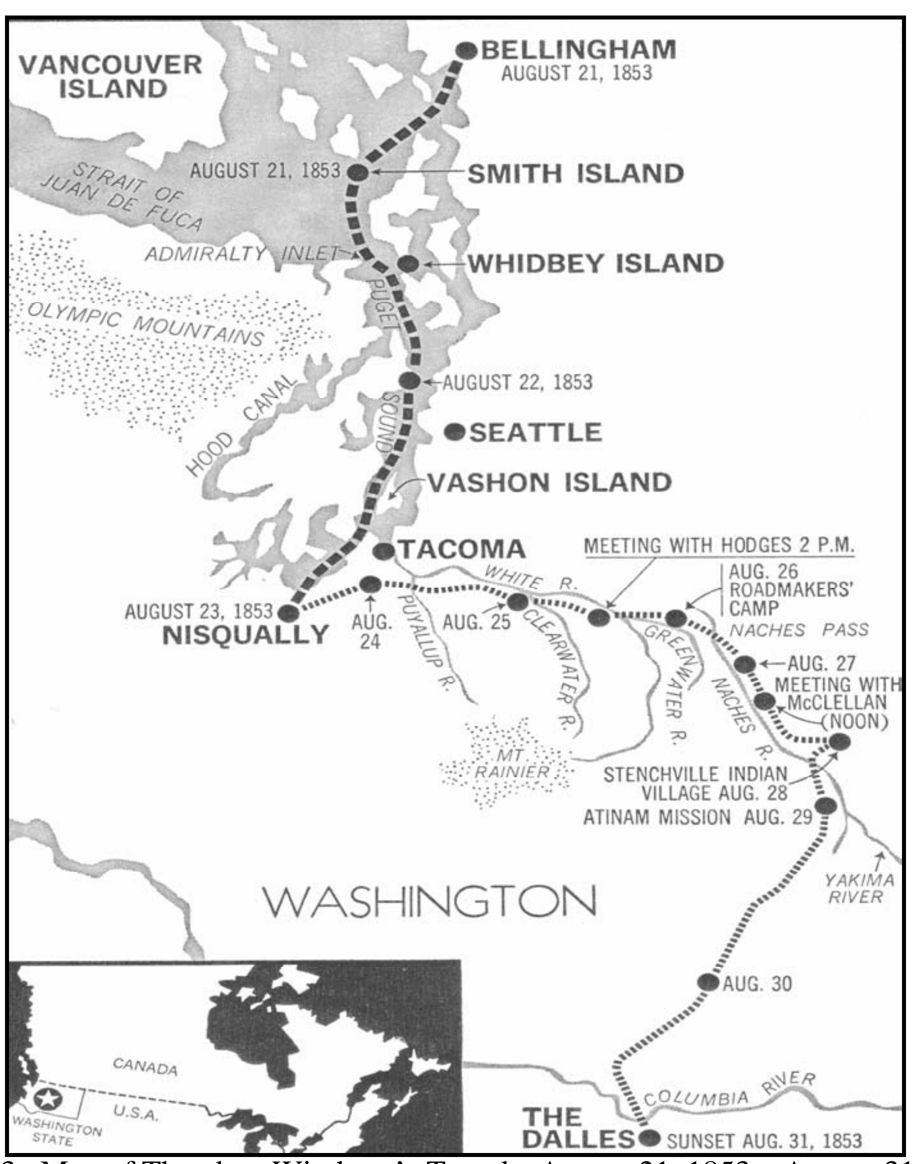

Figure 3. Map of Theodore Winthrop's Travels, August 21, 1853 – August 31, 1853.
Robert Cantwell, *The Hidden Northwest* (1972).

When Theodore Winthrop traveled through the newly established Washington Territory in 1853, he expected to find visions of wilderness that were depicted in Hudson River School landscape paintings. While working for William Henry Aspinwall, Winthrop was entrusted with funds to acquire paintings for the merchant's personal art gallery and was known to pay top-dollar for works by Thomas Cole (Cantwell 119). Now, taking his own excursion into the West, Winthrop was enacting Cole's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (1827-1828), which Barbara Novak describes as a "text on nature and culture, with fallen man faced with the task of recovering culture from the wilderness" (136). Early in his journey, Winthrop professed that Eden could be recovered from Mount Rainer and the Northwest Cascades, so much so, that his description of the landscape became a textual companion to the visual rhetoric of the Hudson River School tradition. In fact, the similarities between Winthrop's prose and the visual ideologies of these painters are traceable through the adventurer's friendship with Frederic Church, who was once a pupil of Thomas Cole. After Winthrop returned from his Northwest travels, he accompanied Church on several trips through New England's backcountry. He also leased writing space in the building where the painter composed *The Heart of the Andes*, a dramatic image of South America that stood at more than five feet high and nearly ten feet wide (Colby 40, 54). While working on *The Canoe and the Saddle*, Winthrop became deeply attracted to Church's vision of the mountainous wilderness and allowed it to shape his writing on the Washington Territory. As Paul J. Lindholdt explains:

> In New York, at the Tenth Street Studio Building where Winthrop rented workspace in the mid-1850s, the painters Frederic Church and Sanford R. Gifford likewise had their studios. Winthrop 'delighted to haunt the studio of his friend Church, the painter, and watch day by day the progress of his picture, *The Heart of the Andes*,' which was later displayed in the Tenth Street Studio, where a skylight naturally illuminated the commercially triumphant painting. ("West of Winthrop" 157)

Winthrop's affection for Church's panoramic canvas was strong and insightful enough for the painter to endorse the publication of his friend's essay, *A Companion to The Heart of the Andes* (1859). Winthrop's forty-three page pamphlet was distributed to more than twelve thousand viewers who paid a quarter to see the vision of paradise first hand (Colby 84). Within a few weeks, receipts for the exhibition "totaled more than three thousand dollars" and further established Church and Winthrop as prominent voices within the Hudson River School movement (Novak 63).

Figure 4. Frederic Edwin Church and Theodore Winthrop, c. 1860. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institute. Digital ID: 2473.

A comparative interpretation of work by Frederic Church and Theodore Winthrop illustrates how Winthrop's representation of Mount Rainer in *The Canoe and the Saddle*

was shaped by visual ideologies enmeshed in *The Heart of the Andes*. The visual and narrative similarities between these two works are so strong that twentieth-century literary critic Elbridge Colby, claimed that Winthrop's representation of "Mount Tacoma" (the indigenous name for Mount Rainer) was inspired by the white peaks of *The Heart of the Andes* (98-99).[10] The claim is more than plausible, considering that as art historian Barbara Novak observes, *The Heart of the Andes* was "Church's pictorial affirmation of God in nature, variously hailed as Paradise, Eden, and the redemption" of the soul through nature (64).[11]

After returning to New York, Theodore Winthrop sought to affirm and restage his own expectation of the Northwest wilderness as redemptive paradise throughout *The Canoe and the Saddle*. While travelling the Naches Trail, for example, Winthrop imagines himself as a morally fallen and physically weary pilgrim. After many hours on a "blind path, harsh, darksome, and utterly lonely," the easterner's agony turns to redemptive joy when he sees the peak of Mount Rainer ("Tacoma") on the horizon (*CS* 87).[12] Deploying paint from Frederic Church's brush, Winthrop frames his encounter with great attention to matters of scale, tone, contrast, and especially light:

> Large and neighbor [Mount Tacoma] stood, so near that every jewel of its snow-fields seemed to send me a separate ray; yet not

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[10]Mount Tacoma is the indigenous name for what is now known as Mount Rainer. In 1890, after years of carrying two names, the United States Board on Geographic Names determined that the mountain would be officially recognized as Mount Rainer.

[11]*The Heart of the Andes* was not publicly exhibited until 1859, a few years after Theodore Winthrop returned from his Northwest adventures. However, as Eldridge Colby observes, Winthrop did not complete *The Canoe and the Saddle* until several after his 1853 journey, for the memoir alludes to events that happened at least three years after he returned to New York (97). In addition, when introducing his travelogue, Winthrop states that the adventures in *The Canoe and the Saddle* document events that took place "five years" ago in "the northwest corner of our country" (*CS* 2).

[12] Unless otherwise noted, all references from *The Canoe and the Saddle* are cited from Theodore Winthrop, *The Canoe and the Saddle,* Paul J. Lindholdt, ed., critical edition (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 2006).

> so near but that I could with one look take in its whole image, from clear-cut edge to edge.
>
> All around it the dark evergreens rose like a ruff; above them the mountain splendors swelled statelier for the contrast. Sunlight of noon was so refulgent upon the crown, and lay so thick and dazzling in nooks and chasms, that the eye sought repose of gentler lights, and found it in shadowed nooks and clefts, where sunlight entertaining not, delicate mist, and emanation from the blue sky, had fallen, and lay sheltered and tremulous, a mild substitute for the stronger glory. (*CS* 87)

In the presence of Mount Tacoma, Winthrop was no longer a weary pilgrim, but a high priest dwelling in an edenic temple adorned with light in a place where "no man had ever trampled these pure snows" (*CS* 88). In Winthrop's mind, he had finally reached the Promised Land and -- in doing so -- felt the urge to ascend "up to Tacoma, or into some such solitude of nature . . . as Moses went up to Sinai" (*CS* 91). By grafting purity and paradise onto Northwest geography, Winthrop was reiterating the painterly labor of Frederic Church, whose mountain peaks stood as the "Alpha and the Omega" of a sublime universe, an incarnation of holiness that Winthrop insisted "dared to demand our worship" ("The Heart of . . . 350).

On the narrative surface of Theodore Winthrop's florid prose, readers meet a weary traveler whose parched body and soul was supposedly revived by a sacred and "virginal mountain" that was "shedding the grace of its breeze for him and him alone" (*CS* 88; Lindholdt, Introduction xxi). However, a deeper geographical and historical excavation of this site indicates that Winthrop's account of the Northwest Cascades was a far stretch from reality. Winthrop describes Naches Pass as a place to consume wild strawberries in a voluptuous temple; however, this mountainous pass was by no means edenic. Few people understood this better than Captain George McClellan, a U.S. military officer who was dispatched by Washington Governor Isaac Stevens to survey the region for a viable railway route across the Cascade Range. In the summer of 1853, the same year of Winthrop's travels, McClellan described Naches Pass as a dark and treacherous sequence of rocks and canyons and doubted he would "ever ride down the

valley of the Naches in a railroad car" (qtd. in Richards 133). By suppressing the hostile topographical realities of the Cascades, Winthrop created rhetorical space for curvaceous bodies and nature's temples, but also left readers with an ideologically charged account of the Northwest that fell short of reality. In fact, Winthrop's habitual pattern of favoring aesthetic surfaces over deeper geographical and historical truths, has caused Paul J. Lindholdt to describe *The Canoe and the Saddle* as a work of "ecopornography," a highly stylized simulation of landscape that seeks to "objectify nature for human aesthetic pleasure" in exchange for historical accuracy ("West of Winthrop" 156).

It is an apt comparison, particularly considering that Winthrop's travelogue is preoccupied with satisfying the senses, an impulse he inherited from Frederic Church and the Hudson River School style. When Church first exhibited *The Heart of the Andes* on New York's Tenth Street in1859, he created a similar ecopornographic spectacle of his own by literally clothing the massive image with "black crepe curtains," surrounding it with "tropical vegetation taken from the site" and lighting the scene "by a gas jet" (Novak 63). When the painting was unveiled, more than twelve thousand viewers lined up and paid a quarter each to see the monument through opera glasses, thus creating a simulated sensation of entering the scene itself. There are no photographic records of Church's Tenth Street exhibition (1859), but an image later taken at the New York Metropolitan Sanitary Fair (1864) illustrates how the painting was dressed and then unveiled for the public eye. Moreover, the inclusion of presidential portraits of George Washington, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson illustrates how narratives of national expansion were fused with visual representations of distant, yet increasingly attainable, western landscapes.

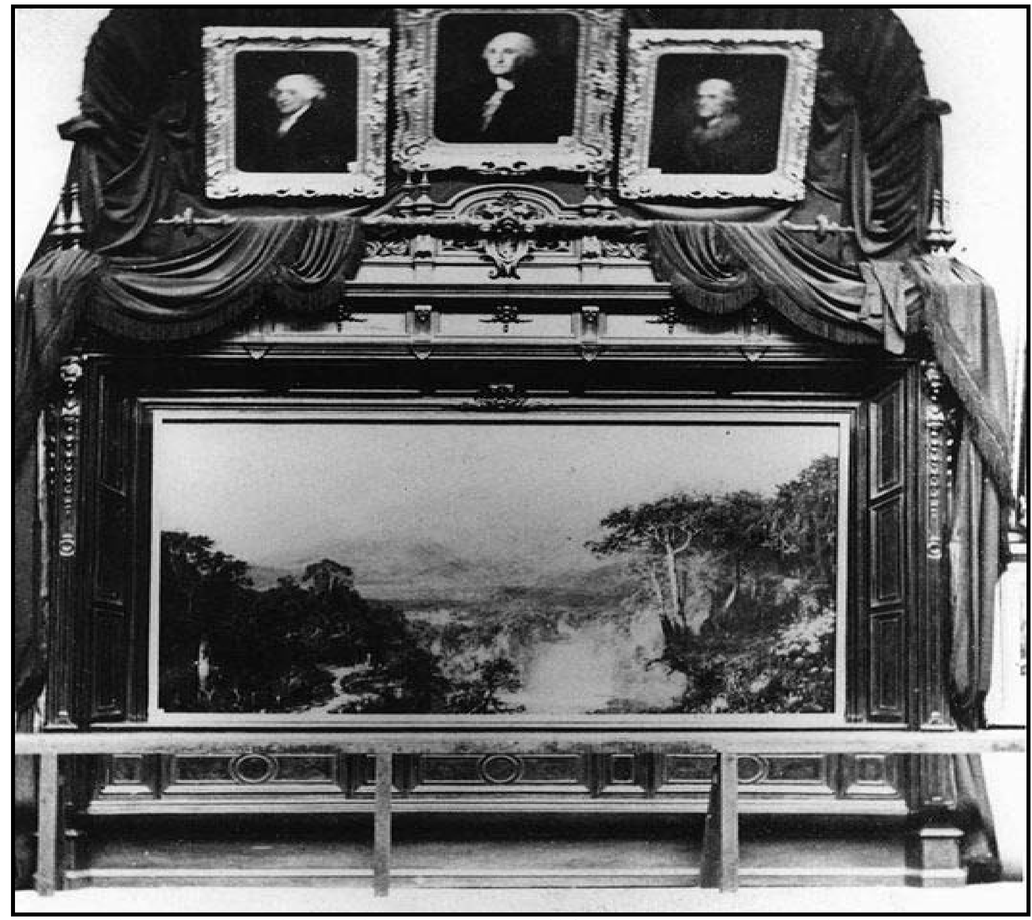

Figure 5. *The Heart of the Andes*, 1859. Exhibited at the New York Metropolitan Sanitary Fair, 1864. Photograph Collection of the New York Historical Society.

It is worth noting that the pervasive reproduction of these ecopornographic ideals extends well beyond the nineteenth century and into Timothy Egan's account of the Yakima Valley published in *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest* (1990). When Egan stepped into the Yakima Valley one hundred and fifty years after Winthrop, he used *The Canoe and the Saddle* to imagine himself as a weary pilgrim in search of food and companionship. While making his way through the Northwest Cascades, Winthrop cherished the sensual company of Mount Rainer, a "virginal mountain" with "soft curves" and "smiling dimples," but as he descended the eastern slope of the Cascades and entered the semi-arid Yakima Valley, the pleasures he longed for became increasing scarce (*CS* 116, 88). In the generations that had passed

between Winthrop and Egan's journeys, the Bureau of Reclamation had used the "transfiguring power of water" to create an "Eden with Irrigation," by irrigating over 500,000 acres of productive lands that, according to Egan, now offers consumers a "young bride" more sensual and voluptuous than anything Winthrop could have ever imagined (*TGR* 205, 212).[13]

In addition to offering romantic fantasies of the Washington Territory, Theodore Winthrop also reiterated problematic ideas about the tribes and bands of indigenous peoples who inhabited the Yakama River Basin. For the most part, these beliefs were played out through Winthrop's relationship with an Indian guide named Loolowcan (Lok-out), the son of Owhi and a relative to Kamiakin, both wealthy and well-respected leaders of indigenous bands who were using Hudson's Bay Company outposts to increase their socio-economic status (Scheuerman and Finley 6-7).[14] Loolowcan, who was at Fort Nisqually at the time of Winthrop's departure, was hired to escort the easterner across Naches Pass, through the Yakama River Basin, and finally to Fort Dalles. Along the trail, Winthrop "wheedled and bullied" his reluctant guide (who was unhappy with the relentless pace) and complained that the Indian was "a half-insolent, half-indifferent, jargoning savage" with a foul smell and unrepentant soul; yet on other occasions, the easterner reveled in his guide's superior skills as a tracker and horseman (*CS* 54, 128).

This paradoxical tension of "desire and repulsion" illustrates the degree to which Theodore Winthrop's participated in a complex, inherited form of identity-making that

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[13] For more on the eroticization and feminization of western landscapes see Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill, NC: U of North Carolina P, 1975); and Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2003).

[14] Richard D. Scheuerman and Michael O. Finley observe that "the earliest documented reference to Owhi appears in Hudson's Bay Company records from Ft. Nisqually (1833). Kamiakin also frequented outposts at Fort Nisqually and Fort Colville and as Scheuerman and Finley explain, during the 1840s and 1850s, Kamiakin "cautiously welcomed White newcomers" and wanted to learn "about those aspects of their culture that he considered advantageous" (19).

Philip J. Deloria calls "playing Indian" (3). For nearly two-weeks during the summer of 1853, Theodore Winthrop used Loolowcan to "play Indian" by reconfiguring his own identity as a white American adventurer seeking a new Promised Land. Winthrop's tension between awe and disgust was palpable as the two men traveled together along the Naches Trail (Deloria 3). At one point, Winthrop stirred up some game birds and reports that Loolowcan suddenly turned savage and "was so eager that from under his low brows and unkempt hair his dusky eyes glared like the eyes of a wild beast, studying his prey from a shadowy lair" (*CS* 115). Although the easterner depicted his guide as entirely uncivilized, the chance to hunt with such a man conjured a seemingly ancient impulse within the traveler. After following Loolowcan's instructions to halt and move slowly, Winthrop brandished a shotgun and attempted to become native to the Western Territory:

> Dismounting, I stole forward with assassin intent, and birds, grouse, five noble ones I saw, engaged in fattening their bodies for human solace and support. I sent a shot among them. There was a flutter among the choir, -- one fluttered not. At the sound of my right barrel one bird fell without rising; another rose and fell at a hint from the sinister tube. The surviving trio were distracted by mortal terror. They flew no farther than a dwarf tree hard by. I drew my revolver, thinking that there might not be time to load, and fired in a hurry at the lowermost. (*CS* 115)

When the smoke cleared the two men reveled in the joy of the kill. Spurring their horses onward, "Loolowcan bagged [the] three trophies" and the easterner triumphantly rode off with his comrade, a man who was no longer "Loolowcan the Frowzy," but "a fearless and agile cavalier" (*CS* 150, 115). While sharing a meal together later that evening, Winthrop looked across the fire and confessed that all along the journey he was "quietly probing the nature of Loolowcan, [his] most intimate associate thus far among the unalloyed copper-skins" (*CS* 121). Torn between feelings of identification and repulsion, Winthrop's prose reiterates a longstanding, national belief about indigenous peoples: that Loolowcan was a nobleman trapped inside a flawed body; an irrational child-man of the wilderness who needed to be colonized, but not before teaching the easterner how to

obtain “a natural affinity” with a sublime and promising region he desired to possess (Deloria 5).

From Paradise to Purgatory:
Theodore Winthrop and the Problem of Semi-Arid Landscapes

When Theodore Winthrop and Loolowcan arose the next morning, they began a steep and arduous eastern descent from the lush Northwest Cascades into the semi-arid Yakima River Basin. Within hours, the topography and climate shifted, and not surprisingly, so did Winthrop’s mood. The western side of the Cascades receives an annual rainfall of 40-80 inches and can be as verdant as a Hudson River painting; but the eastern side is defined by the absence of water and receives only 6-10 inches each year (Freeman and Martin 109-112). As historical geographer D.W. Meinig explains, when compared to the western slope of the Cascades, the eastern side “looks as it were starved as well as desiccated” (6). Upon descent, Winthrop expected to find gardens and sensual delights, but was met with rocky canyons, an empty stomach, and barren soil -- a fine place -- he sarcastically wrote, “if anyone is ambitious to batter his brains” (*CS* 124-125).

According to Winthrop, the descent from the Northwest Cascades into the Yakima River Basin marked more than a geographical shift, but also a binary of moral division: an inhabitable paradise was on one side, with a hellish landscape of heat and aridity resided on the other. As the easterner surveyed the harsh realities of this purgatorial wasteland, he described the region as a place in need of federal reclamation through a sequence of painterly, yet militaristic metaphors of naturalized invasion. In hindsight, these references reveal the United States’ looming intent to reclaim the Yakima River Basin through irrigation canals that would green the landscape.

> Pacific winds sailing inland leave most of their moisture on the western slopes of the range. Few of the cloudy battalions that sweep across the sea, and come, not like an invading horde of ravagers, but like an army of generous allies, -- few of these pass over the ramparts, and pour their wealth into the landward valleys. . . . The land is arid. (*CS* 124)

Attempts to aggressively reclaim and colonize the Yakima River Basin were already in the making. The Naches Trail, the road Winthrop traveled through, was replete with signs of the federal reclamation of land and waterways.[15]

Three years before Theodore Winthrop traveled through the Pacific Northwest, the U.S. Congress had passed the Donation Land Claim Act (1850), a federal decision that opened lands west of the Northwest Cascades for a five-year period of settlement. During this period, the Naches Trail, which Winthrop used to travel from Fort Nisqually to Fort Dalles, served as a point of socio-economic linkage for Indians, military surveyors, as well as missionaries and miners who traveled between Puget Sound and the sparsely populated interior of the Washington Territory. However, as historians Richard D. Scheuerman and Michael O. Finley observe, the use of this route strained relationships between traveling whites and indigenous peoples. In the two years prior to Winthrop's arrival, a total of twelve white Americans had been killed by Indians, while in 1853 alone, the number of white fatalities increased to forty-seven (21-24). That summer, Winthrop nearly became a statistic himself, after he and Loolowcan met members of Captain George McClellan's road building and railroad survey party, U.S. soldiers dispatched by Washington Governor Isaac Stevens to develop roadways, explore waterways, and navigate mountain passes in search of a viable railway route across the Cascades.

Theodore Winthrop and Loolowcan camped with McClellan's men, but after suffering an evening of physical and verbal abuse from Winthrop, Loolowcan woke the next morning and led the easterner to a nearby Yakama hunting camp at Wenas Ridge, a place that the easterner not-so-affectionately called "Stenchville" (*CS* 145). Under the

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[15]D.W. Meinig's, *The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910*, provides a number of maps that illustrate how military roads constructed in the 1850s (such as Naches Pass) developed a grid of federal mobility and power. By the late 1850s, a network roadways connected military forts and provided federal access to each of the major Indian reservations in Oregon and Washington (152-182).

protection of his Indian "compatriots," Loolowcan announced that his journey with Winthrop was finished (*CS* 143). He would not travel to Fort Dalles for fear of his life. At that point, Loolowcan demanded payment for his services, but Winthrop refused to give it. Finally, when confronted by Indians with knives and guns, the easterner saddled his horse and left camp with "Colonel Colt" in hand (*CS* 148). He escaped without harm, but fully expected to feel an "arrow in the marrow," either from "Loolowcan the Mistrusted," or one of the "five foul copperheads" who stood at his defense (*CS* 142, 147). This moment of bitter separation left Loolowcan with lasting impressions of Winthrop. In 1906, fifty-years after parting ways with the temperamental adventurer, A.J. Splawn, a regional historian and early settler of the Yakima Valley, interviewed Loolowcan, who remembered that when he and the easterner "stayed at the white men's camp who were working on the road in the mountains, [Winthrop] kicked me with his boot as if I was a dog."[16] Loolowcan concluded his story by telling A.J. Splawn: "I have often thought of that man and regretted I did not kill him. He was me-stach-ee (mean)" (Splawn 130).

After Theodore Winthrop and Loolowcan parted ways, the easterner pressed onward in an "imprudent rage" and vowed to "scorn the help of aborigines" (*CS* 153). A military officer informed him that St. Joseph's Mission was only twenty miles away, a straight "bee-line" from where he stood (*CS* 155). Yet, without Loolowcan to guide him, the traveler lost his way, and was forced to trade his possessions with two young Indians in exchange for directions. As a genteel New Yorker, Winthrop dressed to make a social impression on his travels and often compared his pearl-buttoned "shirts of faded blue-check calico" to the shabby apparel of miners and Indians who he met along the trial. He

[16]In 1906, Loolowcan (Lok-out) conducted an interview with A.J. Splawn at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia rivers. He told Splawn about traveling with Theodore Winthrop and the violent tragedies of the Yakima War. See A.J. Splawn, *Ka-mi-akin: The Last Hero of the Yakimas* (Portland, OR: Binfords and Mort, 1917; 1944), 127-130.

also carried a "buckskin" shirt, but was unable to wear it due to the unbearable heat of the late August summer. Winthrop offered this "valueless article" to two Yakamas, who then led him to St. Joseph's Mission (*CS* 155). There Winthrop met Kamiakin, a prosperous and formidable leader of the Klickitat tribe, whose manipulation of water had made him one of the most powerful and respected leaders in the semi-arid Yakama River Basin.

Clearing the Promised Land of Natives:
Trampling on Kamiakin's "Unconstitutional" Garden

Over the years, Theodore Winthrop's account of his experiences at St. Joseph's Mission has often been referenced by historians, journalists, and memorializers because it presents readers with a rare and extended glimpse of Kamiakin, the powerful son of a Palouse father and a Yakama mother. Kamiakin had become powerful in his own right by irrigating some of the first gardens in the semi-arid Yakima Valley. His irrigation project would come to a halt, however, when the Walla Walla Treaty Council (1855) and Yakima War (1855-1858) cleared the land of indigenous peoples by dislodging them from ancestral lands and waterways. In the years that followed, Euro-American settlers and the Bureau of Reclamation would start their own irrigation projects, constructing a network of ditches, dams, and canals that transformed the valley from a so-called wasteland into a national seat of agricultural prosperity. Still, as *The Canoe and the Saddle* reminds modern readers, Kamiakin and a handful of priests at St. Joseph's Mission were already managing and reaping the agricultural potential of this valley long before the federal government arrived to reclaim the land.

In the summer of 1853, Winthrop rode into St. Joseph's Mission hostile toward Yakama Indians and the harsh landscape, but remained eager to meet Kamiakin, whose reputation preceded his impressive physical presence (*CS* 148, 161). Earlier in the week, Winthrop made a journal notation that a man named Kamiakin was said to be "chief of the Klickitats" (*CS*, Williams 282). Upon arriving at St. Joseph's Mission, two priests -- Father Charles Pandosy and Father Louis D' Herbomez -- told the traveler of Kamiakin's

accomplishments which were famous throughout the Yakima River Basin. The priests sent two boys in search of the Yakama leader, but to the easterner's disappointment, Kamiakin was nowhere to be found (*CS*, Williams 285).[17] The priests probably told stories how the reputable leader drove the first herds of cattle from the Willamette Valley into the Columbia Plateau during the 1840s, about his reputation as a breeder and trader of the fastest and most desirable horses in the valley, and his skills as a trader at Fort Nisqually (1833) and Fort Colville (1825), Hudson's Bay Company outposts that Kamiakin frequented on a regular basis. While it is impossible to know exactly what Theodore Winthrop heard about Kamiakin, the priests clearly explained that the indigenous leader helped them establish St. Joseph's Mission and its gardens (*CS* 160).

In 1847, six years prior to Winthrop's journey through the Washington Territory, Kamiakin had traveled to Fort Walla Walla and requested that a Catholic missionary come to live amongst the Yakama peoples. During this time, traders and missionaries were entering the territory's interior. As Richard D. Scheuerman and Michael O. Finley explain, "Kamiakin cautiously welcomed White newcomers" desiring to learn "about those aspects of their culture that he considered advantageous" (19). The Walla Walla Diocese responded to Kamiakin's request by sending two French oblates to construct a mission near Simcoe Creek. The men opened a school, established strong relational ties with Kamiakin, and five years later, accepted the leader's invitation to move the mission to upper Ahtanum Creek, where Kamiakin camped during the summer. Fathers Pandosy and D' Herbomez then constructed an outpost about two miles from the camp and relations between them and the Yakamas continued to flourish. Kamiakin educated Pandosy on matters of hunting and the nuances of Sahaptian languages, while the priests

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[17] For more on Kamiakin's relationship with the priests see Jo N. Miles, "Kamiakin's Impact on Early Washington Territory," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* (Fall 2008): 159-172; Ronald Wayne Young, O.M.I., *The Mission of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate to the Oregon Territory, 1847-1860* (Romae: Pontificia Universtas Gregoriana, 2000).

answered the leader’s questions on topics ranging from politics to astronomy. Although Kamiakin refused to be baptized into the Catholic faith, records and letters from the priests indicate that it was not uncommon to find him at religious services, observing the Sabbath, or providing food for his European neighbors (Miles 162; Scheuerman and Finley 20-21).

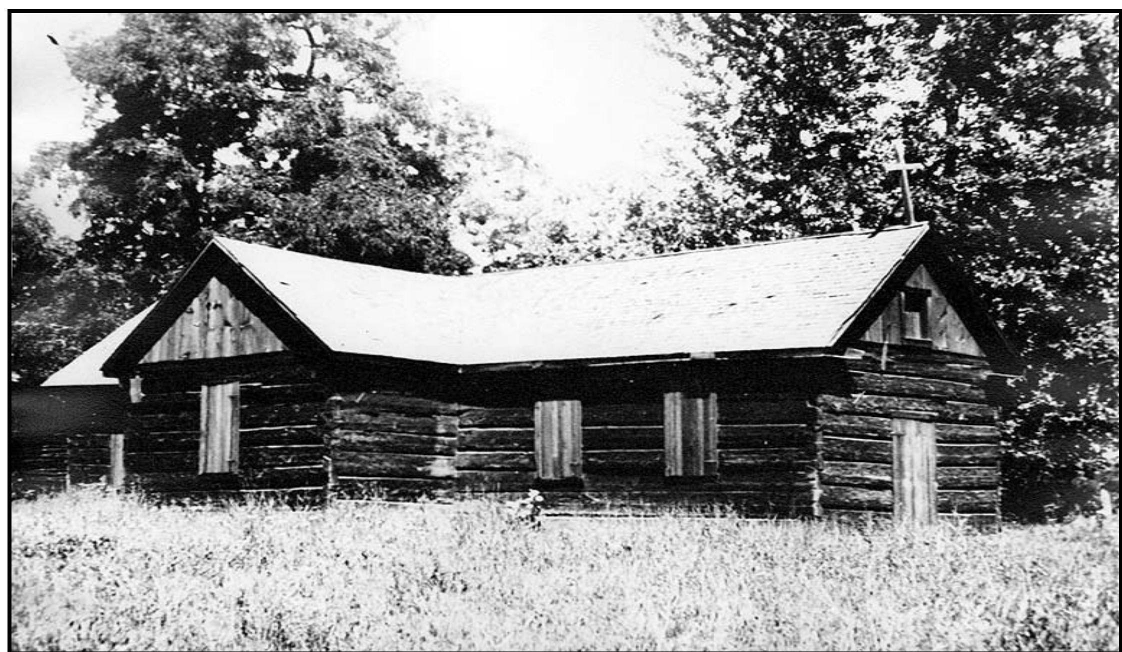

Figure 6. St. Joseph’s Mission (rebuilt 1872), Yakima County, n.d. University of Washington, Department of Special Collections. No. 4010.

One year after the mission was established, Theodore Winthrop arrived to find “a hut like structure of adobe clay” that was “plastered upon a frame of sticks” (*CS* 158). From a distance he heard “reverent voices” singing at what he called a “station in the wilderness.” The “transfiguring power of sunset” made this rugged place “endurable,” but when compared to the aesthetic beauty of Mount Tacoma, this hardened land squelched all hope of finding paradise, as “even sunset, lengthening the shadow of every blade of grass, could not create a mirage of verdant meadow” at the newly established

mission. It was, as Winthrop surmised, "a strange and unlovely spot for religion to have chosen for its home of influence" (*CS* 158-159).

Winthrop arrived at St. Joseph's Mission late in the evening and clearly believed he was staying at a wasteland of aridity; however, the light of a new morning unveiled more fertile realities. When Winthrop woke the next day, Father Pandosy introduced him to Kamiakin, "a majestic Indian" who wore an elaborate tunic the color of "Lincoln green" (*CS* 165). The verdant color and intricate design of Kamiakin's robe communicated his status as a prosperous leader and irrigator of the semi-arid Yakima Valley. In a region that boasted only 6-10 inches of annual rainfall, Kamiakin had manipulated and rerouted the flow of water from a quarter-mile, snake-like ditch that extended from upper Ahtanum Creek to his nearby camp. By regulating the flow of water, Scheuerman and Finley observe that Kamiakin was able to raise "potatoes, squash, pumpkins, and corn in substantial garden plots," crops that were essential to the Yakamas -- and the neighboring mission priests, a fact that Winthrop attested to when he noted that the priests and Yakamas were "friends" who cultivated "potato-patches" in an otherwise parched landscape (19, *CS* 160-161).

In years following the Walla Walla Treaty and Yakima War, there was some degree of controversy over who had designed and constructed the irrigation canal that became known to nineteenth-century settlers and expansionists as "Kamiakin's Ditch." In 1864, A.J. Splawn, a local pioneer and political leader in the Yakima Valley, visited the old irrigation ditch and was certain that the mission priests had taught Kamiakin how to irrigate and farm the land (Splawn 270). However, Scheuerman and Finley suspect that gardens at St. Joseph's Mission were "probably planted with seeds from Kamiakin's fields," a more than probable claim, considering that the priests nearly starved to death during the winter of 1851-1852, and were saved with food provided by Kamiakin and nearby Yakamas (19-20). Moreover, records from the Methodist Wascopam Mission near The Dalles indicate that Kamiakin and his brothers introduced corn, potatoes, peas

and other crops into the valley as early as 1845, using seeds purchased from Hudson's Bay Company outposts (Miles 160; Boyd 147, 150). However, the strongest indication that "Kamiakin's Ditch" was designed and constructed by Kamiakin and the Yakamas -- rather than missionaries or traders -- comes from the physical features of the ditch itself, which was not a linear trench of Euro-American design, but what Scheuerman and Finley call a channel dug with "primitive tools" that "snaked from the spring to the gardens along a contour just north of the chief's camp" (19).

Interestingly, Winthrop's account of Kamiakin's clothing provides contemporary readers with an indication of what the irrigation ditch and gardens at St. Joseph's Mission looked like, at least from the perspective of a nineteenth-century New Yorker who valued systematic order. As a gentry-class New Yorker, with a penchant appreciation for fine clothing, Winthrop was drawn to Kamiakin's "long tunic of fine green cloth," a robe that he suspected was made from fine materials purchased from the Hudson Bay's Company outpost at Fort Nisqually (*CS* 165-166; *CS*, Williams 285). A closer look at Winthrop's account of this "fantastic coat" illustrates how the envious traveler fused this tunic of "Lincoln green" with the verdant gardens, which allowed Winthrop to describe Kamiakin and his irrigated gardens in ways that appeared to be respectful and honorable, but were actually filled with disdain and jealousy (*CS* 167, 165). Most historians insist that Winthrop was impressed, even awe-struck, by Kamiakin's commanding presence, reputation, and technological ingenuity. In the journals and memoir, Winthrop describes him as a magnificent leader whose "gentlemanly" disposition and "grave, reflective look" gave him the aura of a "king" or a "Kaiser" (*CS* 165-166). And yet, at the same time, Winthrop also felt that everything about Kamiakin's garden and tunic was uncivilized and disordered. The easterner became obsessed with the stitching and landscape of the verdant coat, which -- like the gardens themselves -- was patched together in "all shapes and sizes" (*CS* 166). The garden and irrigation ditch, far from being linear and ordered, was what Winthrop called a "gerrymander" creation that was marked by "irregular beds

of a kitchen garden" that appeared to be "verdant" but also unruly and "devious." At one point, Winthrop compared the horizontal waist and main "line" of Kamiakin's green coat to the main-line of the snaking irrigation ditch that moved in a zigzagging line, like a path "trodden by a man after too many toddies." From Winthrop's perspective, the rambling stitch-work on the tunic mirrored the surrounding garden plots and their irrigation channels, as each section of the tunic-garden was "separated from its surrounding patches by a rampart or a ditch of seam, along which stitches of white threads strayed like vines" (*CS* 166).

In a book titled *Beautiful Machine: Rivers and the Republican Plan, 1755-1825*, John Seelye offers an investigation of the United States' peculiar commitment to the federal construction of linear waterways. Winthrop's response to Kamiakin's miniature watershed illustrates the degree to which the easterner had inherited federal ideals that favored the streamlining and straightening of waterways for purposes of commerce and efficient navigation. Compared to the Ohio River and the Erie Canal (1841), grid-like systems of canal commerce produced under federal legislation, Winthrop imagined Kamiakin's wandering ditch as an emblem of political drunkenness, an unconstitutional and anti-federal vision of disorder that lacked the linear structure required for navigation, commerce and commercial expansion (see Seeley 8-12). Although Winthrop confessed that the vine-like network of Kamiakin's clothing and irrigation network might be "understood by the operator," he was certain that any civilized viewer would find the lack of systematic order to be "complex, impolitic, and unconstitutional" (*CS* 166).

Despite the fact that Theodore Winthrop deemed "Kamiakin's Ditch" and gardens an unfit model for national replication, the Yakama leader nevertheless inhabited the semi-arid valley in ways the easterner could only envy. From Winthrop's perspective, Kamiakin was an impressive and resourceful leader, but he was also an obstruction to federal expansion and progress and needed to be uprooted. If the United States was to transform this semi-arid portion of the Washington Territory with irrigation and

development, Winthrop believed that Kamiakin and the Yakamas would need to be removed, but not before teaching easterners the secrets of the land and its waterways. Winthrop's desire to see Kamiakin dislodged is evidenced when he compares the great Yakama irrigator to a wealthy Egyptian Pharaoh who has attained wealth and status by irrigating the Nile River. Winthrop makes this comparison by establishing a pun between "Pharos" and "Pharaoh," allowing him to describe Kamiakin as a light-bearing beacon and a master irrigator -- who must trampled and uprooted by nineteenth-century settlers in their desire to become native by usurping this indigenous "king" from their awaiting national Promised Land (*CS* 167). In this replay of the Puritan errand into the wilderness, Kamiakin is cast as the tyrant Pharaoh (with Jesuitical friends), whose snaky and anti-federal designs are predestined to end and open geographical and political space for newcomers who imagine themselves as a so-called light to the nations.[18]

The trampling of Kamiakin and his irrigated gardens was fulfilled through the Walla Walla Treaty Council (1855) and subsequent Yakima War (1855-1858). These events produced the rhetorical and physical relocation of fourteen tribal groups that now comprise that Yakama Nation and, thus, opened geographical space for settlement and the federal reclamation of land and waterways in the Yakima Valley. In order to expedite the reclamation process, Washington Governor Isaac Stevens and Indian Superintendent Joel Palmer, appointed Kamiakin as "head chief" at The Walla Walla Treaty Council, a political designation that united tribes under the jurisdiction of "a single head" of leadership. From an indigenous perspective, the idea of appointing a single "head chief" was an act of political absurdity, for as Scheuerman and Finley explain, "Kamiakin was 'chief' of only one band Yakamas. No one claimed to be 'head chief' of the whole tribe" (37).

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[18] For more on the concept of the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" see Perry Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1956); and Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1977).

Tension between Kamiakin and Washington Governor Isaac Stevens was reportedly palpable at the Walla Walla Treaty Council. The Yakama leader sat in silence and refused to accept gifts from federal representatives, which caused Stevens to compare Kamiakin to a "panther" or "grizzly bear" (Stevens 52, 38). In an attempt to gain political leverage, the U.S. official pressured and warned Kamiakin that refusing to sign the treaty would guarantee that Yakamas would "walk knee deep in blood," whereas signing the document would assure indigenous peoples open access to ancestral land and waterways for "as long as the sun shines, as long as the mountains stand, and as long as the rivers run." In an effort to avoid violence, Kamiakin became the last Yakama leader to sign the Walla Walla Treaty. According to the priests of St. Joseph's Mission, who were present at the negotiations, he signed the treaty in silence and did so while biting his lips until they bled (Miles, 165-167; Scheuerman and Finley 37-41).

Only weeks after the Walla Walla Treaty Council concluded, the negotiated property boundaries established between the Yakama Nation and the U.S. Government were violated by white miners, whose trespasses on Yakama land resulted in the Yakima War. As historian Clifford E. Trafzer explains, shortly after the council meeting "white miners discovered gold north of the Spokane River. In the ensuing gold rush, miners trespassed on Yakama land, stole horses, raped women, killed innocent people, and triggered a war" (Trafzer, *DSY* 29). Later that summer, as a party of six miners passed through Yakama territory they were killed by the Yakamas in an act of retaliation. As violence between settlers and plateau Indian bands increased, a federal Indian agent named Andrew J. Bolon was sent out to investigate. Bolon sought council with Kamiakin but was instead murdered by the leader's nephew -- one named Mosheel -- who killed the agent as an act of retributive violence against the miners who had murdered his wife and two children (Scheuerman and Finley 45). Kamiakin was not present at any of the massacres, but as "head chief," was cited as instigator and organizer of the violence by newspapers such as the Olympia, Washington, *Pioneer and Democrat.*

As the Yakima War progressed, Kamiakin's relational ties with St. Joseph's Mission implicated the priests as traitors against the U.S. Government. In the fall of 1855, Colonel James Nesmith, under the authority of Major Gabriel Rains, was camped about two miles from the mission. Historian A. J. Splawn indicates that Nesmith "firmly believed that the priests in charge had aided the hostile Yakimas in securing ammunition" (Splawn 266). When military volunteers arrived at the site, they searched and looted the mission, leading to the discovery of a letter that Kamiakin had dictated to Father Pandosy, who was compiling a dictionary and grammar of the Yakama language. In this letter, Kamiakin explained why the white miners and Andrew J. Bolon were murdered, but he also called for reconciliation and the further negotiation of sites on the Columbia River that had not been addressed in the 1855 treaty -- particularly Celilo Falls and Kettle Falls -- ancestral fisheries that were no longer explicitly acknowledged by federal and territorial officials as Indian lands (Scheuerman and Finley 48-49). Military volunteers turned Kamiakin's letter over to Major Rains and the looting of St. Joseph's Mission continued. Then soldiers made a second discovery: gunpowder had been buried in the irrigated gardens. Lieutenant, Philip H. Sheridan, was among the military personnel stationed at the mission during the war. In his memoir, he recalls how mission property was assaulted and destroyed. As Sheridan remembers:

> In digging up the potatoes [a soldier] discovered a half a keg of powder, which had been buried in the garden by the good father to prevent the hostile Indians from getting it to use against the whites. As soon as this was unearthed, wild excitement ensued and a cry arose that Father Pandoza was the person who furnished powder to the Indians; that here was the proof; that at last the mysterious means by which the Indians obtained ammunition was explained – and a rush was made for the mission building. (63)

The soldiers continued their looting, with some parading around the grounds in Father Pandosy's vestments. When the search was finished, they collected "a large heap of dry wood" and piled it on the church floor. In a matter of minutes, St. Joseph's Mission was burned to the ground (Sheridan 62, 64).

After the violence subsided, Major Rains offered a scathing response to Kamiakin's letter that fully detailed the place of the Yakama Nation in the United States' newly acquired Promised Land. Major Rains promised Kamiakin that his "foul deeds" were seen by God: like Cain, who was cursed for murdering his brother, the Yakamas would be marked as "fugitives and vagabonds," destined to forever wander in exile (qtd. in Scheuerman and Finley 50). His statement was not far from the truth. By the time the Yakima War ended, the fourteen tribes and bands comprising the Yakama Nation had ceded 16,920 square miles of territory and retained only 1,875 square miles for their exclusive use. Moreover, twenty-four of the Columbia Plateau leaders were either shot or sentenced to hang. Kamiakin survived, but fled the Yakima Valley, settling northeast of the Palouse River, where he lived until his death in 1877. He was buried in the Palouse River country, but only months later his family discovered a desecrated grave. Kamiakin's head had been removed and carried away like a trophy (Splawn 122; Trafzer *DSY* 34). Soon after, the waterways of the semi-arid Yakima Valley would be transformed by a grid of federal canals and irrigation ditches that nourished the gardens of Euro-American settlers.

From Wasteland to Paradise:
Irrigating the Yakima Valley in the Early Twentieth Century

When Theodore Winthrop completed his journey through the Yakima River Basin, he predicted that brave settlers would soon flock to the Northwest and transform the region through "elaborate new systems of thought and life" (*CS* 90-91). Scheuerman and Finley observe that in years leading up to the Walla Walla Treaty Council and Yakima War, U.S. military officials "failed to grasp the significance of Kamiakin's gardens and grain fields, the tribe's cattle and vast horse herds, or the priests' bountiful orchard" and suspected that the region was "not useful" for the development of civilization (25). However, for settlers and expansionists who migrated to the Yakima

Valley after the Yakima War, Winthrop's vision of progress came to pass and was summed up in one word: irrigation.

In order to transform the semi-arid Yakima Valley into a predestined Promised Land, the economic and ecological landscape had to be transformed through the powers of technology and industry.[19] By 1883, settlers were arriving at the Yakima Valley by way of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The railroad's first year of operation increased the population of the valley from 2,811 to 4,429. By the 1880s, the railroad had brought a total of 13,462 newcomers into the region (Pisani 184). Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant observes that during the late-nineteenth-century railroad companies like the Northern Pacific "not only marketed the fruits of the garden, but lured settlers to the irrigated Eden" with advertising and promotions (126). However, as Winthrop had already witnessed, the problem of aridity in the Yakima Valley seemed to obstruct the possibility of finding paradise in the Yakima River Basin. After all, a biblical vision of the Promised Land which "paints a picture of agricultural abundance, along with fertile soil and provident climate," could hardly be met in a land with an annual rainfall of only 6-10 inches (Ryken 665).

The transformation of the Yakima Valley into an irrigated Eden seemed to take physical shape when Walter N. Granger, a Midwestern water baron, arrived on the scene with plans to turn the region into an oasis in the wilderness. Granger joined forces with

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[19]The concept of *remaking* and *reinventing* the West into a paradise dominates environmental-historical studies of the economic and ecological transformation of the semi-arid West, particularly when questions of religion, nature, and irrigation are in play. Donald Worster's *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (1985), Marc Reisner's *Cadillac Desert: The American Landscape and its Disappearing Water* (1993), Richard White's *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (1995), Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (1999), and Carolyn Merchant's *Reinventing Eden* (2003) all trace the re-invention of western watersheds from different methodological perspectives, yet still emphasize the way the West has been and continues to be re-made in order to meet ideological expectations of paradise.

the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Yakima Canal and Land Company broke ground on the Sunnyside Canal by 1892, which fed a network of ditches that the *Yakima Herald* newspaper insisted would become "the most important system of canals in America" (Dorpat and McCoy 227). As water was channeled through the valley, the region was marketed as a national model of prosperity, a ready-made Promised Land for future settlement. Kirk Munroe, an eastern journalist for *Harper's* visited the valley in 1894, and described the region as the place where "Children of Israel" have come to take root (387). According to Munroe, every house in the irrigated valley "stands by itself, embowered by fruit trees, in yards green with grass of gay with a riotous growth of roses. Every rivulet is a miniature irrigating canal, from which a little lateral reaches to each garden or dooryard, and every householder may use as much water as he pleases" (384-385).

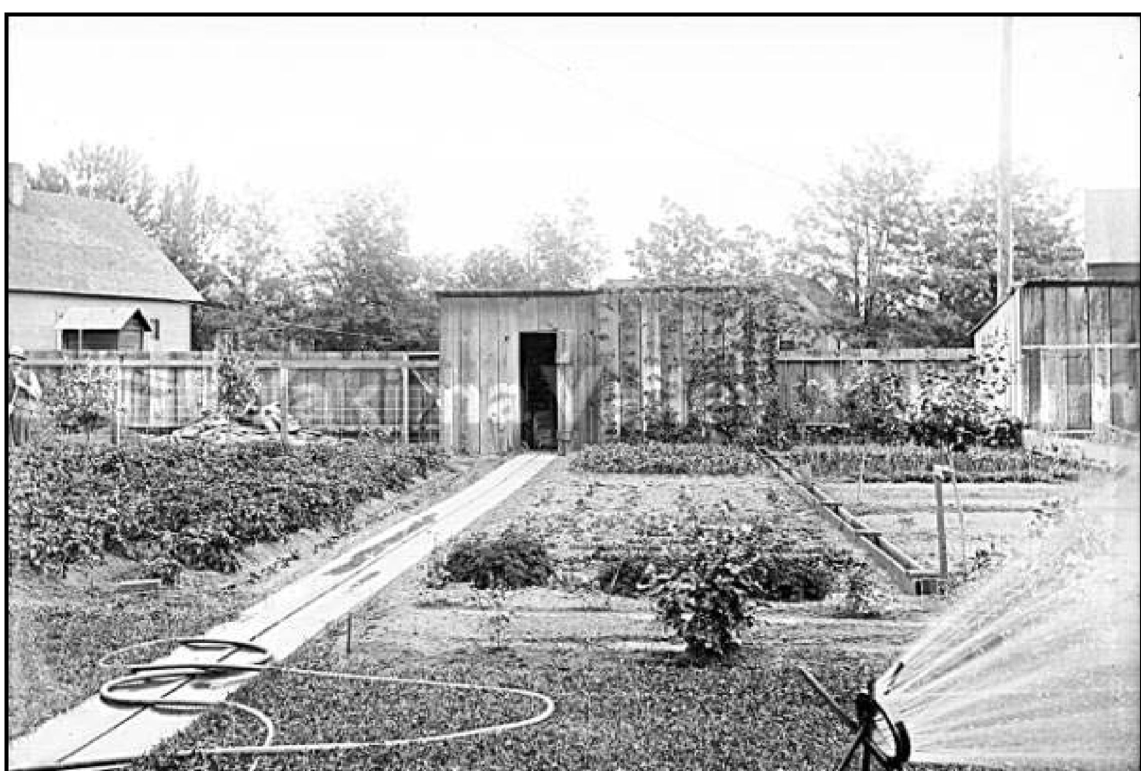

Figure 7. Home Backyard Garden; Sunnyside, Washington (c. 1903). Yakima Valley Museum, Sundquist Research Library. No. 2002-803-532.

Promises of inexhaustible water and cheap land were seductive selling points for westward migration; but accounts like this were a far cry from lived experience in the Yakima Valley. Backyard gardens were one thing, but the large scale management and distribution of water proved to be a far more difficult task. The Sunnyside Canal supplied water to smaller ditches that were dug perpendicular to fields, but these often leaked, broke, or became clogged. Even the seemingly simple task of getting the right amount of water into a field proved to be a challenge for local farmers. As journalist William Dietrich explains, "the trick was to get enough water to produce a 'head' and overcome the friction of liquid against the dirt, but not so much that soil and seed began to wash away. . . . None of this was mechanized, and farmers had to learn by trial and error how to siphon water from their lateral" (244). To make matters worse, "reclamation projects more often than not also diverted anadromous fish runs with it. As a consequence, it was not unusual to see the irrigation canals across vast areas of farmland clogged with dead and dying fish" (Leibhardt Wester 216).

Despite economic and ecological setbacks, the prospect of owning irrigable land was becoming a tangible reality for many settlers of the Yakima Valley, and with the promise of more dependable crop yields, white farmers wanted to develop more land, including irrigable portions of the federally entrusted Yakama Reservation. This desire presented legislative problems, largely because Yakamas owned reservation land and waterways communally rather than individually. In order to weaken Indian property holdings, acreage would have to be distributed to individual Yakamas as irrigable allotments, and then integrated into the Euro-American system of economic exchange. The Dawes Act (1887) addressed local citizens' desire for the reclamation of the Yakama Nation's lands by giving the federal government the right to survey and divide tribal land into individual allotments. The process ultimately divided one third of the reservation into eighty-acre allotments of farmable land (Pisani 184, Leibhardt 83-86). In order to matriculate indigenous lands into a system of capital exchange, all "excess" or "surplus"

lands were then purchased by the federal government and sold to non-Indians, thus, opening additional and affordable acreage to white settlers. As Clifford E. Trafzer explains, "federal agents paid the tribes approximately $1.25 per acre for the excess lands they purchased. In this way, the United States destroyed communal Indian ownership of former reservation lands and, over the years, non-Indians came to own lands on the former Indian reservations" ("The Legacy" 402).

While the Yakama Nation was losing control of reservation lands, white settlers were facing their own problems with the Yakima Valley's stubborn weather patterns. The Yakima Land and Water Company was able to manipulate and distribute water through local canals and ditches, but they still remained at the mercy of the valley's arid weather. Unpredictable and scant seasonal rainfall resulted in erratic distributions of water, particularly during summer months, when glacial run off was thin, rivers were low, and the need for irrigation was at its peak. As William Dietrich explains, private companies "recognized a need for water storage reservoirs in the mountains but lacked the financing or expertise to build them" (244). By 1900, investors wanted out of the irrigation business and Walter N. Granger was forced to sell the Sunnyside Canal to the Washington Irrigation Company, a conglomerate of urban Northwest entrepreneurs who "expanded the system to more than 700 miles of canals and laterals which irrigated almost 44,000 acres" (Dorpat and McCoy 228). Improvements were made, but the new company remained hindered by unpredictable water flow from the Northern Cascades. Small dams and holding reservoirs could solve the problem, but these projects required technology and financing that stretched far beyond the capabilities of regional business. With that said, it did not take long for the Washington Irrigation Company, like its predecessor, to cry out for financial and technological assistance. This time investors turned to the federal government for help.

In 1902, under the administration of Theodore Roosevelt, the U.S. Congress passed the Newlands Reclamation Act, a legislative decision that spawned the Bureau of

Reclamation, a federal organization responsible for the reclamation and equitable distribution of water for purposes of settlement and irrigation across seventeen arid and semi-arid western states. A.J. Splawn, an early settler of the Yakima Valley and Washington State Senator for Yakima County (1903-1905), spearheaded a movement to lure the Bureau of Reclamation to the region. By 1905, the reclamation of the Yakima Valley was a federal priority, generating a wealth of consumer confidence. As Paul Dorpat and Genevive McCoy explain, "between 1902 and 1913 when the price of farmland in the West rose an average of 110 percent, land within the Yakima project, although still unwatered, increased by 5,400 percent – more than any other service project in the country (233). Under the administration of the Bureau of Reclamation and the local advocacy of elected leaders such as A.J. Splawn, the Yakima Valley was transformed from a semi-arid landscape into one of the most profitable agricultural regions in the nation.[20]

Reservoirs and canals engineered by the Bureau of Reclamation stabilized the flow of water and increased economic profits in the Yakima Valley, but the distribution of water was by no means equitable. As federal engineers worked to maximize the Yakima Valley's economic productivity, white policymakers distributed injustices to Native Americans living on the Yakama Reservation by restricting the distribution of water. In 1906, after the U.S. Government purchased Sunnyside Canal, Secretary of the Interior and Director of the Bureau of Reclamation Ethan Allen Hitchcock, "allocated the minimum annual flow so that the Sunnyside Canal, the government's main ditch, received 650 cubic feet per second (c.f.s.) for the forty thousand acres it served, while the

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[20]For more on the prosperity of the Yakima Valley during the early twentieth century see W. Thomas White, "Main Street on the Irrigation Frontier: Sub-Urban Community Building in the Yakima Valley, 1900-1910," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 77.3 (July 1986): 94-103; and G. Thomas Edwards, "'The Early Morning of Yakima's Days of Greatness': The Yakima County Agricultural Boom of 1905-1911," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 73.2 (April 1982): 78-89.

Indians received only 147 c.f.s to service a much large irrigable area" (Pisani 186). Whites who received water prospered, as evidenced by an article published in *The Yakima Daily Republic.* In 1918, a reporter celebrated how irrigated lands throughout the valley had become a "gold mine" that "blessed" farmers with "material wealth," fancy clothes and expensive automobiles ("500 Attend" 1).

The economic and territorial erasure of the Yakama Nation was quietly promoted as the final step in the completion of a Promised Land, a fact evidenced by the work of artists and historians of the Yakima Valley throughout the early-twentieth century. According to William D. Lyman, author of the two-volume *History of the Yakima Valley, Washington* (1919), by the earl- twentieth century the region's transformation from semi-arid wasteland to paradise was ushering in a new era of "poetry of the soil," quite literally a flood of local literary and visual artistry that sang the praises of federal reclamation, while also celebrating the so-called physical and economic death of the Yakama Nation. Lyman, a prominent and prolific Northwest historian, speculated that with the "practical era" of agricultural infrastructure completed, the twentieth century would see "a race of poets and artists . . . bring their tributes of song and brush and music" to honor the Bureau of Reclamation, the strong arm of government that rescued the Yakima Valley from dry landscape and economic drudgery (Lyman, *History* I. 347-348).

Among these expressions of artistry was *Visions Fulfilled: A Symbolical Pageant of the Valleys of the Yakima* (1917), an allegorical-verse pageant written by Susan Lombard Horsley and Alice M. Tenneson, writers from Yakima who composed and directed the pageant with a cast of residents from the Yakima Valley.[21] As the title

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[21] The complete text of *Visions Fulfilled* is available in William D. Lyman, *History of the Yakima Valley, Washington*, Vol. I. (Chicago, IL: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co.,1919), 376-385. To my knowledge, this is the only printed version of the pageant available. There are no scholarly discussions of the production, but it is briefly mentioned in James A. Lichatowich, *Salmon Without Rivers: A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2003), 73. The production may have been performed as part of a celebration recognizing the ratification of the Yakima Valley Historical Society, which also took place in 1917.

suggests, *Visions Fulfilled* is a tale of the pioneering spirit, a recapitulation of the arduous search for a western Promised Land and its achievement in the Yakima Valley. It begins with the history of the "Indian Era," when indigenous "Dust Demons" and a pagan goddess ruled the semi-arid Yakima River Basin. The audience learns that local Indians once captured a woman named "Irrigation" and held her "pinioned fast," until a redemptive band of pioneers and the Bureau of Reclamation arrived to release her from captivity (Lyman, *History* I. 377). For generations "Irrigation" called out to her Indian captives: "Redman, Redman, listen, / Will ye never hear me as I cry?", but her plea was unheard, for the Yakamas were agents of "the Goddess of hunger, Famine" who vowed to keep Irrigation "forever in bonds" (Lyman, *History* I. 378). The audience of Horsley and Tenneson's vision are encouraged to believe that the virginal maiden will be released by a band of "blue-coated soldiers" who "hear her words / And try to break her bonds," but violence between whites and Indians erupts and spectators are reminded that Yakamas are an "ancient foe" who were unwilling to accept the "time when they must go" (Lyman, *History* I. 378-379).

Predictably, redemption arrives in the Yakima Valley when "Irrigation" is rescued by "Pioneer," who hears the maiden calling and releases her from bondage (Lyman, *History* I. 379). Speaking on behalf of all farmers and settlers, the innovative "Pioneer" scatters the "Dust Demons" and unveils the alluring power of the Yakima Valley's untapped fertility when he states: "Ah, it is a lovely maiden, / We would strive to succor your distress. / Tell us how to free you, / That our effort shall receive success" (Lyman, *History* I. 380). The now earthbound maiden offers her virginal secrets to "Pioneer" and promises to submit to his husbandry and the technological manipulation of her body, enacting historian Carolyn Merchant's claim that the reinvention of Eden always depends upon "undeveloped 'virgin' land whose bountiful potential can be realized through human male ingenuity" (118).

It is worth noting that when Timothy Egan retraced Theodore Winthrop's steps through the same region in the late 1980s, he too celebrated the work of agrarian husbands who were manipulating the feminized orchards of the Yakima Valley. In *The Good Rain: Across Time and Terrain in the Pacific Northwest,* Egan declares that "according to natural law, nothing should grow [in the Yakima Valley] but sage and scrub brush," but as he stood above the valley and did a "360 head turn," he saw how the valley was a technologically enhanced womb of fertility that was nourished by an "irrigation artery" spewing water over cherries, grapes, asparagus, peaches, prunes, and "apples for the world" (*TGR* 202). After tasting one such apple, "the fruit Eve used to tempt Adam," Egan meets a host of agrarian "husbands" who educate him on the ways chemicals, genetic alteration and "a pollination orgy" can be used to manipulate the Yakima Valley's reproductive cycles until it has "reached climax" like "a dog in heat" (*TGR* 203, 202, 207). Initially, Egan seems disturbed by the technological manipulation of the valley, but his anxieties fade after he consumes the fruits of the valley, "a dinner of peppercorn duck, slices of scarlet tomatoes, cucumbers, squash bread and a bottle of Semillon" (*TGR* 206). Once satisfied by these pleasures of the land, Egan concludes that the Yakima Valley is a "young bride" destined "to begin a full life" as a satisfying embodiment of the Promised Land (*TGR* 206, 212).

According to "Irrigation," the main character of *Visions Fulfilled*, the suppressed fertility and fruits of the Yakima Valley celebrated by Timothy Egan were first released when "Pioneer" settlers came to "chain" and manipulate the region's waterways through the construction of dams, canals, and irrigation laterals. In order to create a Promised Land in the Yakima Valley, "Irrigation" invites agrarian husbands to bind her waterways and reproduce her bounty:

> Chain the river's waters.
> There shall grow
> Everywhere you pour them
> Fairest flowers and what men may need

> Of old earth's best products.
> This small valley many lands may feed. (Lyman, *History* I. 380)

Once the "Pioneer" follows the maiden's instructions, a chorus of songs arises from "Grains and Grasses" and an allegorical character named "Railroad" arrives to transport the verdant produce of the Yakima Valley's manipulated body throughout the nation. This prosperity sends the "Dust Demons" into a state of turmoil and revolt, but as "hundreds" of pioneers "rapidly invade" the valley, more ditches and channels are dug and the prophetic vision of "Irrigation" flourishes without restraint and the Yakima Valley becomes a Promised Land that is the envy of the Yakama Nation:

> [Irrigation] freed her arms, her body moves with grace,
> And, tho her feet are fettered still, the place
> Has been transformed from desert waste of sand
> By irrigation to a 'Promised Land.' (Lyman, *History* I. 381)

Amid this anthem of praise, the Yakamas cast as "Dust Demons" threaten to recapture and control their partially released maiden, causing "Irrigation" to distribute secrets that will conquer the Indians through the colonizing power of harnessed waters. The settlers experiment with waterwheels and flumes, which cause songs of prosperity and praise to arise from fertile gardens, cottages, and the mouths of sweet singing "children at play." These sounds of joy send the Yakama Nation into the Cascade Mountains, where they stage a final battle, invoking "Nature's evil powers" to destabilize the steady flow of water that has caused the region and its citizens to prosper (Lyman, *History* I. 382).

When members of the Yakama Nation successfully manipulate the forces of nature and minimize the flow of glacial water, the oppressed citizens of the Yakima Valley cry out to the federal government for deliverance. Their songs stretch across the Rocky Mountains to "Uncle Sam," a god-like deliverer who sends "his daughter, Reclamation" to vanquish the indigenous "Dust Demons" of drought forever. Armed with "bridges" and "tunnels," they clear the forests, drain the swamps, and build dams to make the snows "form a lake" of water that can be systematically distributed throughout the valley (Lyman, *History* I. 382-383). Through the reclamation efforts of white

pioneers and the federal government, the bound virgin of "Irrigation" finally becomes a Promised Land of agricultural production that she was predestined to become, leaving her persecutors – the Yakama Nation – in a state of social and economic turmoil.

It is not by chance that as *Visions Fulfilled* draws to a close every character but the "Redman" bows a knee to "Uncle Sam" and "Reclamation." In fact, by the end of the pageant, images of the Yakama Nation are nowhere to be found. "Uncle Sam" and his industrious army of engineers have reduced them to a "scanty fare" and they are "scattered" in "defeat." While celebrating the physical and economic erasure of the Yakama Nation, the pageant rather ironically concludes by calling citizens of the Yakima Valley to define themselves through acts of charity and economic justice. The playwrights remind viewers that citizens of the Yakima Valley must always remember that in this prosperous community "wealth" is something to "share / With others," for in the Promised Land "no oppression [can] bear / Upon the weak" (Lyman, *History* I. 385).

Memorializing the Dead: Returning to Kamiakin's Irrigated Garden

Despite the Yakima Valley's hostility toward neighboring members of the Yakama Nation, one image -- that of Kamiakin -- proved to be exempt from local disdain, largely because prominent members of the valley claimed him as the father of irrigation, the technological innovation that led to their own wealth and prosperity. Beginning in 1917, local organizations such as The Yakima Historical Society and Pioneers' Association honored the work of the Bureau of Reclamation by "erecting monuments" and "marking historic spots" that traced the region's miraculous transformation from wasteland to Promised Land (Lyman, *History* I. 891). It was through the efforts of such organizations that Theodore Winthrop and Kamiakin crossed paths again, this time in 1918, during a memorial ceremony for Kamiakin and his irrigated gardens, land that was now territory owned by white settlers, but nevertheless set apart as "a sacred spot" in the Yakima Valley (*YHSM* 35).

Articles printed in *The Yakima Daily Republic* provide an indication of just how significant the memorialization of Kamiakin's Garden was to the citizens of Yakima Valley.[22] According to local reporters, the much anticipated event was scheduled to bring regional celebrities and "leading historians of the Northwest" to the valley for an afternoon of fanfare and celebration ("Pioneers' Program" 3). Among the most anticipated guests were General Hazard Stevens, son of Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens; William P. Bonney, Secretary of the Washington State Historical Society; as well as Professors Edmond S. Meany and William D. Lyman, prolific and authoritative historians on all matters pertaining to the Pacific Northwest (Meany 240). According to Lyman, who later provided an account of the celebration in his two-volume, *History of the Yakima Valley, Washington* (1919), more than five-hundred whites and Indians gathered at a farm near Tampico, just a few miles from the reconstructed St. Joseph's Mission. They came to witness the driving of iron post, a stake that would mark where "Kamiakin's irrigating canal had passed" (Lyman, *History*, I., 891).

The Yakima Daily Republic reported that those in attendance were treated to an afternoon of music, food, horseshoe throwing contests, pony races, and more than a dozen speeches. General Hazard Stevens -- who was a child at the Walla Walla Treaty Council when his father, Isaac Stevens, negotiated with Kamiakin -- spoke to the gatherers about the historical and political significant of the 1855 treaty, while Edmond S. Meany talked about the history of irrigation and growing prosperity in the Yakima Valley. The event culminated when Fred Parker, President of the Pioneers' Society; W.P. Bonney, Secretary of the Washington State Historical Society; and John Lynch, a

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[22]For more on the memorialization of Kamiakin's Garden see the following: "Historians of State Will Meet at Yakima," *The Yakima Daily Republic* (20 June 1918); "Pioneers' Program Has Many Features: Old-Timers Will Make Merry and Recall Former Days Tomorrow in Ahtahum," *The Yakima Daily Republic* (29 June 1918): 3; "500 Attend Annual Pioneers' Picnic: Tribute is Paid to Kamiakin, the Father of Irrigation in the Yakima Valley," *The Yakima Herald Republic* (1 July 1918): 1; and Edmond S. Meany, "Historic Gardens of Chief Kamiakin." *Washington Historical Quarterly* 9 (1918): 240.

Yakima Attorney and Secretary of the Pioneers' Association, drove an iron stake five feet into the ground to mark Kamiakin's Garden, the home to a prosperous Indian leader and "father of irrigation in the Yakima Valley" ("500 Attend" 1).

Figure 8. The Marking of Kamiakin's Garden, June 30, 1918. (Fred Parker, Right; John Lynch, Left). Yakima Valley Museum, Sundquist Research Library. No. 2001-801-466.

The iron post contained historical records prepared by Margaret C. Splawn, widow of the late politician and early settler A.J. Splawn, whose historical memoir, *Ka-mi-akin: The Last Hero of the Yakimas* (1917) was an authoritative history of the Yakima Valley. That afternoon, Mrs. Splawn was honored to recount the history of Kamiakin's Garden through memories of her late husband and the words of Theodore Winthrop, the author of the still popular memoir, *The Canoe and the Saddle*. Five years before the commemorative gathering, Tacoma, Washington, publisher and writer, John H. Williams, had issued a highly anticipated fifty-year commemorative edition of *The Canoe and the*

Saddle (1913). It included Winthrop's unpublished journals, as well as sixteen color plates, detailed historical appendices, and over one hundred illustrations. Several citizens in attendance at the event owned copies of this luxurious and scholarly edition. The late A.J. Splawn, for example, cited heavily from the 1913 edition throughout *Ka-mi-akin: The Last Hero of the Yakimas* (1917), and it is likely that historian William D. Lyman, who was working on the two-volume tome, *History of the Yakima Valley, Washington* (1919), also owned a copy. In his monumental history of the region, Lyman cites Winthrop as "a gifted scholar, poet and soldier" and "the most brilliant of all writers," whose memoir of the early Pacific Northwest has "no rival for literary excellence" (*History*, I. 92).

Given the local popularity of Theodore Winthrop and social prestige attached to the reissued edition of *The Canoe and the Saddle* (1913), it is probable that Euro-Americans in the audience recognized Margaret C. Splawn's allusions to the legendary easterner and his memoir. At one point, Splawn echoed Winthrop's prose by calling Kamiakin a "gentleman" who was "every inch a king," only this time the description was offered with reverence and without sarcasm by a group of prosperous whites still committed to becoming native to the Yakima Valley (*CS* 166). Decades after the Walla Walla Treaty and Yakima War, Kamiakin, the once vilified leader, was now revised and remembered as a peace keeping man who "played an important part in both the agricultural and religious history" of the Yakima Valley (*YHSM,* 1918, 33-34). While Splawn's observations are technically accurate, they are equally problematic, for they suggest that the social and economic gap between Kamiakin and the settlers who came to reclaim the valley was nonexistent. Listeners in attendance were led to believe that Kamiakin -- like the expansionists and reclamation engineers who came after him -- was an innovative and "self made man" who "rose to the highest place through sheer force of ability as an organizer and leader," when, in fact, he was more often the object of public vilification and abuse (*YHSM,* 1918, 33-34).

On the surface, the memorialization of Kamiakin's Garden certainly seemed like an honorable and celebratory occasion, but a closer look indicates that it was an event fraught with irony and historical inconsistencies. Only a decade earlier honored guest General Hazard Stevens had described Kamiakin as a violent man "whose crafty wiles never slept," while historian William D. Lyman had written that Kamiakin was a man "typical in Indian treachery and secretiveness" (Stevens 61; Lyman, *Columbia River* 216). Moreover, articles that document the event in *The Yakima Daily Republic* illustrate that although "Indians and white men mingled together" at the celebration, they did so with lines of ethnic and economic status clearly established. According to one reporter, only two "full blooded Indians" were in attendance that afternoon; the first, a Methodist minister named Rev. Stwire G. Waters; and the second, a college student named Daniel Simmons who was home for the summer. According to the reporter, both Indian men were well dressed and "showed the progress of the Indian toward civilization," while the majority of other Yakamas in attendance -- "their less fortunate brethren" -- were "squatting on the ground in approved Indian style" ("500 Attend" 1).

While the Yakima Historical Society and Pioneer Association gathered to remember Kamiakin as a great leader of the Yakama Nation, the white memorialists, like many others of their day, failed to recognize their complicit participation in the social and economic marginalization of the Yakama Nation. That afternoon, the audience's ears were surely tuned to Margaret C. Splawn's clever use of *The Canoe and the Saddle*, but it is unlikely that anyone questioned her assertion that settlers and the federal government had irrigated the Yakima Valley with opportunistic equity. No one remarked that settlement was accomplished by nationalist rhetoric and physical force. For most in attendance, it was more important that General Hazard Stevens praised his treaty-making father, and that A.J. Splawn, the recently deceased historian and politician who coaxed

the Bureau of Reclamation into the region, was remembered as the true father of the Yakima Valley's prosperity through federal irrigation projects.[23]

Only sixty years after Theodore Winthrop first met Kamiakin at St. Joseph's Mission, white farmers, memorial makers, and the Bureau of Reclamation now controlled land, water rights, and agricultural commerce, leaving the members of the Yakama Nation to dwell in something less than a Promised Land. Perhaps the most telling illustration of this fact is found in an advertisement printed in *The Yakima Daily Republic* only days before the memorialization ceremony at Kamiakin's Garden. The article announced that "67 allotments of Indian land, aggregating 4428 acres, have been placed on sale" in tracts ranging from 40 to 160 acres in size ("Reservation" 3). In other words, thirty years after The Dawes Act (1887), white citizens of the Yakima Valley were still purchasing lands formerly entrusted to the Yakima Nation, even as they memorialized the life and accomplishments of the Yakamas' most remembered and displaced leader.

The New Deal in the Promised Land:
Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Yakima Valley

In 1882, citizens of the Yakima Valley were just beginning to imagine the economic possibilities of railroads and irrigated lands, when Sara Roosevelt, the wealthy wife of James, gave birth to a son named Franklin in Hyde Park, New York. Strangely enough, young Franklin Roosevelt descended (through his father) from William Henry Aspinwall, the one-time employer of Theodore Winthrop who came to find paradise in the Pacific Northwest.[24] After pursuing a promising political career as Senator for New

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[23] Although Kamiakin was recognized as the "Father of Irrigation in the Yakima Valley," A.J. Splawn's obituary, which covered two full pages of the *Yakima Morning Herald*, honored Splawn, the first mayor of North Yakima, as the political catalyst who brought the Bureau of Reclamation into the Yakima Valley ("Former Mayor" 1, 5).

[24] For more on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's genealogy and his relationship to the William Henry Aspinwall family see Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny, 1882-1928* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), 23-24; and Robert Cantwell, *The Hidden Northwest* (Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1972), 114-115.

York (1910-1913), followed by an appointment as Secretary to the Navy (1913-1920) and a campaign for Democratic Party Vice-President (1920), Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected to Governor of New York (1929-1932) and finally, President of the United States (1932-1945). Like the wealthy and idealistic Theodore Winthrop who searched for a western Promised Land seventy years earlier, President Roosevelt turned to the Yakima Valley in the 1920s, and used the region as a model for more elaborate transformations of the Pacific Northwest Promised Land that could serve the needs of the entire nation.

In 1920, only two years after the memorialization of Kamiakin's Garden, Vice-Presidential candidate, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, published an article in *Harvey's Weekly*, stating that when it came to the management of public lands, the United States must to devote itself to issues of "development rather than conservation" (qtd. in Nixon, II. 38). This statement caught the attention of Percy W. Foote, Aide to the Secretary of the Navy, who, in August 1920, informed Roosevelt that within the otherwise undeveloped Columbia River Basin "the Yakima Valley in the State of Washington" stood as a model case study "of what 'development' means." According to Foote, the state possessed "millions of acres" of "worthless" land that could be transformed "into verdant farms," but only if waters from the Columbia were "turned on the land" (Nixon, I. 37). Later that month, Roosevelt surveyed the Columbia River Basin first-hand, while in route to make a campaign speech in Spokane, Washington. While traveling through the semi-arid landscape he meditated upon the watershed and its "mighty possibilities" for irrigation, river navigation, and the production of hydroelectric power (Nixon, II. 132). Surveying the future from a train car, the young politician drew energy from the Columbia River and prepared a speech for the people of Spokane to be given later that day. He wrote:

> As we were coming down the [Columbia] River today, I could not help thinking, as everyone does, of all that water running down unchecked to the sea. It is not a problem of the State of Washington; it is not a problem of the state of Idaho; it is a problem that touches all the other States in the Union. It is a

> problem that interests us way back in old New York State.
> (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1934")

Roosevelt's vision for expanding the Columbia River Promised Land through a massive reclamation effort remained dormant until 1932, when he ran as the Democratic Party Candidate for President of the United States.

That year, while campaigning in Portland, Oregon, Roosevelt told a crowd of gatherers that "the next great hydroelectric development to be undertaken by the federal government must be on the Columbia River" (Lowitt 157). It was a well-staged appearance and well-timed statement, particularly considering that the Army Corps of Engineers had just finished the "308 Reports," which assessed the Columbia River's wasted power and proposed the construction of ten hydroelectric dams on the main stem of the waterway (Billington and Jackson 153). When Roosevelt took office the following year, it did not take long for the federal vision to become reality. Construction and excavation on the Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams began in 1933 and U.S. citizens were encouraged to view these monuments of concrete and steel as a source of jobs that could help ameliorate the Great Depression.

As President Roosevelt and the Bureau of Reclamation searched for ways to put displaced American laborers back to work with public works projects, the flourishing of the Yakima Valley became the proof case and "testing laboratory for what may occur on a larger scale at Grand Coulee" (Neuberger, "The Columbia . . ." 440). In Roosevelt's mind, the Yakima Valley provided an important, albeit somewhat ambiguous model of progressive, regional capitalist development through public and private works. The Northwest, as he surmised, needed a more diversified economy than apples and sugar beets of the Yakima Valley, and Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams were marketed as an economic cure (Nixon, II. 417). Originally, President Roosevelt believed that Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams would pave the way for "decentralized industries," allowing companies and laborers in the Pacific Northwest to "fill purely local needs and not export their production beyond the Columbia Basin" (Nixon, II. 417). However, the onset of the

Great Depression (1929-1941) was followed by World War II (1939-1945) and the pressures of war increased the need for energy and new production, all of which transformed the Columbia River Basin into the most technologically developed watershed in the world. New Deal dams and their atomic counterpart, Hanford Engineer Works (1943-1945), would become federal monuments to economic progress that provided jobs and sustained national security during World War II.

The thousands of displaced laborers who constructed Grand Coulee and Hanford Engineer Works during the 1930s and 1940s certainly found employment and varying degrees of socio-economic stability, but many were unable to locate the paradise envisioned by Roosevelt and the New Deal. In fact, the literary accounts of laborers' lives -- as told by their descendents -- present quite different, but equally important histories that provide voice to unknown workers, while also tracing the regional, national, and international repercussions of a federal reclamation process that continues to radiate and resonate throughout the so-called Promised Land of the Pacific Northwest.

CHAPTER II:
THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR LABORS:
FATHERS AND SONS, NEW DEAL DAMS, AND
HANFORD ENGINEER WORKS, 1930s-1940s

In *The Federal Landscape: An Economic History of the Twentieth-Century West* (1999), historian Gerald D. Nash locates the "indelible stamp" the federal government made on the Columbia River Basin during the Great Depression in the form of Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams (26). The first project, Bonneville Dam (1933-1937), was engineered and constructed by the Army Corps of Engineers for hydroelectric production and inland navigation to and from the Pacific Ocean. Located just east of Portland, Oregon, this low-dam was designed with "an elaborate system of fishways" to protect the spawning grounds of salmon that migrate up the Columbia River (Nash, *Federal* 26). By contrast, the second project, Grand Coulee Dam (1933-1942), located 90 miles northwest of Spokane, Washington, was engineered by the Bureau of Reclamation to be the largest concrete structure ever built by mankind. This 550 foot high dam provides no navigational benefits and ended salmon migration for over half of the Columbia River Basin, but due to its capacity for hydroelectric output and irrigation the project became a federal "showcase of the potential of dam projects in regional economic development" (Nash, *Federal* 27).

Originally, Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams were designed to provide jobs for thousands of Great Depression laborers, diversify the region's economy, and re-align agricultural production from the drought stricken Great Plains to irrigated lands in the relatively unpopulated Pacific Northwest. On the Great Plains, at least "400,000 farm families lost everything they had" and the construction of New Deal dams during the Great Depression "commanded national and international attention" as the United States set out to alleviate agricultural and economic drought by re-making the Columbia River into a "promised land for the people of the Pacific Northwest" (Nash, *Federal* 27; Lowitt 152). The seeds of this vision were planted by the Army Corps of Engineers "308 Reports" (1932), an assessment of the Columbia River's latent power that called for the

construction of ten multi-use dams to be constructed on the main-stem of the waterway for purposes of navigation, hydroelectric production and irrigation (Billington and Jackson 153). When Roosevelt took office in 1933, the vision of a "planned promised land" commenced almost immediately, with construction on Bonneville and Grand Coulee Dam starting that same year (Lowitt 152). During his Second Inaugural Address (1937), with Bonneville Dam nearly completed and Grand Coulee Dam well on its way, the President assessed the progress of the New Deal and posed sweeping world-historical questions with profound implications for the Pacific Northwest: "Shall we call this the promised land? Or, shall we continue on our way? (Zevin 90). That question was answered through the Reclamation Act of 1939, a legislative decision that paved the way for all of the hydroelectric dams proposed in the Army Corps of Engineers 308 Report, transforming the Columbia River into what Richard White aptly calls an "organic machine" (*Organic* 108).

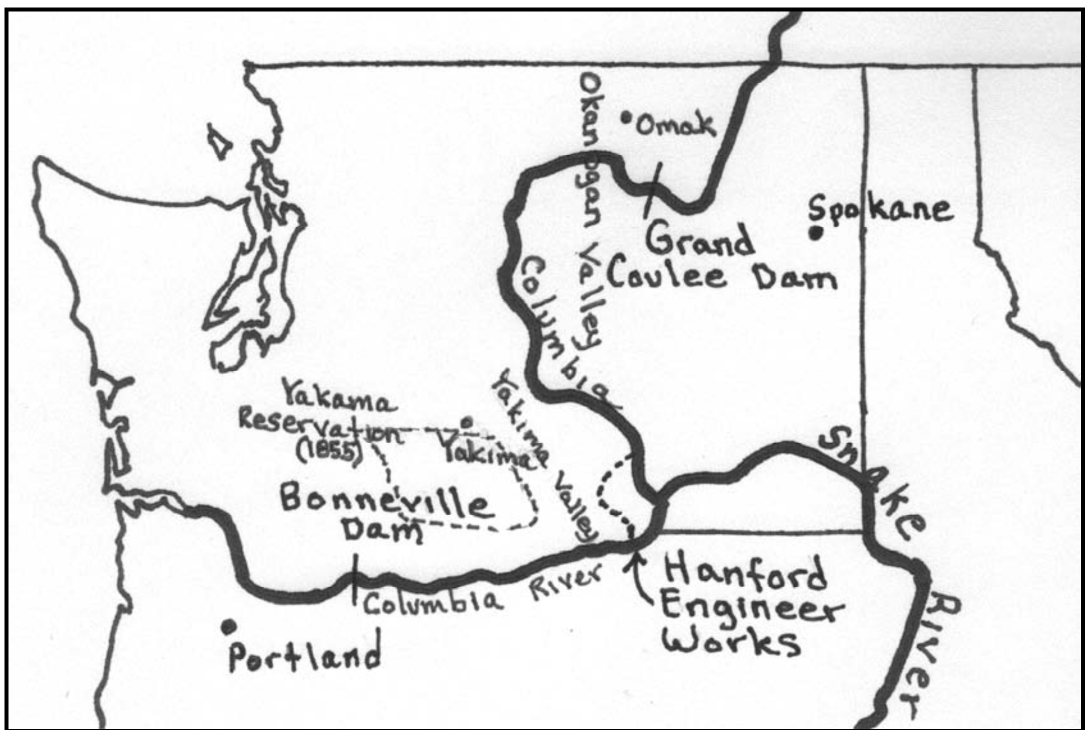

Figure 9. Map of Bonneville Dam, Grand Coulee Dam, and Hanford Engineer Works

During the Great Depression, Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams provided thousands of jobs for Midwestern and Southern laborers; however, after the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor (1941), the federal government revised the management of the Columbia River Basin to meet the needs of a nation at war. Between 1941 and 1945 the War Production Board (1942) pushed the Bonneville Power Administration to increase its "power output by a whopping 400 percent, of which 90 percent was consumed by the new war industries up and down the Pacific Coast" (Nash, *World War II* 149). Shipyards, the Boeing airplane production plant, and five aluminum mills all drew from low-cost hydroelectric power to generate military implements for the wartime effort. In addition, "the cheap power available from Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams" persuaded the federal government to add a third concrete monument to the geography of Columbia River Basin, "the world's largest plutonium-producing plant at Hanford, Washington"-- making the Pacific Northwest one of the most important military production sites in the United States (Nash, *World War II*, 7). As Richard White explains:

> During World War II, electricity produced from [Bonneville and Grand Coulee] dams went almost totally to defense. National defense, in turn, gave the region an industrial base it so longer for. The dams powered the shipyards of Portland, Vancouver, and Seattle, the aluminum mills the Defense Plant Corporation built across the Northwest, and the factories that turned aluminum into airplanes. They supplied power to the top secret project at Hanford which was producing plutonium for the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki. (72)

All of these jobs required laborers, thousands or them, which caused the population of the Pacific Northwest to increase by a fifth over the war era. As Robert E. Ficken notes, "between 1940 and 1942 alone, over 200,000 newcomers took up jobs in defense industries of Puget Sound and the Columbia River. Shipbuilders employed 170,000 laborers in 1943. Boeing employment reached 50,000 in 1944, a year in which the company produced $600 million worth of airplanes for the government" ("Grand Coulee and Hanford" 26). At the same time, between 1943 and 1945, some 137,000 laborers and

their families lived and worked at Hanford Engineer Works, home to the first production scale nuclear reactors and plutonium processing plants in the world (Sanger 68; Morgan, *The Dam* 53).[25]

Journalists and historians who have written about Grand Coulee Dam (1933-1942) and Hanford Engineer Works (1943-1945) often use staggering statistics and superlative phrases to communicate the massive presence and monumental changes initiated by the largest hydroelectric dam and plutonium processing plant built in the United States. In 1937, for example, at the peak of construction, Grand Coulee Dam provided jobs for more than 7,000 laborers. During that time, journalist Richard L. Neuberger attempted to harness the magnitude of the project with words and statistics in *Our Promised Land* (1938), a work of literary journalism about Grand Coulee Dam that supported the socio-economic renewal of the Pacific Northwest through the construction of federal dams. After working on location to collect histories and interviews, Neuberger noted that the phrase "the largest in the world" was among the most oft-spoken lines at the dam (73). As Neuberger explains, at Grand Coulee Dam:

> The cement-mixing plant is the largest in the world. The spillway will be the largest in the world. The river behind the dam will be backed up into the longest artificial lake in the world, which will extend to the Canadian boundary, one hundred fifty-one miles away, and will bury Kettle Falls, a thirty-six-foot drop fifty miles above Grand Coulee, beneath one hundred feet of water. The powerhouse will be the largest in the world – almost as long as two city blocks. The belt conveyor, which carries dirt from the excavation to a neighboring ravine and dumps it there, is the largest in the world; it is a mile in length and has already dumped a pile of waste as high a twenty-story skyscraper. (93)

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[25] In *Working on the Bomb: An Oral History of WWII at Hanford* (1995), S.L. Sanger writes, "DuPont's unpublished company history of Hanford, on file at the Hagley Museum and Library at Wilmington, Delaware, said that some 137,000 thousand persons moved through Hanford, during the two-year construction period from March, 1943, until February, 1945, when Camp Hanford was abandoned (68).

Language failed to translate the size of the Grand Coulee construction site, for when completed the dam would "exceed the twenty next largest dams in the country combined" and "contain enough concrete to build a standard automobile highway from Philadelphia to Seattle and back by way of Los Angeles" (*Promised* 73).

Between 1943 and1945, some 137,000 laborers and their families came through Hanford Camp, working to complete infrastructure for the first nuclear reactors used to produce the first production grade plutonium the world would ever see. The camp began as a village of tents along the Columbia River, but within a matter of months it too was transformed into a city that could only be described by way of staggering statistics. In the summer of 1944, construction payroll peaked at 45,096 employees; however, hundreds of new laborers arrived each day, replacing those who had fled the scorching heat and dust storms that produced a record high twenty-one percent turnover rate that summer (Sanger 68, Van Arsdol 50). In *Working on the Bomb: An Oral History of WWII Hanford* (1995), S.L. Sanger faced the challenge of translating the almost unimaginable magnitude of Hanford Engineer Works -- and the work that served it -- through words and statistics. Like Grand Coulee Dam, this federal-reserve is typically defined with superlative descriptions and mind-boggling calculations. As Sanger explains:

> Eventually, [Hanford Camp] included 1,175 buildings, most of them living quarters, varying from the 131 H-shaped barracks with beds for 190 persons, to some 900 huts holding from 10 to 20 men. The camp was a full-service town with banks, hospital, eight mess halls, taverns, movies, an auditorium for sports and dances, fire and police departments, baseball fields and a swimming pool. (68)

In 1944, at the peak of site construction, "eight mess halls each served 2,700 persons three times a day, and taverns sold 12,000 gallons of beer a week," and the camp boasted the largest general delivery post office in the world (Sanger 68).

While superlative descriptions of the sublime federal projects of Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works are not difficult to find, the personal histories of workers who constructed these federal monuments are surprisingly scarce. In *The*

Organic Machine (1995), historian Richard White reflects on the challenge of tracing the lives of laborers who worked on Grand Coulee Dam from 1933-1942, and notes that workers, like the materials they manufactured, were typically "reduced to the barrage of statistics that surrounded the dam" (63). At one stage or another, more than 12,000 peopled worked on the construction site, but their lives as laborers and future inhabitants of the Pacific Northwest remain largely unknown. Their faces exist in photographs and pamphlets of the 1930s and 1940s, but these images produced by the Bureau of Reclamation typically depict Grand Coulee laborers as anonymous figures without names or personal histories. As White explains:

> [At Grand Coulee Dam] workers appear en masse: workers lining up for their pay, for their meals. . . .We know they were young men. In 1937 nearly 60 percent of them were under thirty; the majority of them were unmarried. The sum of their experience was the 100 million man-hours of work that went into the dam. Only occasionally names appear to go with the thousands of pictures: Harvey Henke, Louie Eylar, Clayton Hanson. But there is no other information. They exist in the pamphlets, the brochures, the publicity shots as representative types. Only their work seems to matter (*Organic* 63).

Taking White's observation further, this pattern of anonymity and erasure even extends beyond federal photographs and pamphlets and into works of literary journalism, historical novels, and the federally commissioned songs that Woody Guthrie wrote about Grand Coulee and Bonneville dams in the early 1940s.[26]

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[26]For more on Woody Guthrie's short-term employment as a songwriter with the Bonneville Power Administration see Robert C. Carriker, "Ten Dollars a Song: Woody Guthrie Sells his Talent to the Bonneville Power Administration," *Columbia: The Magazine of Northwest History* 15.1 (Spring 2001): 32-36; and Mark Pedelty, "Woody Guthrie and the Columbia River: Propaganda, Art, and Irony," *Popular Music and Society* 31.3 (July 2008), 329-355.

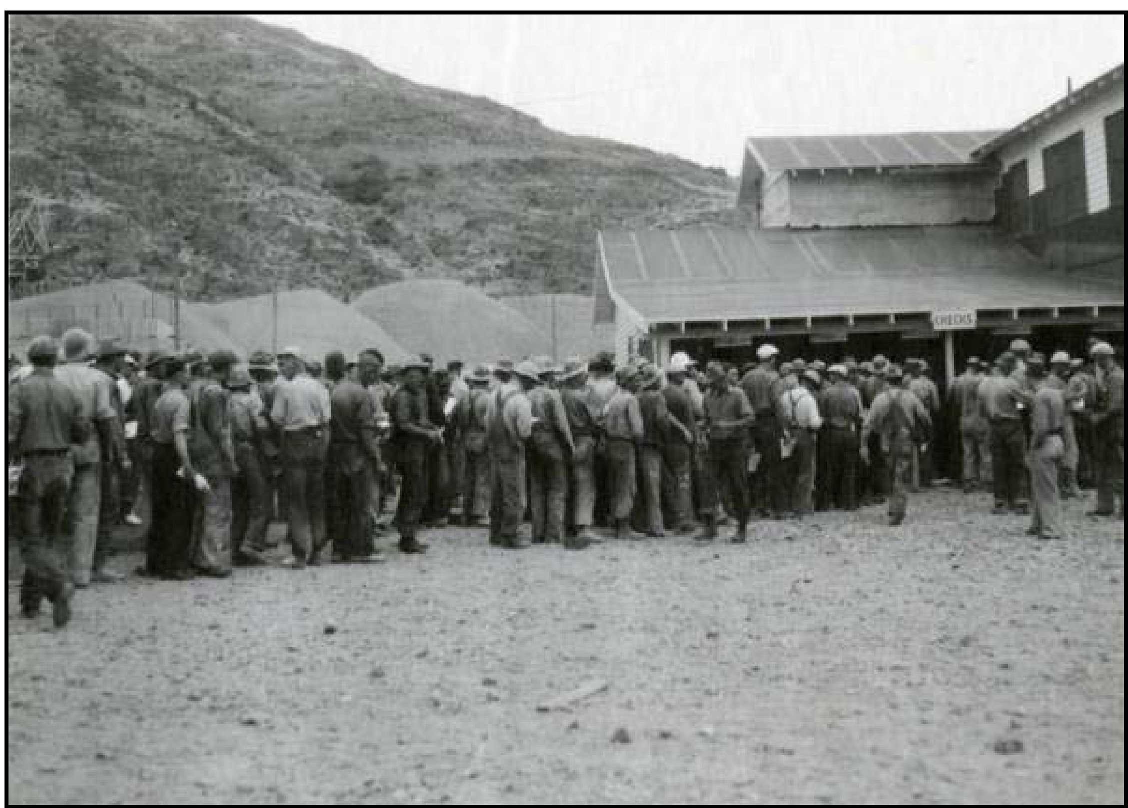

Figure 10. Grand Coulee Dam Workers Receiving Weekly Paychecks at a Contractor's Office, 1936. Washington State University, Special Collections. No. 40b5v4p329.

Working alongside the Bonneville Power Administration and the Bureau of Reclamation, a host of regional journalists and historical novelists promoted their own visions of hydroelectric prosperity through artistic expressions that endorsed the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin. Contemporary works of literary journalism such as Richard L. Neuberger's *Our Promised Land* (1938) and Murray Morgan's *The Columbia: Powerhouse of the West* (1949) documented the federal reclamation of the Columbia River, endorsing the promise of socio-economic renewal through the construction of federal dams.[27] While these works do make occasional references to the

[27] In 1949, after serving as a U.S. Army officer in World War II, Richard L. Neuberger (1912-1960) was elected to the Oregon Senate; from 1955-1960 he served as a United States Senator for Oregon. Murray Morgan (1916-2000) was a popular journalist and historian of the Pacific Northwest. From the 1940s to 2000, he published more than twenty volumes on life and

lives and working conditions of Grand Coulee laborers, the journalists' unabashed support for the federal reclamation process depict a false reality by assuming that every laborer who worked at Grand Coulee or Bonneville dams was destined to inherit the benefits of a New Deal Promised Land. Likewise, regional novelists Margaret Thompson (1892-1969) and Nard Jones (1904-1972), also supported the construction of hydroelectric dams with historical novels such as *Space for Living: A Novel of the Grand Coulee and Columbia Basin* (1944) and *Still to the West* (1946), but the lives of laborers are entirely absent from these works.[28]

For many, the most memorable and authentic accounts of work at Grand Coulee Dam are articulated in Woody Guthrie's (1912-1967) twenty-six Columbia River songs that were commissioned by the Bonneville Power Administration in 1941. In 1939, shortly after the publication of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, President Roosevelt wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, explaining how reclamation projects at Bonneville and Grand Coulee would put an end to the "shiftless" and "adrift" people of the American West, what he called the "'The Grapes of Wrath' families of the nation" (Nixon, II. 406). Not by chance, two years later, the Bonneville Power Administration commissioned Woody Guthrie, the living embodiment of Tom

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labor conditions in the Pacific Northwest. For more on Morgan's life and work see the following: Nicholas O'Connell, *At the Field's End* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1998), 312-322.

[28] Margaret Thompson (1937-1969) was a prolific writer and Northwest conservationist between the 1930s and 1950s. In addition to works of fiction and nonfiction, she was the editor of the Seattle based *Conservation Newsletter* and was the executive secretary of the Northwest Conservation League for more than twenty years. She was an active member of the Lewis and Clark Trail Advisory Committee, Superintendent of Benton County Schools, and wrote a script for a three-hour historical pageant titled *West to the Columbia* (c. 1962) that was performed annually at the Columbia Park Amphitheatre in Kennewick, Washington. At this point, very little is known (or has been written) about her life and work. Some of her papers and correspondence are available at the East Benton County Historical Society in Kennewick, Washington. Nard Jones (1904-1972) was an editor for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and a popular writer of historical fiction and literary journalism about the Pacific Northwest. Between the 1930s and early 1970s, he authored nineteen works about the Northwest, but like Thompson, very little has been written about his life or work.

Joad, to write pro-hydroelectricity folk songs such as "Jackhammer Blues," "Pastures of Plenty" and "Roll On, Columbia, Roll On" for future promotional film projects. Written by Guthrie in less than a month, the twenty-six songs tell stories of migrant laborers and extol the federal government's plan to achieve socio-economic renewal through the reclamation of the Columbia River. At the time, the federal government paid Guthrie two hundred and seventy dollars for the songs, but honored him further in 1966, when the U.S. Department of Interior presented the ailing singer with a Conservation Service Award, followed with the announcement that a substation of the Bonneville Power Administration would be named after him. Twenty years later, in 1987, the state of Washington paid additional respects to Guthrie as well, passing legislation that declared the deceased songwriter's "Roll On, Columbia Roll On" its official state folk song.

It is widely assumed that Woody Guthrie's Columbia River songs accurately documented the lives of Grand Coulee laborers because as a Great Depression migrant man himself, the songwriter should be able to chronicle the lives and worries of workers in an authentic way. This is the interpretive direction underlying the documentary *Roll on, Columbia: Woody Guthrie and the Bonneville Power Administration* (1999) and John R. Gold's "Roll on Columbia: Woody Guthrie, Migrants' Tales and Regional Transformation of the Pacific Northwest" (2003), among the many cultural biographies that present Guthrie as an authentic spokesman for hard traveling laborers. The truth of the matter is far more complicated. As Richard White observes, many of Guthrie's Columbia River songs "vividly rendered work, yet the workers themselves, as in other contemporary accounts of the dams, were anonymous" (*Organic* 63). More recently, historian Mark Pedelty investigated the history of the Columbia River songs using documents at the Woody Guthrie Archives. According to Pedelty:

> The archival documents present a fairly clear picture of what Guthrie actually did in Oregon, a picture that is distinctly different than the popular image of the rambling songwriter rubbing shoulders with the workers. These documents indicate that Woody Guthrie was not a labor activist with an interest in song, as often

> represented, but rather a professional songwriter and artist with a passionate interest in labor struggles, the dispossessed and small farmers. Like most working artists, he spent more time with musicians, urban audiences, supporters, and sponsors than with the subjects of his songs. (9)

In fact, after investigating archival records and correspondence of Bonneville Power Administration representatives who interacted with Guthrie, Pedelty concluded that in contrast to the popular image of the songwriter working to document the lives of 1930s laborers, there is no indication that "Guthrie ever spoke to a BPA construction worker" or, for that matter, any laborer working on Grand Coulee Dam (12).

Overall, the cultural erasure of laborers at Hanford Engineer Works has proven to be equally problematic for regional historians -- despite the fact of their extraordinary numbers. Between 1943 and 1945, while the nuclear reactors and plutonium processing plants were under construction and newly operational, the Du Pont Corporation had 137,000 laborers and families living and working on the federal-reserve (Sanger 68; Morgan, *The Dam* 53). Until the publication of S.L. Sanger's *Working on the Bomb: An Oral History of WWII Hanford* (1989, 1995), the lives of workers and families were unknown, largely because during World War II the construction and production at the site was top-secret. Workers did not know what they were manufacturing and were forbidden to talk about the work they performed at the processing site. After the war ended, the federal government withheld classified information concerning the occupational hazards of working at the nuclear reserve. Finally, in 1986, under pressure from the Freedom of Information Act (1966, 1996), the Environmental Protection Agency (1970), and the locally formed Hanford Education Action League (1984), the U.S. Department of Defense declassified nineteen thousand pages of information and allowed public access to thousands of documents and photographs that chronicle the daily lives of laborers, the occupational hazards they faced, and the federally endorsed chemical and radiation exposures that had taken place on the general public between the 1940s and 1970s (Gerber 90, Dietrich 369).

Figure 11. Hanford Engineer Works, Mess Hall No. 1 at Mealtime, c.1944. Hanford Declassified Retrieval System. No. N1D0023548.

Interestingly, when it comes to Grand Coulee Dam, Richard White suggests that the stories of Great Depression and World War II laborers can still be recovered through the words and memories of descendents of laborers who still know their parents' stories. As White explains:

> Laborers who built Grand Coulee Dam left very few published accounts about what they intended, thought, or felt. They do not say whether they came to love the rock they transformed; whether through their labor the river entered their bone, sinew, and brain until later those moments dangling between rock and water would seem the most real and vital of their lives. The children of some of these workers know their stories of these days. They know their pride was this dam. For others it was just a job, a wage, a biding of time. (*Organic* 61)

White's reflections consider only the nameless workers at Grand Coulee Dam; however, this speculation might be equally applied to the 137,000 laborers and families who lived and worked at Hanford Engineer Works between 1943 and 1945.

Working from White's important speculation about the possibility of recovering lost narratives of work, this chapter turns to the prose and poetry of Raymond Carver (1938-1988) and William Witherup (1935-2009), descendents of fathers who worked at Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works, in order to reclaim and excavate the lost histories of men who built the most controversial and powerful federal monuments in the Columbia River Basin. Raymond Carver's father, Clevie Carver (1913-1967), worked as a construction laborer on Grand Coulee Dam, the largest hydroelectric dam in the United States. In years following the New Deal era, power produced by Grand Coulee Dam would be used to fuel a world war with hydroelectricity used to produce plutonium at the downriver Hanford Engineer Works, the federal-reserve where William Witherup's father, Mervyn Witherup (1910-1988), worked for more than thirty years. Following immediately after each of their fathers' deaths, Raymond Carver and William Witherup would use the witness of their deceased fathers to write poetry and prose bent on reclaiming the details of men who constructed Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works, federal monuments of immense power that continue to produce far reaching socio-economic, ecological, generational and global repercussions.

The chapter begins with a critical portrait of Clevie Carver (1913-1967), the father of writer Raymond Carver, who migrated from Leola, Arkansas to Omak, Washington, in 1929. After working in a lumber mill for most of six years, Clevie and his relatives believed they had recovered the Promised Land out West, that is, until they found themselves caught up in a union strike and left millwork to take jobs as contract laborers on Grand Coulee Dam. After working at the construction site for most of two years, Clevie would spend the rest of his life in lumber mills, searching for the elusive Promised Land that was guaranteed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal. Although it is often assumed that laborers at Grand Coulee Dam took pride in their contribution to federal progress, throughout his life Clevie remained unimpressed by "the mystique of the Grand Coulee project" and "never bragged about his own work at the

dam" (Sklenicka 8). Triggered by his father's death in 1967, Raymond Carver would spend the next twenty years of his life working to recover and reclaim his father's struggles through prose and poetry, writing upwards of a dozen poems as well as "My Father's Life" (1985), a personal narrative that chronicles Clevie Carver's some thirty years of life as a laborer in the Pacific Northwest. It is only through the memories of Raymond Carver that Clevie Carver's life, work, and indifferent attitude toward the federal reclamation of the Columbia River emerges as a counter-witness to the Promised Land promoted by Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Dealers.

Linking hydroelectricity produced by Grand Coulee Dam to the manufacturing of plutonium at Hanford Engineer Works, the chapter then transitions to the life of Mervyn Clyde Witherup (1910-1988), father of poet William Witherup, who migrated from Kansas City, Missouri to Richland, Washington, to work at the top-secret federal reserve in 1944. In Kansas City, Witherup had worked as a Quality Control Engineer for Remington Arms, a subsidiary of the DuPont Corporation that would build Hanford Engineer Works. While Clevie Carver -- and thousands of young men like him -- headed west to escape the socio-economic hardships of sharecropping in Arkansas, oral histories of Hanford employees indicate that thousands of well-established, skilled workers from the DuPont Corporation made their way to Richland, Washington, between 1943 and 1945 to support the wartime effort. Initially, Witherup worked as a Quality Control Engineer who oversaw the installation and assembly of Reactor-B, the first production grade nuclear reactor in the world, a concrete monument designed to cool and dissolve uranium fuel for the production of plutonium used in atomic weapons. Then, in 1945, with the production of plutonium fully underway, Witherup worked as an Operations Engineer in a plutonium separation plant, an occupation that son William later insisted, slowly took his father's life.

Through William Witherup's prose and poetry, the historical and familial details of the occupational hazards his father faced at Hanford Engineer Works between 1943

and 1945 are voiced as one witness among thousands of workers who were contaminated by radiation and chemical exposure on the federal-reserve. Like Raymond Carver, who set to work recovering his father's life in 1967, William Witherup would use his father's death from prostate cancer in 1988 to fuel poems collected in *Men at Work* (1989), along with an essay titled, "Fallout: Reflections on the 60th Anniversary of the Trinity Test" (2005), both of which recover and bear witness to the far reaching ecological, familial and international consequences linked to the federal reclamation of the Columbia River at Hanford Engineer Works.

Finally, then, the last section of this chapter turns to the early work of William Stafford, a conscientious objector to World War II and Civilian Public Service laborer (1941-1947) who arrived in the Columbia River Basin shortly after the war ended. While Clevie Carver and Mervyn Witherup were building the concrete monuments that used the harnessed Columbia River to produce hydroelectricity and plutonium for atomic weapons, Stafford was among 12,000 drafted objectors to the war engaged in alternative labor at 152 Civilian Public Service camps scattered throughout the United States. Between 1942 and 1945, Stafford worked at camps in Illinois, California and Arkansas, where he earned $2.50 per month as a soil and forest conservationist. After the war ended, he migrated to the Pacific Northwest to take a job with Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon. Arriving in Portland, the Midwestern poet, still nationally unknown, made a visit to Bonneville Dam and used his pen to question the federal management of the Columbia River.[29]

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[29] Archival records indicate that William Stafford was writing poetry as early as 1937, while still an undergraduate student at University of Kansas. During the 1940s, his work was published in small literary magazines and newspapers at University of Kansas and in publications printed by Civilian Public Service. Some of Stafford's early work was published in larger literary journals such as the *New Mexico Quarterly Review* and *Poetry*, but it was not until the publication of *West of Your City* (1960) and *Traveling through the Dark* (1961), which won the National Book Award, that Stafford's poetry gained national attention. For more on Stafford's early writings see Fred Marchant, ed., *Another World Instead: The Early Poems of William Stafford, 1937-1947* (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf, 2008), 137-145.

In poems written in the early 1950s and later published in *West of Your City* (1960), Stafford used his work experience as a Civilian Public Service camp worker to protest and expose the ecological and international repercussions of re-making the Columbia River into a federal war machine. In his assessment, Bonneville Dam had "killed the river" and provided energy for the manufacturing of atomic bombs detonated on Japan in 1944 (*The Way It Is* 68). Stafford's resistance to the federal reclamation of the watershed, then, opens the way to Chapter Three, which considers how other young descendents of Great Depression laborers would begin to expose and revise the federal reclamation of the river in works of countercultural prose and poetry. Like Stafford's poetry, early writings by Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey and Raymond Carver would reveal the cultural, personal, socio-economic and moral costs of federally-funded hydroelectricity and set the foundation for a literary movement that would seek to reclaim and restore the ecology and economic framework of the Pacific Northwest's largest and most complex watershed.

Heading West with Clevie Carver:
Working on a Dream at Grand Coulee Dam

Clevie Carver (1913 -1967) was born into a family of once prosperous Arkansas cotton farmers impoverished during the socio-economic reconstruction of the South after the Civil War. As Carol Sklenicka, author of *Raymond Carver: A Writer's Life* (2009) explains, Clevie's grandfather, Abram Carver, had led the large family into "its economic highpoint" through the possession of slaves and "several hundred acres of cotton fields east of the Saline River in Arkansas" (5). However, Abram's death in 1860, followed by the Civil War (1861-1865), stripped the slave-owning Carvers of wealth and land, reducing them to "sharecroppers and lumber mill hands" who could be found "migrating from one sharecropping situation to another" (5). During the Depression of 1893, Clevie's father, Frank, still a teenager at the time, had watched his parents, aunts, and uncles lose their land and like other tenant sharecroppers in the Jim Crow South, sink into

"further deprivation as the cotton-based Arkansas economy collapsed at the end of World War I" (5). For years, the Carvers continued as itinerant laborers and managed to raise their own food, but as Raymond Carver would later explain, by the time the Great Depression hit Arkansas in 1929, his ancestors were "about to starve down there, and this wasn't meant as a figure of speech" (*Fires* 13).

Weary of sharecropping and economic uncertainty, Clevie's older brother, Fred, and his wife, Billie, headed West in 1929, intending to "abandon the economic quagmire of Arkansas" for good (Sklenicka 5). The couple relocated to Omak, Washington, where Fred took a job with the Biles-Coleman Lumber Company (est. 1921) in the Okanogan Valley. When Fred and Billie wrote letters back to Arkansas with stories of "paradise regained," it fell upon Clevie, only sixteen at the time, to load up an "old, black Model-T Ford sedan" and drive his mother, father, sister, brother-in-law, and baby nephew to the Pacific Northwest in search of greener pastures (Sklenicka 5-6).[30] Violet Archer, Clevie's sister, remembers that traveling West was slow and space was tight. Her brother and father rode up front, which left three adults and a baby to make do in a small backseat. They strapped "bedding, furniture, luggage, and water for the car's radiator" onto the sides of the Model-T and traveling "over narrow, dusty roads at top speeds of thirty-five miles per hour, the 2,200-mile journey took thirteen days" (Sklenicka 5).

The Carvers arrived in the Okanogan Valley at an ideal time, for the Bureau of Reclamation had used the Okanogan Irrigation Project (1905) to transform the semi-arid landscape of the valley into irrigated orchards of prosperity. As historian Carlos A. Schwantes explains, by the 1920s orchardists of eastern Washington were struck with "apple fever," part of a 1908 agricultural campaign that planted over one million apple

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[30] In "My Father's Life" (1985), Carver states that his father first left Arkansas in 1934, but oral histories conducted by Carol Sklenicka with Carver's extended family between 1994 and 2009 indicate that Clevie left the southeast with his father, mother, sister and brother-in-law in 1929 (see 5-7, 491, 501).

trees across the federally irrigated Okanogan and Yakima valleys (see Fig. 2.1; Schwantes, *Pacific Northwest* 171). Arriving in 1929, the Carvers and Archers were among the earliest Great Depression laborers who had come to reap the benefits of federal irrigation. Settled in Omak, Clevie "picked apples for a time" while his mother and sister "sorted apples at a packing plant" (*Fires* 13, Sklenicka 6). Within a few months, however, Clevie left fieldwork behind and joined his brother Fred, and brother-in-law, Bill Archer, at the Biles-Coleman Lumber Company, "where they milled timber and manufactured apple boxes and coffins" (Sklenicka 6).

By 1935, after working at the mill for most of six years, Clevie had managed to "put aside a little money" and bought a car to drive his parents back to Leola, Arkansas, to visit family and friends over the Christmas holiday (*Fires* 13, Sklenicka 6). While Clevie's parents shared stories about life out West, the young millworker spent nights carousing at local "bars and gambling joints" (Sklenicka 6). One evening, after a late-night binge, Clevie stumbled out of a bar and into Ella Casey, the daughter of a wealthy railroad engineer. Years later, reflecting back on their youth and subsequent years of economic hardship, she remembered that when she first met Clevie "he was drunk . . . I don't know why I let him talk to me. His eyes were glittery. I wish I'd had a crystal ball" (*Fires* 14). The couple married three weeks later and returned to Omak, where Clevie resumed work at Biles-Coleman and Ella struggled to make it through a long winter of homesickness "in a tiny cabin that fronted an alley" along the Okanogan River (Sklenicka 7, see *Fires*).

In an essay titled "My Father's Life" (1985), Raymond Carver states that when his parents left Arkansas and moved to Washington they were not "pursing a dream," but merely "looking for steady work at decent pay" (*Fires* 13). This may be true, but the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin had also stirred dreams of prosperity among the migrant laborers who arrived in the Pacific Northwest during those years. In many cases, migration was directly triggered by Roosevelt's optimistic rhetoric and his

allotment of federal funds in excess of sixty-three million dollars for the construction of Grand Coulee Dam (1933). By 1934, this massive project, advertised as the "biggest thing on earth," was beginning to rise from the dust just fifty miles southeast of the Carvers' home in Omak (Neuberger, *Promised* 61). That same year, President Roosevelt himself had visited the construction site and told a crowd of some 20,000 gatherers that the New Deal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin would re-open the era of westward expansion (see Pitzer 101). His speech recalled a visit he made to the Columbia River in 1920, when he first set eyes upon the watershed and imagined its "mighty possibilities" for irrigation and the socio-economic reconstruction of the West (Nixon, II. 132). Fourteen years later, Roosevelt stated that "scratching the soil" for Grand Coulee Dam was the fulfillment of a national "prophecy" that promised that the "unlimited natural resources" of the West would one day serve the entire nation (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1934"). Ultimately, through projects at Bonneville and Grand Coulee, the President guaranteed that "many families back in the older settled parts of the nation" would be able to claim "the opportunity of still going west" (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1934").

Roosevelt's remarks were later repackaged in *Still to the West* (1946), a historical novel about the construction of Grand Coulee Dam written by Seattle novelist, Nard Jones (1904-1972), whose fictional account of the Great Depression linked the socio-economic reconstruction of the Pacific Northwest to New Deal dams. Looking back to 1934, Jones describes how "twenty thousand men, women and children" had come to Grand Coulee and "were standing shoulder to shoulder in the shadows of the gorge that all its millions of years had been almost unpeopled. They had come by automobile, and by train, and by horse and buggy and wagon," hoping to catch a glimpse of President Roosevelt who was there to explain how "dreams in American [would] come to reality again" through the construction of Grand Coulee Dam (Jones 153). Fishermen from Seattle, orchardists from the Okanogan Valley, timber workers from Portland, local

politicians from Salem, and housewives of local cattlemen, had all come to hear how eastern Washington will soon be transformed from a semi-arid desert into "green and fertile" pastures (Jones 153-155). The crowd listens attentively as Roosevelt guarantees that the Northwest would become home to brave families eager to claim the "opportunity of still going West" (Jones 158-159). This promise, which according to one Idaho shop owner was "like opening up the frontier again," sends the masses into "a roar of shouting and applause," causing the ancient canyons to tremble, "as if the very gorge itself was awakening to meet its destiny" (Jones 158, 159). Roosevelt's speech, then, heralds a flood of migrant laborers streaming into eastern Washington, forming a line that stretches "halfway across the continent." Oakies and Arkies arrive in "battered jalopies, running on driblets of gasoline" and "resembled the lost tribe" of Israel wandering through the desert in search of the Promised Land (Jones 196).

Although a work of fiction, *Still to the West* depicts how economic promises made at Grand Coulee Dam prompted an historical migration of thousands of Midwestern and Southern families, men and women -- like the Carvers and Archers -- who were searching for a new incarnation of the Promised Land. Richard L. Neuberger, author of *Our Promised Land* (1938), a nationally published work of literary journalism, wrote from the Grand Coulee construction site and observed that "the speeches of the President have been an astonishingly important factor in deciding people to turn toward the coast in quest of new lands" (43). This was, in fact, the case for one South Dakota farmer who kept a newspaper clipping of the President's 1934 speech at Grand Coulee in his wallet. Neuberger reports that the farmer pointed to more than a dozen "dilapidated automobiles . . . heaped high with household goods" and explained how they had been "followin' that newspaper piece there ever since [they] left the Dakotas" (43). These farmers were not alone. Neuberger goes on to document battered license plates from many Southern and Midwestern states, and concludes that everyone who came to Grand Coulee was

searching for socio-economic stability, or at least a quick dollar in a boom and bust economy. As the journalist explains:

> Every element – good, bad, and indifferent – that goes to compose a community in the hinterlands, joined the parade [to Grand Coulee]. Over the desert like plateau of the Columbia a veritable caravan rolled. From trucks, wagons, and trailers protruded barber chairs, hand printing presses, and permanent-waving machines. Cooks dreamed of making fortunes out of hamburgers and custard pie and beer. Real-estate agents visioned lucrative returns on the quick turnover of lots and sections. (374)

In contrast, however, to political rhetoric that called upon the national mythology of paradise regained, the journey to Grand Coulee Dam was by no means a route to the "Garden of Eden" that was imagined by regional novelist Margaret Thompson (1892-1969) in *Space for Living: A Novel of the Grand Coulee and Columbia Basin* (1944, 85).

The re-creation of the Pacific Northwest into a revised Promised Land is directly contradicted by the lives of Raymond Carver's parents, Clevie and Ella Carver, a young couple from Arkansas who were absorbed into the construction of Grand Coulee. Rather than finding financial prosperity, their engagement with the federal project ushered them into a lifelong journey of economic uncertainty and instability that took them from Omak, Washington to Clatskanie, Oregon; to Yakima, Washington, and finally to northern California. The first signs of trouble appeared early in 1936, when Clevie and his relatives became embroiled in a union strike only months after the couple had settled in Omak. Along with the National Recovery Administration (1933) and Works Progress Administration (1935) -- legislative components of the New Deal that undergirded the construction of Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams -- economic relief came with the Wagner Act (1935), a federal decision that revised decades of anti-union legislation by guaranteeing laborers the right to organize and bargain collectively. According to historian Carlos A. Schwantes, author of *Hard Traveling: A Portrait of Work Life in the New Northwest* (1994), "the 1930s were an especially stormy time of strikes and schisms in the house of labor. The ranks of organized workers expanded rapidly as a result of

federal pro-labor legislation, but the nearly uncontrolled growth worsened friction between advocates of craft and industrial unions" (67).

In 1936, Clevie and his relatives felt these repercussions locally, when the Sawmill Workers Union of the American Federation of Labor (est. 1881) petitioned the Biles-Coleman Lumber Company "for collective bargaining rights, a union-exclusive shop, a forty-hour work week, and a minimum wage of 50 cents an hour" (Sklenicka 7). When company owners refused to comply, Clevie; his brother, Fred; and brother-in-law, Bill Archer, sided with the union and voted to strike. Between May and June of 1936, negotiations between mill owners, union laborers, and law enforcement turned heated and violent. As Carol Sklenicka explains:

> Men [at Biles-Coleman] picketed the mill in six hour shifts. Company operations were curtailed until early June and then resumed with non-AFL workers. The Omak city government and local orchard owners supported the mill and owners by blacklisting strikers to prevent their working elsewhere. In June the mill reopened with strikebreakers carried in by the busload from other states, including contingent who brought wives from Arkansas. The Carvers and Archers held out against increasing pressure to cross the picket lines and return to work. They received food from commissary trucks sent by AFL organizations in Seattle and Bellingham. The confrontations turned violent, with shootings, a bridge burning, and spikes set in roadways to disable logging trucks. (7-8)

The Carvers were among the last holdouts against the Biles-Coleman Lumber Company. In fact, when all attempts to negotiate with the corporation were exhausted, the Arkansas laborers, now loyal to the American Federation of Labor, refused to return to the mill and trekked fifty miles southeast to test the socio-economic waters at Grand Coulee Dam -- where they learned to pour concrete.

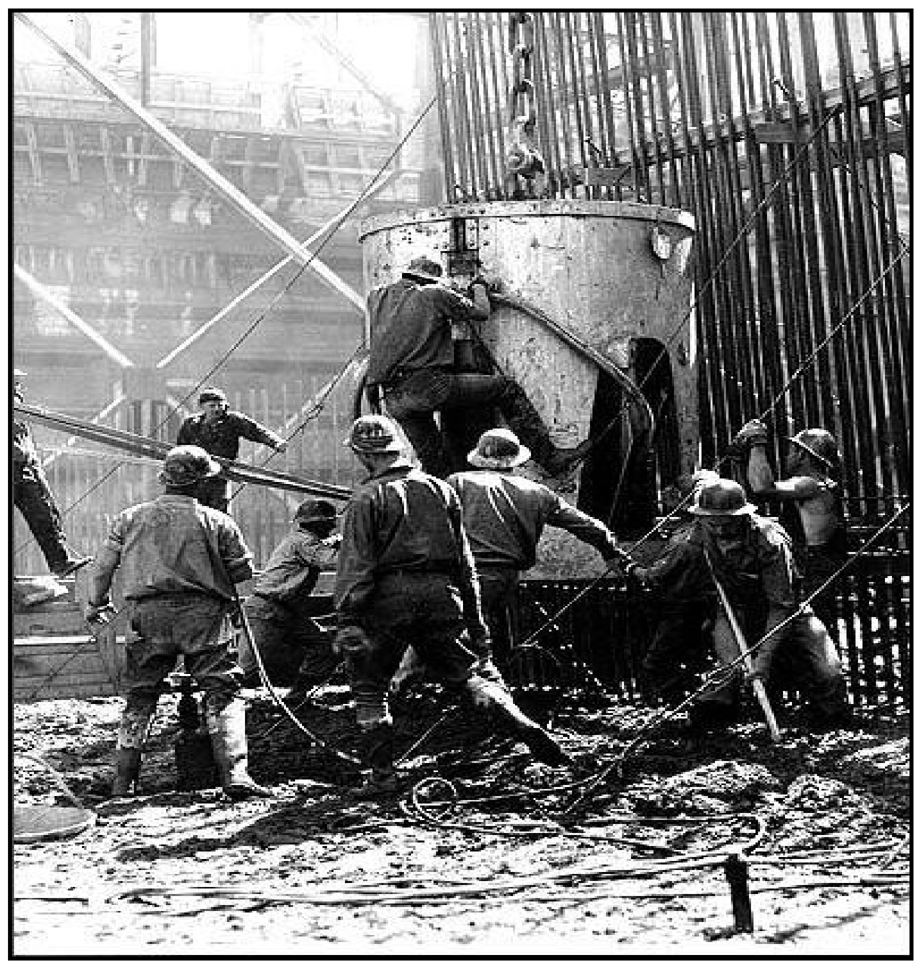

Figure 12. Batch of Concrete Handled by Workers at Grand Coulee Dam, c. 1937. University of Washington, Special Collections. NO. UW 9164.

At Grand Coulee, the Carver men obtained jobs with the MWAK Company, a conglomerate of three independent firms that had earned the bid to build the foundation and coffer dams at the Grand Coulee construction site in 1933.[31] Now, working as a contract laborer for the Bureau of Reclamation, Clevie had become a "farmhand-turned-construction worker" (*Fires* 14). Earning fifty-cents an hour, plus paid overtime, the

[31] The MWAK Company (1934) was comprised of the following three firms: the Silas Mason Company of New York, the Atkinson-Kier Company of San Francisco, and the Walsh Company of Davenport, Iowa (see Pitzer 97-99). The company was the primary contractor for the first phase of construction (1934-1937). From 1938 to 1941, the second phase of construction was completed by the Consolidated Builders Incorporated, a conglomerate of industrial companies that had experience constructing other New Deal dams in the West.

Carver men worked as "broom-and-bucket" laborers and were part of a team of more than 5,300 workers who poured and formed concrete for the foundation of the dam (Sklenicka 8, Pitzer 138). They worked with four yard buckets of concrete made by the "House of Magic," two crushing and mixing plants that were capable of producing 8,000 cubic yards of concrete each per day (Pitzer 138). By 1941, this concrete production plant -- the largest in the world at the time -- had provided more than ten-million cubic feet of concrete to general laborers like the Carvers and Archers.

The MWAK Company distributed batches of concrete to its laborers through an elaborate system of trestles, cranes, and transport rail cars that girded the external framework of the dam. As Paul C. Pitzer, author of *Grand Coulee: Harnessing a Dream* (1994) explains:

> The MWAK Company settled on a combination of trestles and cranes to shuttle the mixed concrete from the batching plant to the waiting forms. Two trestles, at first only 1,300 feet long, extended over the west side of excavation. . . . Thirty feet wide, each of the trestles held three standard gage tracks and, along the outer edges, rails for gantry cranes. Together they required 9,500 tons of steel and their supports, when buried in concrete became part of the dam. (131)

Margaret Thompson would marvel at this network of steel and scaffolding in her historical novel *Space for Living* (1944), when she depicted the dam as a federal "miracle" rising up from the desert. In this fictional account, ant-like laborers work below "high steel trestles built out over the damsite, each of the first two carrying three railroad tracks of standard gauge . . . that moved twelve-ton buckets of concrete up for pouring" (236). While Thompson's novel is attentive to historical and structural details at the site, her work fails to mention the occupational hazards that laborers faced while working with massive buckets of concrete beneath the trestles at Grand Coulee Dam.

Figure 13. Laborers Placing Concrete with Cranes and Trestles, Grand Coulee Dam Construction Site, 1936. University of Washington, Special Collections. No. DAM129.

Regional historians such as Richard White and Paul C. Pitzer suspect that between 1934 and 1941, not a day went by without someone being seriously injured on the Grand Coulee construction site. The winter of 1935, in particular, marked a terrible period of injuries, with 157 recorded by the MWAK Company in February alone. Between 1938 and 1939 another 499 injuries were reported, most often triggered by construction equipment and materials that fell from trestles and scaffolding (Pitzer 109, 207). Injuries were common, but fatalities proved more politically problematic, for the news of death “spread rapidly” and “constantly troubled workers” (Pitzer 106). By 1937, only three years after construction began, fifty-four men had already been killed in rock

slides, falling accidents and by drowning; between 1938 and 1939 another eighteen men would be killed and by the project's completion in 1942, the death count would reach seventy-seven, most of which were caused by laborers "falling or having something fall" on them from trestles, scaffolding and cranes (Neuberger 70; Pitzer 207; White, *Organic* 63).

In 1937, President Roosevelt returned to Grand Coulee to encourage laborers to press onward toward the reclamation of the Columbia River, but he did not address the numerous injuries and fatalities incurred at the construction site. Nevertheless, according to journalist Neuberger, the President remained the "hero of at least three-fourths of the laborers on the dam" who kept his posters, newspaper clippings and buttons on display in their bunkhouses (*Promised* 69). When visiting the construction site for the second time, the President's remarks to construction laborers were likely well received, particularly considering that he opened his speech by alluding to the moment, three years earlier, when the dam was just beginning to emerge from the earth:

> Coming back to Grand Coulee after three years, I am very happy by the wonderful progress that I have seen. And I can't help feeling that everybody who has had anything to do with the building of this dam is going to be made happy all the rest of his life. (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1937")

Roosevelt reminded laborers that their work was predestined to help families, both locally and nationally, "live better than they are living now." For this reason, their work at Grand Coulee was cause for "rejoicing" and celebration (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1937"). According to White, many construction laborers at Grand Coulee took the President Roosevelt's comments to heart, taking "pride" in building the dam; but this was not the case for Clevie Carver, who also attended the speech (*Organic* 61).

Figure 14. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Speaks Over a Microphone to a Crowd at Grand Coulee Dam, 1937. Washington State University, Special Collections. No. 40b5v5p35.

In 1937, as Carver stood listening to President Roosevelt, he felt no sense of pride in constructing Grand Coulee Dam and, in subsequent years "never bragged about his own work at the dam" (Sklenicka 8). In fact, according to his eldest son Raymond, while his father listened to the President that day, he was embittered that Roosevelt "never mentioned those guys who died building the dam. . . . Some of his friends had died there, men from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri" (*Fires* 14). These were men like Ransom Burke, a welder's helper who died "when a 200-pound bottom plate of a steam pile-driving hammer broke loose and dropped on his head," and Thomas Newton, a crane operator who drowned after a boom on his crane snapped, sending him into the river (Pitzer 108-109). Richard White speculates that laborers may have felt a deep sense of purpose and awe while "dangling between rock and water," but when his statement is read alongside accounts of death it is difficult to believe that laborers at the construction

site would later remember their days at Grand Coulee as "the most real and vital of their lives" (*Organic* 61).

Accidents involving the Columbia River were not uncommon. In many cases, "men and equipment plunged into the Columbia, which flowed swiftly past the site -- and the odds of survival did not favor the unfortunates" (Pitzer 152). The MAWK Company did take preventative measures by hiring Roland H. Tegtmeier, "a nationally known marathon swimmer" from Tacoma, Washington, to patrol the river and watch for fallen laborers. In 1937, however, while Clevie was still on the job, the engine on Tegtmeier's boat stopped working and the small craft was pulled into the concrete of the construction site. Clevie may have been among the "workers above [who] watched helplessly" as the force of the Columbia River "tore the boat apart and the suction of the swirl pulled the champion swimmer to his death" (Pitzer 152-153).

Despite the dangers of working on Grand Coulee Dam, and his doubt about its national significance, Clevie Carver believed he had bettered himself through his contract job with the Bureau of Reclamation. Decades later, his son Raymond would capture that beleaguered sense of optimism and purpose in a poem titled "Photograph of My Father in his Twenty-Second Year" (1968). Written one year after Clevie's untimely death in 1967, Carver interpreted his father's youth through a photograph taken during "those early days in Washington" when his father was "still working on the dam" (*Fires* 20, 14). The picture was given to Carver by his mother and for several years he carried it with him, studying it and "trying to figure some things about [his] dad" and how "in some important ways [they] might be alike" (*Fires* 20). After several moves and his own missteps with alcohol and money, however, Carver lost the photograph. When his father died in 1967, he metaphorically recovered the image through his poem -- and several

others like it -- as part of an attempt to "connect up" with this man who was moving "further and further away from [him] and back into time" (*Fires* 20).[32]

On the surface, "Photograph of My Father in His Twenty-Second Year" depicts Clevie Carver as the "happy" Grand Coulee laborer who had worked for the vision promised by Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Woolley and Peters, "Remarks 1937"). He leans against the fender of a 1934 Ford, a car he purchased with money earned at Biles-Coleman Lumber Company. He offers the photographer a "sheepish grin," with one hand holding a bottle of Carlsbad beer, the other a stringer of fish -- both signs of the good life. He wears a "young man's face" and poses "bluff and hearty for his posterity" with an "old hat cocked over his ear" (*All of Us* 7). Yet, even in these days of youth and promise, Carver perceives "a sense of menace" and instability working beneath what he sometimes called "the smooth (but sometimes broken and unsettled) surface of things" (*Fires* 14, 26).

In the final stanza, Carver goes beyond the photograph's optimistic surface to expose his father's inability to claim the elusive stability of the Promised Land. Despite appearances, Carver states that his father's hands and "eyes give him away," telling the story of a man who "*wanted* to be bold" and "would *like* to pose brave and hearty for his posterity," but was merely performing, working in an historical time and place that contradicted such fantasies (my emph., *All of Us* 7). In 1968, using the poem to read the past, Carver was looking back to see his mother and father's dreams beginning to slip away. Within a year after the photograph was taken, the MWAK Company's contract

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[32] After Clevie Carver's death in 1967, until the time of his own death in 1988, Raymond Carver wrote several poem's about the precarious state of his father's socio-economic condition as a laborer in the Pacific Northwest. In addition to the essay, "My Father's Life" (1985), Carver wrote the following poems that chronicle his father's life and death as a laborer: "Photograph of My Father in His Twenty-Second Year" (1968), "Forever" (1968), "Prosser" (1972), "Near Klamath" (1976), "Bobber" (1977, 1983), "My Dad's Wallet" (1984), "The Meadow" (1985) and "The Trestle" (1985).

with the Bureau of Reclamation would end, sending his parents and their extended family in search of "steady work at decent pay" once again (*Fires* 13).[33]

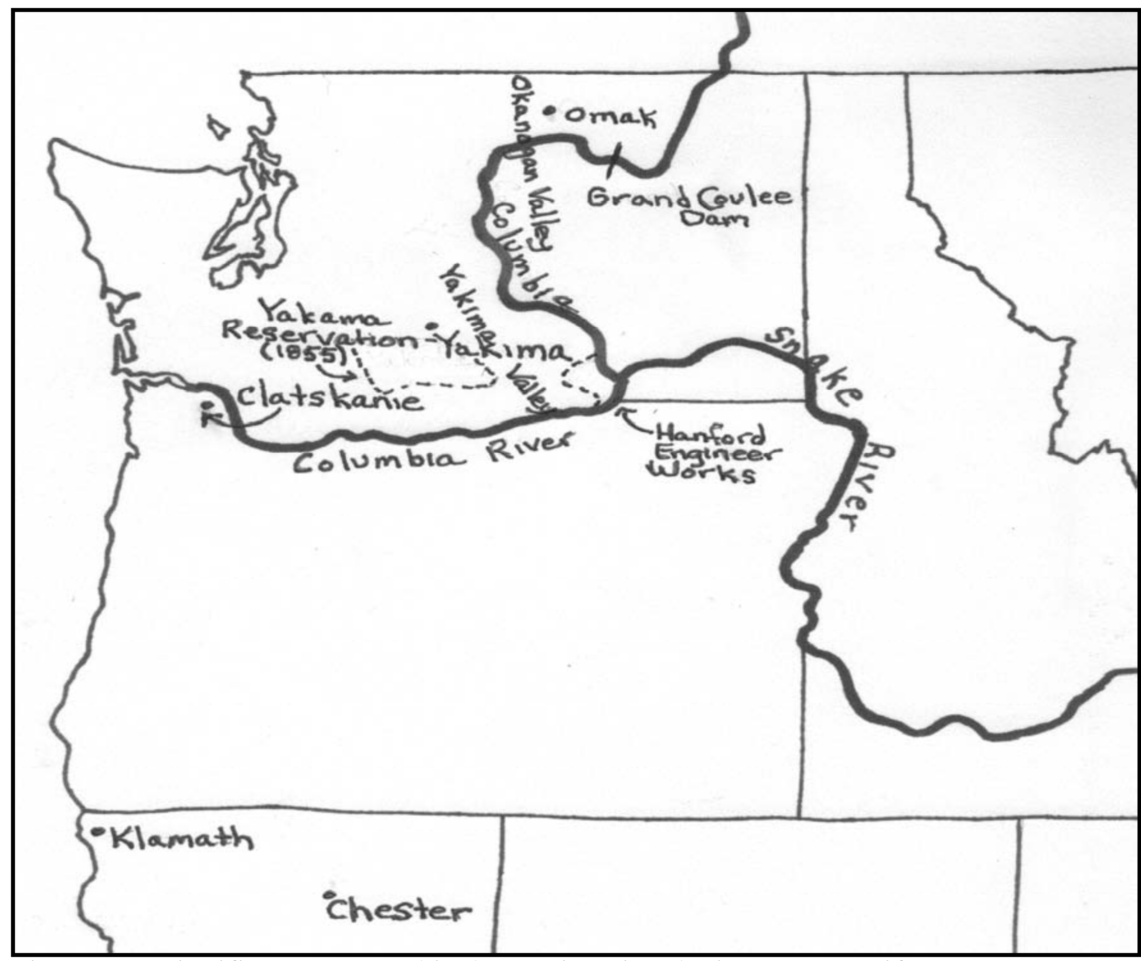

Figure 15. Significant Geographical Locations in Clevie Carver's Life, 1929-1967.

In 1938, the Carvers would move several hundred miles down the Columbia River to Clatskanie, Oregon, where his father and uncles would take jobs with the

[33] It is unclear why Clevie Carver quit working on the Grand Coulee Dam. Carol Sklenicka suspects that Clevie and his relatives "quit" the job due to the occupational dangers; however, given that the MWAK Company's contract for completing the foundation ended in 1937, the same time Clevie stopped working, it is probable that his contract with the Bureau of Reclamation simply ended.

Crossett Western Company, part of an Arkansas based timber conglomerate (see Stull and Carroll, *Collected* 958). That same year, Ella and Clevie's first son, Raymond, would be born in that "little town along the Columbia River" (*Fires* 14). Another photograph kept by Ella Carver from their days in Clatskanie, suggests the move away from Grand Coulee Dam started out good. In "My Father's Life," Carver describes the care-free photograph in the following way:

> . . . my mother has a picture of my dad standing in front of the gate to the mill, proudly holding me up to face the camera. My bonnet is on crooked and about to come untied. His hat is pushed back on his forehead, and he is wearing a big grin. Was he going in to work or just finishing his shift? It doesn't matter. In either case he had a job and a family. These were his salad days. (*Fires* 14)

The Carvers moved again in 1941, this time to Yakima, Washington, where Clevie and his brother Fred took jobs as saw filers with Boise-Cascade Lumber Company, while the women worked in the federally irrigated orchards of the Yakima Valley. Within a few years, they took root in the Promised Land and moved extended family out from Arkansas, thus, re-establishing their socio-economic identities in the Pacific Northwest (*Fires* 14). As Carver explains:

> After my dad had moved us to Yakima, he moved his folks into the same neighborhood. By the mid-1940s the rest of my dad's family – his brother, his sister, and her husband, as well as uncles, cousins, nephews, and most of their extended family and friends – had all come out from Arkansas. All because my dad came out first. The men went to work at Boise Cascade, where my dad worked, and the women packed apples in the canneries. (*Fires* 14-15)

Working at the Columbia River mill near Clatskanie, Clevie had picked up a "skilled trade" as a saw filer that now offered him a draft deferment during World War II (*Fires* 14). However, while Clevie's brother, Fred, found some stability as a head saw filer at Boise Cascade during the 1940s, Clevie, who worked under his older brother and made far less money, was never able to make financial ends meet and believed "that he had been given the short end of the stick" (Sklenicka 14).

In "Shiftless" (1985), an autobiographical poem about growing up in Yakima, Washington during the 1940s, Raymond Carver would describe his family's condition and implicitly critique the failings of the New Deal economic plan. In 1939, shortly after the publication of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, President Roosevelt wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior, Harold L. Ickes, and explained how reclamation projects at Bonneville and Grand Coulee would soon put an end to the "shiftless" people in the "adrift" American West, or what he called the "'The Grapes of Wrath' families of the nation" (Nixon, II. 406). Carver's poem, narrated from the perspective of a child who has watched the financial struggles of his parents and relatives who once worked at Grand Coulee Dam, talks back to the federal government and its version of prosperity. Now, an adult inheritor of the Promised Land, Carver, who had already been consumed by alcoholism and twice with bankruptcy, uses the poem to profess why he "never liked work" and grew up vowing "always / to be shiftless" (*All of Us* 175).

By 1946, the Carvers had purchased a house in the low-income Fairview district of Yakima, a section of town that was easily identified by its rundown condition and outside toilets. To his mother's dismay, they went without a car until 1949, when Clevie bought a 1938 Ford, what Ella often referred to as the "oldest car in town" (*Fires* 15-16). Working from memories of the family's life in Yakima during the 1940s, the boy measures their class status within a system where no one finds stability or prosperity, much less a Promised Land. Carver writes:

> The people who were better than us were *comfortable.*
> They lived in painted houses with flush toilets.
> Drove cars whose year and make were recognizable.
> The ones worse off were *sorry* and didn't work.
> Their strange cars sat on blocks in dusty yards.
> The years go by and everything and everyone
> gets replaced. (*All of Us* 175)

As the poem continues, the boy persona explains that his "goal" is not to attain comfort, or to fall into a sorry state, but to remain "shiftless" for there is "merit in that," especially since "everything" even "comfortable" people -- like old cars -- "gets replaced" in time

(*All of Us* 15). Rather than inheriting the exploitive vision of socio-economic mediocrity earned by his father, the boy revives and embraces an alternative path to success that contests the federal vision of industry and reclamation enacted by laborers such as his father and uncles:

> I liked the idea of sitting in a chair
> in front of your house for hours, doing nothing
> but wearing a hat and drinking cola.
> What's wrong with that?
> Drawing on a cigarette from time to time.
> Spitting. Making things out of wood with a knife.
> Where's the harm there? Now and then calling
> the dogs to hunt rabbits. Try it sometime.
> Once in a while hailing a fat, blond kid like me
> and saying, "Don't I know you?"
> Not, "What are you going to be when you grow up?"
> (*All of Us* 175-176)

Carver's picture of working-class life in the Columbia River Basin was obviously shaped by his father, a man whose understanding of the watershed as a scene of underpaid and dangerous labor is complex, insightful, and jaded.

This connection between father and son is evident in "Bobber" (1977, 1983), another autobiographical poem set "on the Columbia River" in the 1940s, at the town of Vantage, about thirty miles northeast of Yakima (*All of Us* 42). At first glance, the poem appears to be a nostalgic memory of a childhood fishing trip and about the formation of masculine identity; however, the conclusion gives way to a sharp and cryptic commentary on the relationship between Carver's father, the Columbia River, and a life of underpaid and unsatisfying work. Again, reflecting on childhood memories after his father's death in 1967, Carver refuses to read the watershed as a place of paradise and financial stability, but embraces the example of his "shiftless" father, a laborer who will not chase or endorse the middle class dream of prosperity more commonly called "What are you going to be when you grow up?" (*All of US* 176).

The opening stanza of "Bobber" tells about the people on the Columbia River fishing trip: a boy named Junior (Carver's childhood nickname), his father, and Mr.

Lindgren -- a man the boy remembers liking "better than [his own] father for a time" (*All of Us* 42). The events unfold from the perspective of the boy, attentive to the gear and bait the men carried -- sinkers, belly-reels, and flies baited with maggots. Junior hopes to fish with the men and their gear, but Lindgren and Clevie "wanted distance and went clear out there / to the edge of the riffle," leaving the boy "near shore with a quill bobber and a cane pole" (*All of Us* 42). The boy feels a deep affection for Mr. Lindgren, a man who teases him and lets him steer the car on the way to the Columbia River. He is more suspicious of his alcoholic and silent father. Lindgren does not drink. He is patient and talkative. In contrast, Carver's father, the alcoholic, is restless and reticent, keeping "maggots alive and warm / under his lower lip" while getting ready to fish (*All of Us* 42). The tone of the poem, as well as Junior's interest in Mr. Lindgren shifts, however, after the optimistic fisherman surveys the beauty of the Columbia River and tells Junior that someday he will "grow into a fine man, remember / all this, and fish with [his] own son" (*All of Us* 42). At the time, the child-narrator may have believed this. But years later, in a distant and ambivalent tone, Carver sides with his father when he states:

> But my dad was right. I mean
> he kept silent and looked into the river,
> worked his tongue, like a thought, behind the bait. (*All of Us* 42)

Like much of Carver's early poetry, the ambiguous ending of "Bobber" leaves readers with more questions than answers, provoking literary critic Arthur Bethea to ask the most immediate one: "What was the father right about?" (232).

Many critics interpret the concluding lines of "Bobber" as a silent response to the pastoral beauty of the Columbia River. This is the direction taken by Theresa Kemper and Arthur Saltzman. Kemper suggests the men are "silent and awestruck" in the presence of the river, while Saltzman claims that "it would be sacrilege to let language intrude too heavily" upon the day's fishing experience (qtd. in Bethea 232, Saltzman 162). Although Bethea reluctantly entertains the possibility that silence may affirm "nature's value," he also insists that "critics have exaggerated the degree of joy Carver's

poetry associates with the outdoors" (232). He is right. An overly optimistic or pastoral reading of "Bobber" is completely inconsistent with the poem's structural flow, which hangs on the image of "maggots" and turns on the phrase: "but my father was right." Carver's comparison of the two men and their responses to the Columbia River, in fact, suggests that Clevie, like the "shiftless" men of the previous poem, possessed degrees of knowledge about the watershed that were far deeper and more complex than Mr. Lindgren's shallow pastoral reading.

Undertones of environmental critique are more explicit in an earlier version of "Bobber" published in Carver's collection *At Night the Salmon Move* (1977). In this account, which is similar to the later version until the closing lines, the father hears Mr. Lindgren's words of optimism, but "just kept silent, / stroked his chin, / and went on pissing an arc into the river" (*All of Us* 342). When the two versions of "Bobber" (1977, 1983) are read comparatively, it is not just about maggots and piss, but connections between water, work, and childhood memories that floats like a bobber to the surface. In the early version, Lindgren's reading of life on the Columbia River causes Carver's father to state a frank and embodied version of the truth while silently pissing into the river. When Carver revisited and republished the poem, the ending became less explicit; however, the tone of dissatisfaction toward Lindgren's pastoral reading of the Columbia was retained, through the word "worked" that was added to the final line.

In the later version, Carver's father (along with his son) listened to Lindgren's optimistic story and then "looked into the river" (*All of Us* 42). Considering the optimistic and sentimental "bait" offered by Lindgren, Carver's father "worked his tongue," looked into the river and reflected on the words. His mouth worked, silently speaking, not only with the maggot-coated bait, but also his own experiences as a once-hopeful construction laborer and millworker on the river. The economic truth of the Columbia River Basin is kept warm in his tightened lips (to be spoken later by the adult poet-son). The laborer waits for his son to take Lindgren's bait of sentimentality -- and to

picture who he will hopefully be when he grows up -- but like a wise old fish the child-persona will have none of it and sides with his father.

By the time Raymond Carver graduated from Yakima High School in 1956, Clevie Carver was moving toward complete physical, psychological, and financial deterioration as a laborer in the Pacific Northwest. Problems started after Clevie's brother, Fred, the head saw filer at Boise Cascade Lumber Company, got into an argument with a supervisor concerning a change in mill policy. After twenty-two years of employment with Boise Cascade, Fred and Clevie were fired and sent out to look for work again. Leaving family behind in Yakima, the two men headed south and took jobs with Collins Pine Lumber Company in Chester, California. Shortly after their arrival, Clevie, who was "a careful worker who avoided accidents," cut himself on a saw and "got a tiny sliver of steel in his blood," a mishap that triggered a series of unexplained physical and psychological illnesses, along with several brushes with death (Sklenicka 15, *Fires* 17).[34] Back in Yakima, Ella heard rumors that her husband was deathly ill and drinking "raw whiskey" (*Fires* 17). She moved to Chester with Raymond in order to care for Clevie. Years later, Carver would remember the shock of finding his father near death, living out of a company trailer:

> I didn't recognize [my dad] immediately. I guess for a moment I didn't want to recognize him. He was skinny and pale and didn't look like my dad. My mother began to cry. My dad patted her shoulder vaguely, like he didn't know what this was all about, either. The three of us took up life together in the trailer, and we looked after him as best we could. But my dad was sick, and he couldn't get any better. I worked with him in the mill that summer and part of the fall. We'd get up in the morning and eat eggs and

[34] The Carvers believed that Clevie suffered from lead poisoning from an infected cut incurred on the job at Collins Pine in Chester, California. In 1964, Ella and Clevie started to receive small disability payments from the corporation, but the ultimate cause of Clevie's physical and psychological deterioration remained undiagnosed. Ultimately, as Carol Sklenicka observes, "lead poisoning from filing room tools, with its known symptoms of fatigue and mental deterioration, cannot be ruled out, nor can the effects of depression and alcoholism" (56).

> toast while we listened to the radio, and then out the door with our lunch pails. (*Fires* 17)

Clevie's health stabilized and the two men spent weekends enjoying the companionship of fishing together on Butte Creek and at nearby Lake Almanor. However, when Raymond returned to Yakima a few months later, his father collapsed on the job and found himself "in the midst of a nervous breakdown" (*Fires* 16). His parents returned to Yakima and Clevie was admitted to the Yakima Valley Memorial Hospital for psychiatric and electroshock treatments. Unable to work for the next six years, the Carvers "lost everything" and Clevie gained a reputation as "someone who couldn't pay his bills" (*Fires* 19). In 1964, the Clevie and Ella made a final attempt to find stability when Clevie took a job working for a lumber mill in Klamath, California. As Raymond would later remember, his mother and father were "making a comeback" there when, only a few years later, his father grew weak again and died one night in his sleep (*Fires* 19).

As a first-generation migrant laborer to the Pacific Northwest, Clevie Carver experienced the Columbia River Basin through physical work.[35] He made a living near water, working at the Grand Coulee Dam and at lumber towns such as Clatskanie, Oregon and Yakima, Washington. Interestingly, as a second-generation inhabitant of the region, his son's expression of work came through water as well, as evidenced by seven collections of poetry that are titled and influenced by western watersheds.[36] Without romanticizing the often grim realities of labor, Carver's literary works drew from the embodied physical realities of work and from the river itself, the place that was both a respite from and the scene of his family's pain and financial undoing. This two-fold

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[35] For more on this see: Richard White, "Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?: Work and Nature," in *Common Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 171-185; and Carlos A. Schwantes, *Hard Traveling: A Portrait of Work Life in the New Northwest* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1994).

[36] See the following: *Near Klamath* (1968), *At Night the Salmon Move* (1976), *This Water* (1985), *Ultramarine* (1985), *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water* (1985), *In a Marine Light: Selected Poems* (1987) and *A New Path to the Waterfall* (1989).

tension of pain and renewal gets played out in *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water* (1985), a volume that Carver completed in only six weeks (Gentry and Stull 148). In 1984, after being away from the Pacific Northwest for several years, Carver left a teaching position at Syracuse University and was looking for a new direction for his life and work. Like his father, he headed west and turned to rivers. Carver was never able to articulate how or why the poems in the collection came so quickly, but was convinced that "it had something to do" with his return to the "landscape and the water" of the Pacific Northwest (Gentry and Stull 170).

When Clevie Carver was employed as a construction worker at Grand Coulee Dam, the Bureau of Reclamation was committed to re-routing and restraining the Columbia River in order to create work and serve national interest by harnessing western watersheds for irrigation and hydroelectric power. Carver's collection *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water* (1985), in fact, also performs a work of reclamation. Only here, Carver gathers the people of his past to rewrite their socio-economic struggles, thus, revising the federal fantasy of upward mobility through the harnessing of western watersheds. In a recent study of Pacific Northwest literature and culture titled *On Sacred Ground: The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature* (2003), Nicholas O'Connell suggests that literature about the Northwest has evolved from nineteenth and early-twentieth-century accounts of place that emphasize "making a living from the country" to more recent "attempts to recover a sense of the landscape's spiritual qualities"(x). To some degree, Carver's poetry about the relationship between his father, himself and the Columbia River illustrates this observation; however, in contrast to the cultural binary established by O'Connell, Carver's work actually refuses to separate "spiritual" or aesthetic and socio-economic concerns. This is particularly evident in "My Dad's Wallet" and "The Trestle," two poems that were published in *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water*.

"My Dad's Wallet" (1984) is Raymond Carver's darkest poem about his father's life as a working class laborer in the Pacific Northwest. Before its publication in *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water*, the poem appeared alongside Bruce Weber's *New York Times Magazine* article, "Raymond Carver: A Chronicler of Blue-Collar Despair" (1984). Geographically, it locates Clevie Carver in Klamath, California, where he has died while making a last-ditch attempt to find financial stability in a timber mill. Ella and Raymond have just arrived in a dark and dusty mortuary to grant Clevie a final wish: "to lie close / to his parents" and those who came with him to the Pacific Northwest in 1929, relatives now buried in the Yakima town cemetery. Raymond and Ella were aware of Clevie's last wish to return from Klamath, California to Yakima, Washington, but as Carver states:

> . . . when the breath
> left his lungs and all signs of life
> had faded, he found himself in a town
> 512 miles away from where he wanted to be most. (*All of Us* 89)

Now, even with life taken from him, Carver insists that his Arkansas father, who "liked to wander," remains "restless / even in death" (*All of Us* 89). However, in order to grant the shiftless laborer his final desire, Ella and Raymond are forced to enter into a game of economic exchange surrounding Clevie's dead body.

Upon hearing the family's request to return the corpse to Yakima, Washington, the mortician says he can "arrange it, not to worry." However, as critic Arthur Bethea observes, once the undertaker proceeds to pull out "his pad and pen" his calculations indicate that he is "more concerned about his fee for transporting the corpse than the bereavers' feelings" (*All of Us* 89-90, Bethea 242). While Ella and Raymond wait for the mortician to return from the back room with calculations, Carver describes waiting in office lit with a "poor light" that fell on a "poor place on / the dusty floor" -- signs of poverty that are indicative of the dire economic circumstances that mother and son faced in transporting Clevie's body back to Yakima (*All of Us* 98-99).

The mortician calculates the cost of a journey from Klamath to Yakima and presents the Carvers with the following scenario:

> [The undertaker] took out his pad and pen and began
> to write. First, the preparation charges.
> Then he figured the transportation
> of the remains at 22 cents a mile.
> But this was a round-trip for the undertaker,
> don't forget. Plus, say, six meals
> and two nights in a motel. He figured
> some more. Add a surcharge of
> $210 for his time and trouble,
> and there you have it. (*All of Us* 90)[37]

After hearing the cost to transport the corpse, Carver writes that the undertaker "thought we might argue," but instead Ella complied with the conditions set forth on the table. She nodded in agreement with all of the figures, although her son knew that "none of it had made sense to her, beginning with the time she left home / with my dad. She only knew / that whatever was happening / was going to take money" (*All of Us* 90). Bought out by an economic scheme that had dictated her life for more than thirty years, Ella pulls Clevie's "old and rent and soiled" wallet from her purse. The mortician and Raymond "stared at the wallet for minute," the empty tomb of a mill and dam worker whose "life had gone out" to pay "rent" in an unfulfilled hope of achieving ownership and stability. In this moment of silence, unfulfilled dreams are torn against the economic price of living in the Promised Land. Granting Clevie his last wish, Ella opened the wallet "and looked inside. / Drew out / a handful of money that would go / toward this last, most astounding trip" (*All of Us* 91).

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[37] According to Maryann Burk Carver, Raymond Carver's first wife, the events depicted in "My Dad's Wallet" are based on actual circumstances. As she remembers, after the funeral the family followed the hearse from northern California to Yakima. Shortly after they left town, the undertaker "stopped at a drive in" to eat. "Not only did that give us a sad start, but for Ray, the writer and elder son, it was a dramatic, ironic experience to travel across three states, on the same route with his dad's coffin. He kept saying, in tears, 'I just wish I could go take my dad and bury him'" (qtd. in Sklenicka 135).

The closing lines and dark sense of socio-economic finality rendered in "My Dad's Wallet" would seem to suggest that Raymond Carver has closed the final chapter of his father's hardscrabble life as a laborer in the Pacific Northwest. However, this is not the case. In the last section of *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water*, the life-narratives of many figures from Carver's childhood and adult life are collected and reclaimed from this "dusty" scene of economic and spiritual drought to be gathered into a revised confluence of optimism, health, and generosity. It should be no surprise that Clevie Carver is among those whose life is reclaimed through the poetics of water.

In a poem titled "The Trestle" (1984), Carver uses a dominant image of labor and industry at the Grand Coulee dam construction site to reconfigure his father's relationship to the Columbia River Basin. The connection between water and work surfaces in the opening lines, when Carver awakes one morning to confess that he has "wasted [his] time" and is "deeply ashamed" of the lack of work he has written. The poem, then, shifts to events that happened the night before, when the poet "went to bed . . . thinking about [his] dad" (*All of Us* 136). Falling asleep, he remembered their days working together at the timber mill in Chester, California, and how they spent free-time at "a little river [they] used to fish -- Butte Creek -- / near Lake Almanor." Lulled to sleep by memories of companionship, fishing, and water, Carver awakens the next morning to remember another time when he was a kid, "sitting on a timber trestle, looking down," watching his father in the water far below.

Raymond Carver makes no explicit connection between the days his father worked as a laborer below the trestles at the Grand Coulee Dam construction site; however, in this poem Clevie is healthy and young again, participating in a revised picture of renewal through times spent on and with a free-flowing river, rather than days employed by the Bureau of Reclamation to harness the power of the Columbia River. In *The New Deal and the West* (1984), Richard Lowitt explains that in addition to dams and irrigation projects, by 1940 the Bureau of Reclamation had built more than 13,000

bridges and trestles throughout the West (94). Among the largest structures were the "trestles almost two hundred feet high" that were used to transport and pour concrete at Grand Coulee Dam, where Clevie worked for some two years (Neuberger, *Promised* 70). In Carver's poem, however, the trestle is transformed from a massive public works project into a secret place where a son can find a father's love for family and free-flowing water. Imagining the days when Clevie arrived at Omak from Arkansas, Raymond revises history by telling how, from the very beginning, his father "loved / this country where he found himself. The West. / For thirty years it had him around the heart, and then it let him go" (*All of Us* 137). In this poem, history and memory are reclaimed, as Clevie's encounter with the river is not based on economics, but relational and personal affection. In this place of renewal, Raymond imagines himself as a child and watches his father's love for free-flowing, clean water unfold from high above on the trestle. Far below, Carver's dad works, drinking "from his cupped hands," telling the boy, "this water's so good. / I wish I could give my mother some of this water" (*All of Us* 137).

Through the often tormented labor of writing, "The Trestle" becomes a kind of relational reclamation through the work of poetry, where Raymond Carver can build and locate his itinerant father in a state of spiritual and socio-economic health. Through the current of imagination, the poet explains that even after his father's death he can return "to [his] desk back to childhood. And from there it's not so far to the trestle. / And from the trestle I could look down / and see my dad when I need to see him. My sweet father" (*All of Us* 137). According to Bethea, this poem, the last one Carver wrote about his father, "imaginatively resurrects his long dead parent," endowing him with "holiness and a sense of emotional rejuvenation" (242). The transformation, however, is associated with the Columbia River and emerges through a flow of words that re-pattern and release history from linearity into turnings of open-ended verse. The shift from binding regularity to renewal and release is most evident in the closing lines, where Carver reflects on the vaguely bourgeois triviality of his own line of work -- its telephone calls,

deadlines and appointments. In such moments, he remembers his father at the trestle and imaginatively joins him in a baptismal form of renewal. Seeking re-alignment and regeneration, Carver writes: "I want to plunge my hands in clear water. The way he did. Again and then again" (*All of Us* 137).

Clevie Carver had worked on Grand Coulee Dam for only two years, but the socio-economic mirage of the Promised Land haunted him for the rest of his life. Little more than a decade after his arrival, Mervyn Clyde Witherup, a worker from Kansas City, Missouri, would make his own way to the Columbia River Basin and spend thirty years of his life working downriver at Hanford Nuclear Reserve. Working as Quality Control Engineer in a nuclear reactor and then as an Operations Engineer in a plutonium separation plant, Mervyn would be among the first laborers in history to handle and manufacture radioactive materials on a massive scale. In years following the cataclysmic end to World War II, Mervyn would take pride in knowing that his work contributed to maintaining national security. Following his death in 1988, however, Mervyn's son, William Witherup, would use prose and poetry to recover his father's life history as laborer in the Columbia River Basin. Like Raymond Carver, who used poetry and prose to chronicle his father's life, William Witherup would use literary arts to release the moral guilt and physical anger of watching his father live and die for Hanford Engineer Works, an extension of the U.S. Department of Defense that willfully exposed its employees to occupational hazards, while using the power of the harnessed Columbia River to secure peace through international violence.

Working with Mervyn Clyde Witherup:
Building the Bomb at Hanford Engineer Works

In the late 1930s, Mervyn Clyde Witherup (1910-1988) and Nita Rosemond Allen (1914-2009) were a newly married couple working to provide for their growing family in Kansas City, Missouri. "Merv" was the son of a local grocer and "Rose" was the youngest daughter of a Midwestern drugstore supply salesman (Witherup, *Men at Work*

54). After the couple married in 1934, they remained in Kansas City, where Merv took a job selling paint and Rose raised their three young children at home. This pattern of life shifted, however, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared war against Japan in 1941. With the United States fully invested in World War II, Merv was hired by "Remington Arms, a DuPont subsidiary" to inspect the annealing on brass military cartridges in the Quality Control department (Witherup, *Men at Work* 54). The couple had no idea at the time, but secret negotiations taking place between the DuPont Corporation and the U.S. Department of Defense would soon send them to the Columbia River Basin, where Merv would construct military infrastructure and process plutonium at Hanford Engineer Works, a top-secret military operation designed to generate materials for the first atomic weapons the world would ever see.

In response to the attack on Pearl Harbor (1941), Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared war against Japan and initiated the Manhattan Project (1942), a covert operation whose mission was to produce the first atomic bomb. During the race toward U.S. nuclear armament, the Army Corps of Engineers worked with international chemists and alongside the DuPont Corporation, the Delaware based company that specialized in "the production of chemicals and explosives" and possessed "wide experience in the construction of large production plants" (Sanger 30). At the time, DuPont's executives doubted that an atomic weapon could be manufactured in such a brief allotment of time, but accepted a contract to build three top-secret production sites that did work for the Manhattan Project's Metallurgy Lab (1941) at the University of Chicago. The production network of nuclear power spread across the nation. The National Scientific Laboratory (1943) at Los Alamos, New Mexico, was constructed to engineer, assemble and test atomic weapons; Clinton Engineer Works (1943) at Oak Ridge, Tennessee, was created to mill uranium based fuel through gaseous and thermal diffusion; and Hanford Engineer Works (1943) at Hanford, Washington, was built to manufacture and separate plutonium, a man-made element that required several nuclear reactors, immense amounts of

electricity and a seemingly endless supply of water for the cooling and dissolution of radioactive fuel.

In 1941-1942, when selecting a site to manufacture the plutonium, DuPont executives and chemists within the Manhattan Project informed the Department of Defense that the production plant would need to be located in a remote place, not only for secrecy but because the nuclear reactors would be dangerous to operate and completely "untested and untried" (Sanger 2). Moreover, these reactors would "utilize an enormous amount of electrical power" and require a "large, dependable supply of pure cool water" in order to cool and dissolve uranium fuel slugs that would be housed inside the concrete structures (Sanger 2). Taking these factors into consideration, the Department of Defense looked to the semi-arid west, where recently completed hydroelectric dams such as Boulder (1936), Shasta (1938-1945), Bonneville (1937) and Grand Coulee (1942) could provide the military with both power and water. Ultimately, they chose the Columbia River Basin, focusing their attention on a remote stretch of water in-between Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams, a site with enough natural and hydroelectric currents to meet the Department of Defense's voracious demand for energy throughout World War II.

Drawn by the power of the Columbia River and the remoteness of southeastern Washington, the federal government used the War Powers Act (1941) to "reclaim" a 670 acre site along the Columbia River near Priest Rapids -- the future home of Hanford Engineer Works (Sanger 17). The proposed site was certainly remote, but it was by no means unpopulated. As S.L. Sanger explains, "two villages, White Bluffs and Hanford, were home to about 300, and Richland, about 30 miles downriver, had a population of 200" (17). In total, approximately 1,000 farmers were living and working at the confluence of the Yakima and Columbia rivers.[38] In 1943, these families were notified

[38] For a history of these southeastern Washington communities before the federal reclamation of land see Martha Berry Parker, *Tales of Richland, White Bluffs and Hanford 1805-1943, Before the Atomic Reserve* (Fairfield, WA: Ye Galleon Press, 1986); S.L. Sanger, *Working*

of the federal appropriation of their property on the grounds that it was “necessary to the public interest” (Sanger 2). They were compensated below market value and forced to move within thirty days.

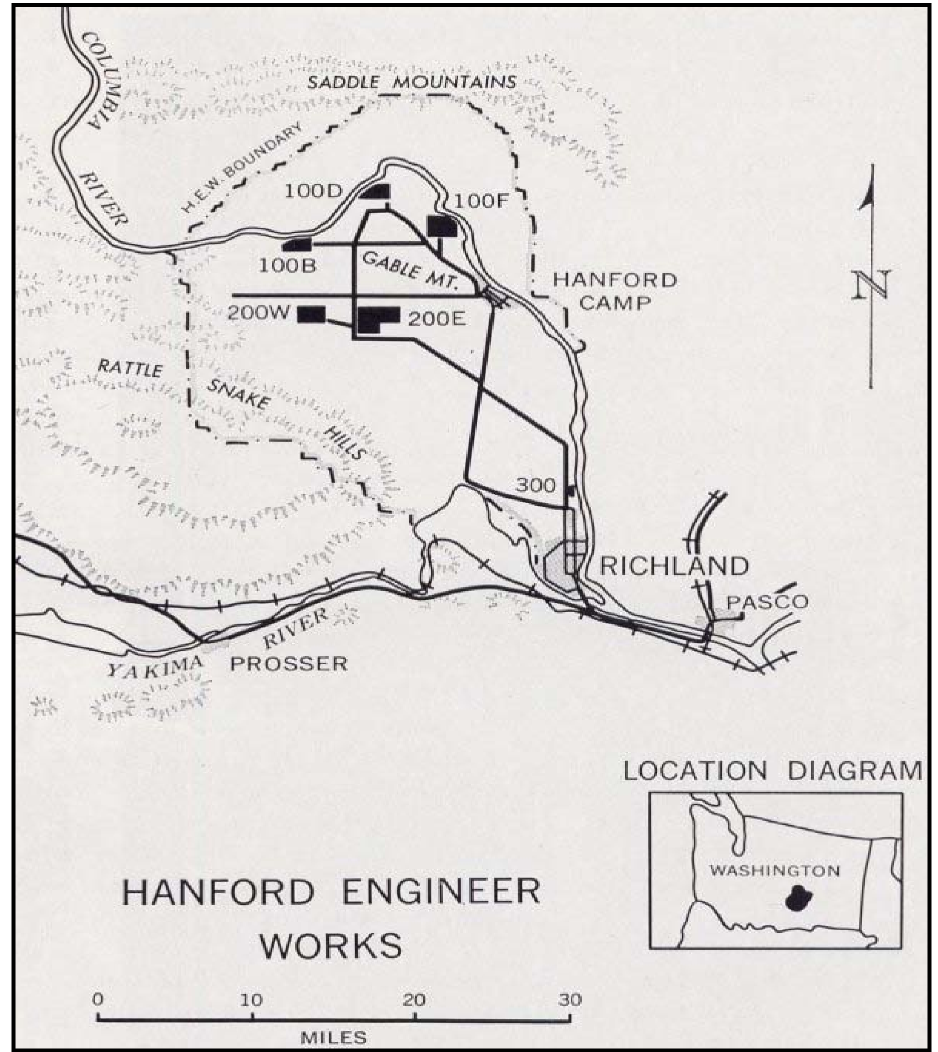

Figure 16. Map of Hanford Engineer Works, 1943-1945. U.S. Department of Energy, Office of History and Heritage Resources.

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on the Bomb: An Oral History of World War II Hanford (Portland, OR: Portland State UP, 1995), 16-27.

Relocation was more problematic for the Wanapum tribe of Indians, a nomadic band of southeastern Washington that had refused to participate in the 1855 treaty negotiations, which produced the nearby Yakama Reservation. Now, lacking federal representation for a property settlement with the government and no legal right to occupy the land, the Wanapums were also forced to abandon salmon fisheries at Priest Rapids and relocate without compensation. The removal and dislocation of farmers and indigenous peoples at the confluence of the Columbia and Yakima rivers paved the way for an exodus of some 137,000 laborers and their families who arrived between 1943 and 1945 to construct infrastructure and process plutonium for Hanford Engineer Works.

One of these workers was Merv Witherup, among the "first to be recruited" from the Remington Arms Company, a Kansas City subsidiary of the DuPont Corporation (Witherup, "Fallout" 25). In a retrospective essay titled, "Fallout: Reflections on the 60th Anniversary of the Trinity Test" (2005), Merv's son, William Witherup, describes his father as a "typical" laborer who moved west to work at Hanford (25). As the sole contractor for the construction of Hanford Engineer Works, the DuPont Corporation recruited heavily from its own pool of employees. According to journalist Ted Van Arsdol, author of *Hanford: The Big Secret* (1958), statistics from the Atomic Energy Commission (1946) indicate that in 1944 DuPont had 153 corporate "recruiters scattered in all parts of the nation" (21). Indeed, one only need sift through the pages of S.L. Sanger's *Working on the Bomb: An Oral History of WWII Hanford* (1995) to trace the linkage between Hanford and DuPont employees. In addition to skilled workers like Merv Witherup, the corporation recruited men like Joe Holt, a DuPont construction laborer from Charleston, Indiana; Jess Brinkerhoff, a transfer from a Remington Ammunition plant in Salt Lake City, Utah; Dewitt Bailey, a DuPont shipyard worker from Alabama; and Fred Vanwyck, a technician from West Virginia, who came to Hanford as a steam power plant operator (Sanger 118-121, 129-131, 136-138, 184-186). While DuPont laborers arrived from all parts of the nation, it was Merv Witherup's home

state of Missouri that supplied 7,756 recruits to Hanford, a contribution of bodies surpassed only by Washington and California (Arsdol 22).

With his experience working as a Quality Control man at Remington Ammunition Company, Merv Witherup was an ideal candidate for Hanford Engineer Works, particularly since he was not eligible to be drafted. Statistics from the Atomic Energy Commission (1946) indicate that DuPont actively pursued workers "who were not likely to be drafted," either because they were thirty-eight or older, or because they had obtained 4-F status and could not be drafted due to physical injury (Sanger 68). Indeed, as Van Arsdol explains, "fifty-one percent of those employed at Hanford during the war were 38 or older, and 75 percent of the workers in the 18 to 26-year-old bracket, prime military age, were rated 4-F" (26). Merv Witherup was thirty-four when he arrived at Hanford, but classified as an "F-4 because of a bad shoulder from an auto accident in Kansas City" ("Fallout" 26-27). Although an ideal candidate for employment at the federal reserve, William Witherup always suspected that his father "felt somewhat guilty about not being in the war, though he balanced this, as did many of the other workers, and their families, with the satisfaction that he was doing important, wartime work" ("Fallout" 27).

Merv Witherup first heard about employment with Hanford Engineer Works in late 1943, while still working for Remington Ammunition Company in Kansas City. His son William, only nine at the time, remembers that "there were announcements at Dad's workplace that there was an opportunity for higher wages if he would 'Go West, young man'" ("Fallout" 26). Merv, along with thousands of laborers at DuPont subsidiaries, made employment decisions after reviewing recruitment propaganda that was distributed throughout the United States by the DuPont Corporation and Hanford Engineer Works.

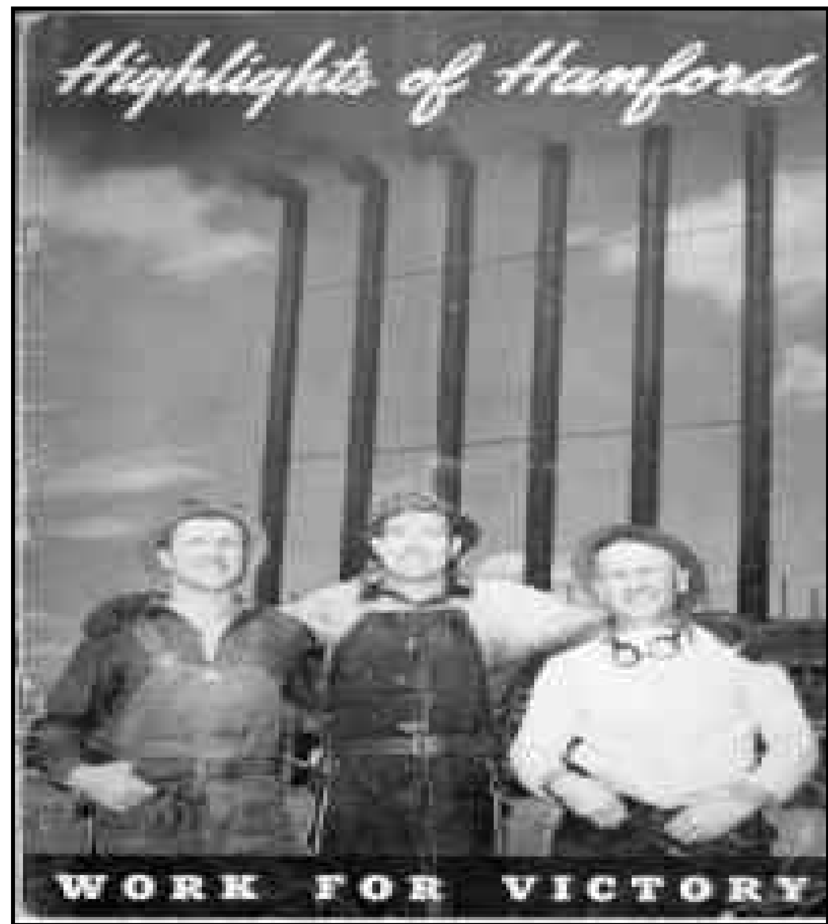

Figure 17. Recruitment Pamphlet, *Highlights of Hanford: Work for Victory*. Hanford Engineer Works, 1943.

Brochures such as *Highlights of Hanford: Work for Victory* (1943) and *Here's Hanford* (1944) pledged long-term and meaningful employment at a heavy construction site that was vital to the wartime effort. The pamphlets lured workers west with promises of money, adventure, camaraderie, and a sense of national purpose -- all of which were depicted through photographs and narrative snapshots of daily life at the plant. *Highlights of Hanford*, for example, begins by offering prospective workers the following guarantee:

> There's a job for you at Hanford. It's not short job and it's not a small job. We can't tell you much about it because it's an important war job, but we can tell you that it's new heavy industrial plant construction. (2)

As an added incentive, DuPont promised to advance laborers travel funds for railway tickets to the Pasco, Washington, hiring office, guaranteeing complete travel reimbursement for laborers who stayed with the company for at least four months. The twenty-page document provided details on weather, accommodations, meals, payment schedules, safety, and recreation; however, it also warned that "it is almost impossible to find living quarters for a family. There are no trailers or houses for rent in Hanford and no accommodations for married couples to live together in the barracks" (*Highlights* 8). The corporation provided rental space for privately owned trailers, but most construction laborers, including Merv Witherup, decided to leave family behind until adequate government housing became available.

Early in 1944, Merv arrived in Pasco, Washington, and was processed through the War Manpower Office of Hanford Engineer Works, an administrative hiring branch of the company that was struggling to keep laborers employed at the construction site. Staffed by seventeen employees, working seven days a week, the War Manpower Office processed more than 90,000 laborers from 1943 to 1944, an average of 600 to 1000 new employees each day (Van Arsdol 22-23). However, the turnover rate was staggering. *Highlights of Hanford* described the nearby mountains and forests in pastoral terms, but also warned that southeastern Washington was "a little on the rugged side" (2). Regardless of this, many newcomers imagined working in a picturesque Promised Land and were completely unprepared for the heat, wind, and dust storms that swept through the reserve almost every day. According to DuPont photographer Robley L. Johnson, who arrived in 1943, prospective workers came "out here thinking Washington was the Evergreen State, and got dumped in a desert" (Sanger 109). Many laborers stepped off the train in Pascoe and left town before their jobs even started. Turnover rates peaked in the summer of 1944, when twenty-one percent of laborers were driven away by heat and dust storms that were aptly called "termination winds" (Van Arsdol 50). But turnover was not completely caused by weather.

Many workers refused to work at Hanford Engineer Works because they could not tolerate the secrecy and lack of information provided by the DuPont Corporation. Lois May Lyon, a manager of employee enrollment at the War Manpower Office in Pascoe, spent many hours negotiating with disgruntled laborers who found the secret life at Hanford Engineer Works to be intolerable. After collecting a litany of their complaints, she penned workers' arguments in the form of a poem that concluded:

> ". . . I am leaving
> It's not that I hate the dust
> It's not that my bunk mates snore too loud
> Or my lunches contain some crust
>
> It's just that I want to be doing
> A thing I can see and know
> Be it a ship or airplane or what not
> The thing is I just want to know." (Van Arsdol 19)

For those who signed on with the company, Lyon processed hiring papers and assigned each worker a rate of pay and a place to stay. General laborers made about $1.00 an hour, while "skilled laborers such plumbers, steamfitters, electricians and bricklayers" earned up to $1.85 or more. Hours were long, but the pay was excellent, particularly considering that a two-person room in the army barracks was only $1.40 per person each week, and all-you-can-eat meals were available at 60 cents apiece in eight available mess halls (Sanger 68).

Until early 1945, construction laborers and skilled workers such as Merv Witherup lived at "Hanford Camp" (1943-1945), a community of trailers and army barracks that were segregated by sex and race.[39] When Joe Holt, the DuPont worker from Indiana, arrived at camp in 1943, there was "hardly anybody" at the site. He lived out of an army tent and worked to build barracks and mess halls; within a few weeks

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[39] Sanger explains that "by actual count in July 1944, there were a total of 52,709 persons at Hanford Engineer Works, which presumably included people in Richland. The breakdown was 34,007 white men; 13,044 white women; 4,650 'colored' men; and 796 'colored' women" (68).

there were “a thousand men a day coming in” (Sanger 119). By the summer of 1944, Hanford Camp was transformed from a few tents into a massive infrastructure of 1,175 buildings, 345 miles of roadway and 125 miles of railroad lines, a community which boasted the largest general delivery post office in the world (Sanger 68). For two years, the camp was home to more than 50,000 people and operated as “a full-service town with banks, hospital, eight mess halls, taverns, movies, and auditorium for sports and dances, fire and police departments, baseball fields and a swimming pool” (Sanger 68). In the tradition of western boom and bust economies, however, once the construction period was completed and contracts with laborers ended, the labor camp was abandoned and destroyed (1945-1946).

With experience in Quality Control at Remington Arms, Merv Witherup’s first job assignment and Hanford Engineer Works was to inspect the construction and assembly process of “100-B reactor,” the first production scale nuclear reactor in the world (Sanger 70). Before the detonation of atomic bombs “Trinity” and “Fat Man” (1945) laborers at work on the reactor had no idea what they were building; they only knew that it was crucial to the wartime effort. They were forbidden to discuss their jobs with family or friends. According to William Witherup, those who talked were fired and sent out of town “on the next train, or moving van” (“Fallout” 28). In 1972, however, after retiring from thirty years of secrecy, Merv was able to talk with his family about the jobs he performed on the federal reserve, the first of which “was to help log in the graphite blocks that were used in B-reactor” (“Fall Out” 28, *Men at Work* 54).

B-reactor was a massive tower of concrete, graphite and steel, a giant water pump built to cool and dissolve slugs of uranium fuel using the circulatory currents of the Columbia River. Its size and technological intricacies were staggering. As S.L. Sanger explains:

> [The 100-B reactor] stood on concrete approximately 23 feet thick. Between the graphite and laminated walls on the top and sides was a cast-iron thermal shield about 10 inches thick on the right and

> left sides. The entire reactor was enclosed by three to five feet of concrete. Horizontally, through the graphite, were more than 2,000 holes containing aluminum tubes approximately one and on-half inches in diameter. The side of the reactor where the tubes were inserted, and loaded with 70,000 uranium fuel slugs, was the charge or front face. At the other end, where the slugs were pushed out after uses, was the discharge or rear face. From front to rear through the cast-iron thermal shield there were 208 holes containing cooling water pipes. (72)

The Columbia River was essential in the cooling and dissolution process. In the 1940s, the undammed stretch of the river at Priest Rapids moved at a pace of 121,000 cubic feet per second and the reactors' consumption and circulation of water was phenomenal. As Richard White explains, by the time three nuclear reactors were completed in early 1945, they utilized "30,000 gallons of water per minute . . . more water than a city of a million people," and by 1964, with nine reactors in operation, water pumped and circulated through the reserve returned to the Columbia at 74 degrees, accounting for a 2-3 degree rise in water temperature each summer between Priest Rapids and Richland (*Organic* 83).

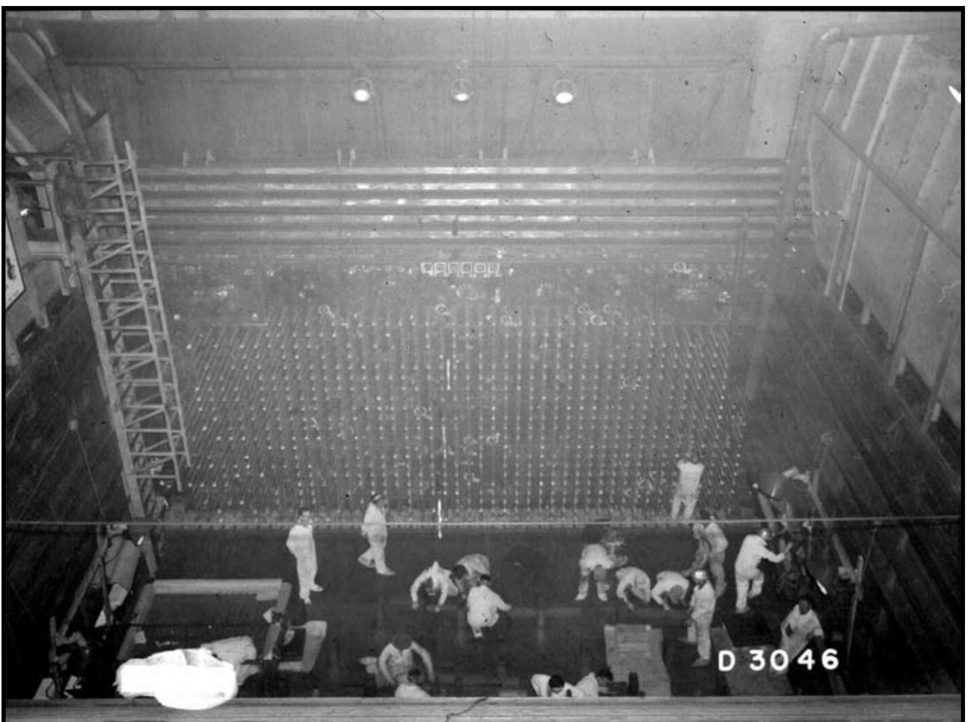

Figure 18. Laborers Constructing the Front Face of 100-B Reactor, 1944. Hanford Declassified Document Retrieval System. No. N1D0029049.

In 1944, Holt, the DuPont transfer from Indiana, worked on the construction of 100-B reactor with Merv Witherup. They were part of a 5,000 person crew that worked seven days a week, 10-12 hours at day, to complete the first production scale plutonium processor in the world. Holt, one the first laborers to arrive at Hanford Camp, remembers watching cranes and heavy equipment "digging this hole for the reactor building, and it was like going down to China" (Sanger 118). When the external infrastructure was finished, Holt joined forces with quality control monitors such as Witherup, who recorded the dimensions of graphite blocks that were assembled like a puzzle inside the reactor. Decades later, Holt could still recall the excitement, complexity, and secrecy of the assembly process as he worked inside Reactor B:

> [Laying the graphite] was wonderful, very precise work. The blocks were different lengths, but all had to be fitted to tolerances in the thousandths. We had to wear protective clothing, shoe coverings, so there wouldn't be any contamination of the graphite. . . . You wondered then what you were doing. I got acquainted with one of the engineers and he said 'Instead of killing Japs by the hundreds, we are going to get them by the thousands.' He had an idea of what we were making but did not tell me. To tell you the truth, I had no idea. (Sanger 120)

Through the intelligence, determination, and sweat of men such as Holt and Witherup, B-reactor began producing plutonium in the fall of 1944. In a matter of months the unit was joined by Reactor D (1944) and Reactor F (1945), the three processors that produced uranium fuel slugs for the atomic bombs "Trinity" (1945) and "Fat Man" (1945).

Merv Witherup was among the construction laborers who continued to work for Hanford Engineer Works even after plutonium production began in 1944. In an attempt to provide housing for "some 6,000 operations workers and 11,000 family members" who continued to work at the plant once plutonium production began, the federal government (under the auspices of DuPont Corporation) had purchased Richland, Washington in 1943, and were now attempting to provide permanent housing for laborers and families committed to long-term employment with the corporation at "Richland Hanford Engineer Works Village," a federally managed community of the atomic future (Sanger 70).

Housing was planned and designed by G. Albin Pherson, a Spokane, Washington based architect who was hired by DuPont and given only ninety days to present a city plan that could accommodate the influx of laborers. Upon federal approval Pherson's plan for Richland Hanford Engineer Works Village, a revised version of Richland, Washington emerged from the dust and was transformed as quickly as Hanford Camp. As S.L. Sanger explains:

> By early 1945, Richland had been transformed, with 4,304 new housing units, and sufficient stores, shops, schools, churches, medical facilities and government services to support the mushroomed population. The 2,500 conventional wood-frame houses were of eight different styles, from two-bedroom on story duplexes to four-bedroom two –story single-family homes. In addition, about 1,800 small prefabricated houses were shipped from Portland, Oregon, 300 miles away. (70)

Efficient and affordable housing was provided in the form of a series of "alphabet homes," eight pre-fabricated models that were designed by Pherson and identified as "A, B, C, D, E and F houses" (*Men at Work* 58). The letter homes were in high demand, and many families waited in government trailer parks until units became available to lease; this was the case for Merv Witherup and his family. In the summer of 1944, five months after arriving at Hanford Camp to start work on constructing the B-reactor, Merv moved his wife and three children out to the Pacific Northwest, hoping to settle into a basic "A-type" alphabet home in Richland. His oldest son William, who was nine at the time, remembers that "for three baking months" the family lived in an "army-type trailer camp," while waiting for a pre-fabricated "A-type, government built, double-decker duplex" to become available for lease (Witherup, "This is. . . ").

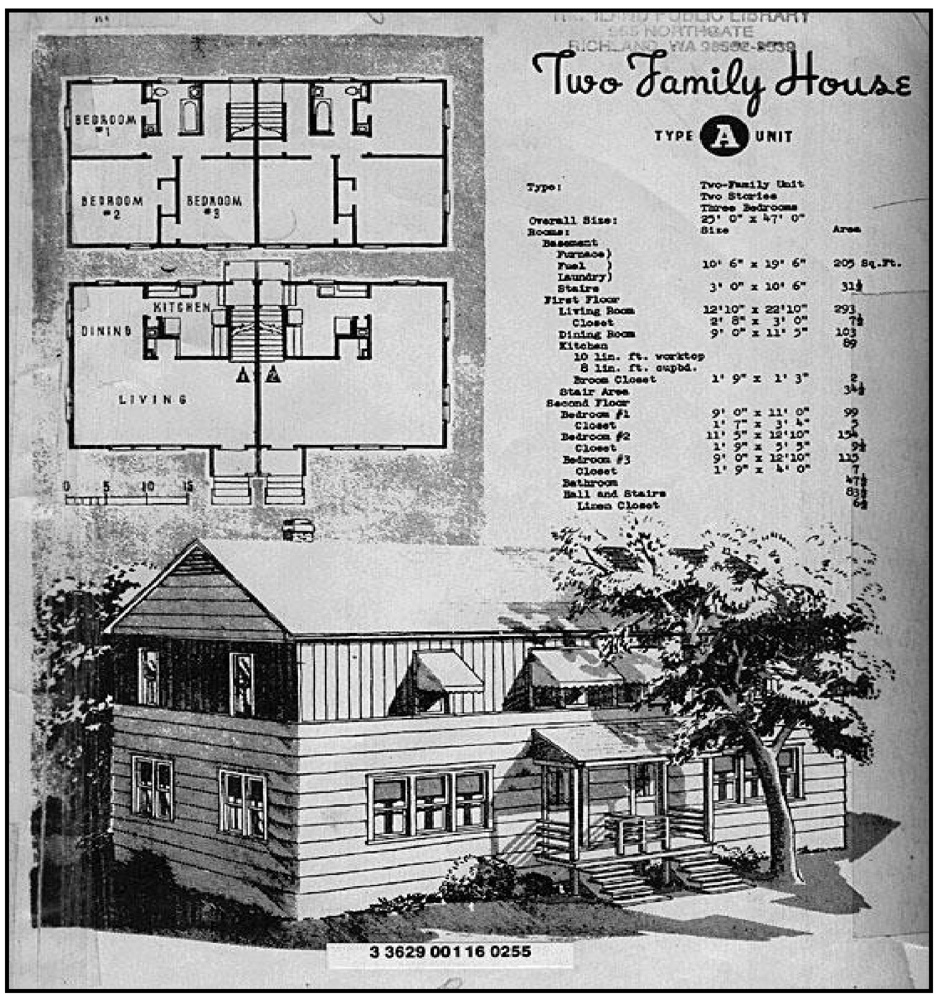

Figure 19. G. Albin Pherson's Advertisement for the "Type-A" Prefabricated Government Duplex, c. 1943. East Benton County Historical Society, Kennewick, Washington.

That fall, the Witherup family settled into Richland Hanford Engineer Works Village and became part of a wartime community that promoted a suburban fantasy of the erasures of class division through the support for the U.S. military. Living in Richland from 1944-1953, William Witherup remembers that "the children of physicists, doctors, chemists, engineers and workers wore pretty much the same style of clothes to school, shirts, slacks and shoes ordered from Montgomery Ward or Sears and Roebuck in Seattle; and although the better paid scientists lived in single unit government housing, while the rest of us lived in prefabs or duplexes, the gray and brown shingle sameness of

government housing erased class differences" ("Fallout" 27-28). Below the equitable surfaces of the village, however, the newly constructed community was as segregated as the Hanford Camp that preceded it. According to William Witherup:

> The workers and businesses in Richland, were all white folks. The African Americans who worked on construction helping to build the plant, and the other reactors that went online during the Korean War, had to live downriver in Pasco, Washington, and in often substandard housing. There were no Hispanics or Native Americans either working at Hanford – and there were only one or two Hispanics and/or Native Americans in my graduating class of 1953. ("Fall Out" 28)

These personal observations are consistent with insights made by historian Richard Bauman, who traces how African American laborers migrated from the South to Hanford Engineer Works hoping to find socio-economic equity, but "faced a system of segregation not unlike that in some southern communities" (124).

In an article titled, "Jim Crow in the Tri-Cities, 1943-1950" (2005), Bauman explains that during the construction period of Hanford Engineer Works, the DuPont Corporation recruited about 15,000 African American laborers from the South to head to the Columbia River Basin, roughly 10 percent of the total labor force (124, 125). They, along with white laborers, attempted to move into the communities of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco, now commonly referred to as the Tri-Cities, but were typically forced to take up residence in shanties without adequate heat, plumbing, or access to clean water. Kennewick had established housing covenants against Africans Americans, while the DuPont community of Richland was strictly off limits to temporary black employees, a policy that was not surprising given that work forces at Hanford Engineer Works were also segregated by the corporation throughout World War II. While the town of Kennewick openly passed legislation that discriminated against African Americans, the DuPont Corporation obfuscated accusations of racism by hiring African Americans as "temporary laborers" at Hanford, while white men and women were classified as "permanent laborers," an occupational entitlement that provided them with

access to government housing and health benefits, both of which were withheld from African Americans of temporary status. The only housing option available to African Americans was in Pascoe where "the African American population . . . rose from 27 in 1940 to just under 1,000 in 1950" (Bauman 126). Statistics from 1950 indicate that after the war only seven African Americans lived in Richland, and that they were offered this benefit only because they held "permanent" white collar jobs at Hanford Engineer Works (Bauman 128).

Late in 1944, now settled into an A-type government owned duplex, Merv Witherup entered into the next phase of his career with Hanford Engineer Works, as an Operating Engineer in a plutonium chemical separation plant. After uranium fuel slugs were cooled in nuclear reactors, the radioactive materials were transported to one of three chemical separation plants, T plant (1944), U Plant (1944) and B Plant (1945). At these sites, the first laborers in human history were "handling radioactivity" on an "enormous scale" (Sanger 39). Work performed at the separation plants was top-secret. As William Witherup remembers, everyone involved, plant laborers, along with family "were kept in the political and moral dark about the product of their labors" (*Men at Work* 56). Upon retirement, however, Merv told his son about years spent as an "Operating Engineer in the process that separated the plutonium from the slurry after the uranium was fissioned." As William explains, "the separation process was done in a huge two-block long facility called a 'Queen Mary,' and this was one of the more toxic work stations in the process" ("Fallout" 28).

The Queen Mary chemical separation plants were nicknamed named by construction laborers who compared the long, v-bottom buildings to a beached steamship (the "Queen Mary") in the desert. The separation process began after uranium fuel slugs processed at the nuclear reactors were transported by train in lead-lined boxcars to one of the three chemical separation facilities. Each separation plant was 800 feet long, 65 feet wide and 80 feet high. The interior was constructed in the shape of a giant canyon and

various chemicals circulated through individual "cells" in the dissolution processing line. Laborers used remote control equipment, periscopes, and television monitors to manipulate the batches of uranium fuel through the sequential series of chemical cells. In an effort to maximize safety and maintain chemical purity, each cell was covered with a six foot thick concrete lid and workers manipulated the products from behind shields of the same thickness (Sanger 60, 63-64). Safety precautions were of paramount importance, as indicated by Oswald H. Greager, a DuPont chemist who often reminded operators such as Merv Witherup that "plutonium is very, very toxic. You don't fool with plutonium" (Sanger 191). Greager's description may seem vague and unhelpful, but there are no available words to describe the toxicity of the substance. Richard White has attempted to explain the immeasurable and permanent danger of plutonium to the Columbia River Basin by comparing it to the impermanence of hydroelectric dams. As White explains, many people vilify the seemingly permanent ecological impact of federal dams throughout the watershed, but with a "fiendishly toxic" half-life of 25,000 years, "plutonium makes the dams seem as transient as sunlight sparkling on the water" (*Organic* 81).[40]

Wakefield Wright, a DuPont chemist and head supervisor at plutonium separation "Plant T" (1944), remembers that the separation process usually ran smoothly, but that anxieties of chemical and radiation exposure were constantly circulating among supervisors and lead chemists. As supervisor, Wright set the standards of operation for the dissolution process and trained "construction people" like Merv Witherup, who stayed on with Hanford as plutonium separation processors, how to operate and time the separation cycles through Plant T (Sanger 187). Uranium fuel slugs arrived at the back of

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[40] According to historian Michele Stenehjem Gerber, a half-life is "the time required for the activity of a radionuclide to decay to half its value; the term is used as a measure of the persistence of radioactive materials" (299).

the plant by train cars and were “backed right into the tunnels and unloaded into the dissolver” (Sanger 188). During the initial dissolution process, the main concern was the atmospheric release of nitric acid, which was used in the first phase of separation. As Wright explains, “you had to worry about wind conditions, because nitric acid fumes, on a first cut, would be practically brown. They didn’t want the wind to be in the direction of the Tri-Cities, even though they were 30-35 miles away . . . If we started to dissolve and the wind got bad, we would have to quit, so we were at the vagaries of the wind” (Sanger 188).

Figure 20. Hanford Engineer Works, Plant T (221-T, “Queen Mary” Separation Plant), 1944. Hanford Declassified Document Retrieval System. No. N1D0030560.

As supervisor of chemical production Plant-T, Wright had access to knowledge about radiation and toxicity that operation engineers such as Merv Witherup were not provided with. According to Wright, “radiation danger was always with us,” but

supervisors were not allowed to talk with operation engineers about the dangers of chemical exposure. Instead, laborers like Merv Witherup were taught standard operating procedures and reminded to receive routine physical examinations as scheduled by company policy (Sanger 189). This procedure is corroborated by historian Michele Stenehjem Gerber, author of *On the Homefront: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site* (1992), whose research indicates that when it came to the occupational health hazards of plutonium separation, the Manhattan Engineer District "prevented disclosure even of the existence of radioactivity to most employees" (49). In fact, from the very beginning, it was determined that supervisors and general employees would be informed of occupational hazards on a strictly "need to know basis" and that plant supervisors, physicians, and nurses would only be given enough information to "work intelligently" (49). Those who possessed classified knowledge were then required to use code words when speaking to the public or uniformed laborers about the dangers of radiation and chemical exposure; in most cases "uranium was 'base metal' and plutonium was 'product'" (49).

The Manhattan Engineer District feared that if workers were informed of health hazards at Hanford Engineer Works, the workforce would diminish and dissolve as quickly as uranium fuel slugs. They were probably right. The incremental amounts of plutonium harvested by Merv Witherup (and thousands of laborers like him) carried levels of toxicity that extended beyond all means of linguistic classification, as evidenced by William D. Norwood, DuPont's Medical Director at Hanford Engineer Works, who claims that "the worst possibility [of exposure] was plutonium. The amount allowed, total whole body, was .04 microcuries, an amount equal to what you could put on the point of a very sharp pencil" (Sanger 184). According to Norwood, everyone at Hanford was under threat of exposure to plutonium, but laborers who worked in the chemical separation plants faced the greatest and most threatening risk:

> Plutonium is an alpha emitter, and internal deposition is dangerous because it goes to the bone and liver and can cause malignancies. The people at greatest risk were working in separation plants. We did urine tests, at first, some were done daily. After that, weekly and, finally, I think, monthly. We were looking for plutonium. Plutonium did show up, but well below the permissible limits. (Sanger 184).

Despite these dangers, Norwood was part of an administrative team that chose to withhold information concerning occupational health hazards from Hanford employees. He continues to insist, however, that under his administration the federal government used "all types of measuring instruments" to prevent accumulations of different types of radiation. During the earliest stages of plutonium production, laborers wore Geiger counters and had clothing monitored for radioactivity. They were later equipped with "a pencil-type monitor, and also a badge with X-ray film" in order to detect if exposure levels had exceeded the standard set for "permissible limits" (Sanger 184).

Despite such precautions, judging from health problems later incurred by Merv Witherup in the 1980s, it seems probable that "permissible limits" of plutonium and toxic chemicals were circulating through his body in the 1940s. Indeed, after more than thirty years of employment on the nuclear reserve, Merv retired in 1976, only to be diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1983, a disease which developed into "terminal bone cancer" and took his life in 1988 (*Men at Work* 53). Nevertheless, throughout his retirement and ailing years Witherup insisted that the nuclear reserve was "a safe workplace; that the various contractors, DuPont, GE, United Nuclear, etc. had the workers' health in mind" ("Fall Out" 28).[41] By contrast, his son William, who was never able to agree with his father "on nuclear matters and foreign policy," would spend the next twenty years

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[41] In 1945, shortly after the end of World War II, the DuPont Corporation announced that it would no longer manage Hanford Engineer Works. In 1946, under the administration of the Atomic Energy Commission (1946), General Electric became the operating contractor of the nuclear reserve and managed the facility through the Cold War. In 1977, the United States Department of Energy took charge of the reserve and completed the process of decommissioning the reactors (1964-1987).

insisting that occupational hazards incurred by his father's thirty years of employment at Hanford Nuclear Reserve spawned the cancer that killed him twelve years after retirement (*Men at Work* 53).

One year after Merv Witherup died of prostate cancer, William Witherup published a collection of poems titled *Men at Work* (1989), documenting the occupational hazards of working at Hanford Engineer Works. In a final cycle of poems titled "Graveyard," he traces the fatal exposures incurred by his father while working in the plutonium separation plants. For thirty years, Witherup had performed rotating "shift work: days, swings, graveyards," causing a pattern of biological instability that William insists disrupted his father's life-rhythms and allowed "cancers and illnesses" to develop within his father's compromised "immune-deficiency system" (Witherup, "Fallout" 28).

In a poem titled "My Father Dying: 1984," Witherup opens with a stark line that compares his father's body to a bombsite of smoldering destruction, a wasteland caught fire by the nuclear reactors and plutonium separating plants of Hanford. As Witherup states:

> He burns with prostate cancer.
> Carried plutonium home in his underwear,
> Ashes of Trinity; Ashes of Nagasaki. (*Men at Work* 59)

Here, linking ash with the hidden fact of prostate cancer, of natural reproduction turned to waste, and a wasteland of nuclear fall-out, Witherup links the New Mexico Alamogordo Bombing Range and Nagasaki, Japan, to the burning aftermath of nuclear destruction carried within his father's diseased prostate. These bodily references, although seemingly hyperbolic, literalize the health risks that laborers at Hanford Engineer Works endured for decades. During the 1940s, for example, DuPont Corporation physicians and chemists were concerned with concentrations of radiation accumulating in the thyroid gland; more recently, however, Frederick Wayne Nelson, a scientific consultant for the Hanford Research Archive, has explained that "the prostate is [also] one of the organs that collect radionuclides" to produce cancerous cells within the body (Witherup, "I,

Too" 3). These speculations are affirmed by physician Jay M. Gould, Director of the Radiation and Public Health Project, whose collaborative research in *The Enemy Within: The High Cost of Living Near Nuclear Reactors* (1996) has traced and linked prostate and breast cancer to watershed and airborne contaminates released from nuclear reactors and processing plants throughout the United States.

As the poem continues, Witherup reenacts fractured conversation exchanged with his father about the years he spent working for the federal government. The conversation is one-sided, regulated and managed by a son who, despite empathy for his father, cannot endorse his complicit engagement with the moral and occupational evil that took the lives of innocent people, and threatened the health of his entire family. Witherup acknowledges that his father "went to work daily, out of love," but also insists that he "did the Devil's job" by cooking up batches of evil in "Hell's ovens" and the "satanic mills" at Hanford (*Men at Work* 59). Again, although seemingly metaphorical, these allusions to cookery prove to be literal, but only when historicized and situated within the geographical framework of Hanford Engineer Works. Wakefield Wright, the supervisor of separation T-Plant, recalls that dissolving a "batch" of uranium fuel slugs was simply a matter of "cookbook chemistry," a process that required operational engineers like Witherup to follow a predetermined recipe or "run book" for each phase of the dissolution process (Sanger 187). In the poem, however, batches of uranium and plutonium "stoked" in reactors and cooked in chemical baths have spread beyond the confines of the reserve, appearing in the ashes of bombs in Japan, as well as in the "shadows" of "lunchboxes" and "smoldering . . . work pants" of men who worked at the chemical separation plants (*Men at Work* 59).

William Witherup closes "My Father Dying: 1984" in a way that is affectionate, but also deathly honest. For more than thirty years, Merv's identity as a Quality Control and Operations Engineer was defined by measurement and calculation, yet his son insists that "radiation badges" can never "monitor / How much your children love you." Despite

such affection, Witherup, like Carver, refuses to reduce his feelings and anger to sentimentality or nostalgia. Instead, he returns to the dominant image of the opening lines and links his father's burning tumor to the death rain that fell on Nagasaki, Japan, killing more than 73,000 people and injuring another 75,000. Turing to the reproductive power of atomic weaponry, the final and most memorable image of the poem links Merv Witherup's prostate "smoldering in [his] work pants" to radioactive and procreative "sperm spitting across centuries, / lighting everywhere karmic fires" of militaristic desires and destruction (*Men at Work* 59).

The last and most powerful statement in *Men at Work* is an elegiac poem titled "Mervyn Clyde Witherup, b. July 14, 1910 – d. May 12, 1988." Upon returning home to visit his ailing father in 1987, William found a man "frail now, down to 135 lbs" and with cancer metastasized to his bones (*Men at Work* 53). Attentive to the history of occupational hazards at the chemical separation plants, the poem literalizes Merv Witherup's body as a slug of uranium fuel now deteriorating from the corrosive chemicals used to extract plutonium at Hanford Engineer Works.

William enters the room to find his father "all bones and pain" with a radioactive "tumor [that] had eaten him down the rind" (*Men at Work* 63). Consumed by chemicals that his son believes were absorbed at Hanford Engineer Works, the old Quality Control Engineer finds it difficult to speak. He maintains "mind and wit" under the influence of "sulphate of morphine," but finds the task more difficult when shadowy chemical remnants from Hanford Nuclear Reserve drift downwind "off the volcanic desert" and circulate through his Richland home and body, leaving behind an "alkaloid crust / On his tongue" (*Men at Work* 61). The chemicals, carrying the smell of death, travel through "each of his rooms . . . snuffing out cells" along the way. Here, Witherup's word choice is sharp and calculated, as the word "cells" cuts two directions at once, signifying the deterioration of the cellular make-up of his father's body, as well as the forty chemical "cells" or "rooms" within each of the separating plant production lines (see Sanger 60).

Tormented by the chemicals circulating through his own body, Merv is also described as being physically and emotionally "irritated," a word that resonates with the *irradiated* -- a term used by laborers at Hanford Engineer Works to classify hot uranium fuel after it was processed by a nuclear reactor, but still waiting to be dissolved at a chemical separation plant (*Men at Work* 61, Gerber 300).

Figure 21. Plutonium Processing Line with Cell Cover Blocks, 1950. Hanford Declassified Document Retrieval System. No. N1D0001802.

Appropriately, Merv Witherup's final moment of release arrives when his spirit separates from a body contaminated by more than thirty years of work at Hanford Engineer Works. Hallucinating, or perhaps following some pathway into an unknown future, Merv tells his son that he has travelled "up in the sky." Returning to earth for a

brief moment, the federal employee migrates toward the future again, "brachiating from cloud to cloud" in search of a cross-continental route that will take him from one way of life and into another (*Men at Work* 63). Frantic, Merv catches sight of a railway station, not unlike the one that brought him to Pascoe, Washington, some forty years ago. In search of departure and rest, the laborer asks his son: "Is there a station nearby? / How do we get out of here?" (*Men at Work* 63). William provides direction, but no signs of eternal rest. The last lines of the poem, in fact, leave his father with anything but closure and certainty. Re-enacting his life as a worker on the graveyard shift, Merv Witherup heads out to catch an image from his past that ultimately carries him to occupational death:

> He died on the grave shift.
> The train came for him at 3 A.M.,
> And when he ran to catch it,
> He was already out of breath. (*Men at Work* 63)

Written more than forty years after World War II, it is no surprise that William Witherup's history of his father's life and death is fraught with uncertainty, regret and personal anguish; however, in days immediately following the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, laborers at Hanford Engineer Works were celebrated as local and national heroes.

On August 6, 1945, the day Hiroshima was bombed, *The Richland Villager* unveiled the secret link between Hanford Engineer Works and the local men who manufactured plutonium for atomic bombs. In hours following the national announcement of the bombing, the townsfolk of Richland Village, although reportedly astonished, were stuck with "jubilation and satisfaction" in knowing that the work of local families had played an integral part in the war (1). One week later, after the bombing of Nagasaki and the subsequent surrender of Japan, the newspaper linked Hanford Engineer Works directly to the "Fat Man" bomb detonated on Nagasaki and announced: "Peace! Our Bomb Clinched It!" In months and years that followed, the

workers and townspeople of Richland took pride in knowing that plutonium produced at Hanford Engineer Works had provided national security and warded off forces of international evil.[42] Two years later, however, while Merv Witherup was still celebrating national security and victories earned by local laborers, journalist John Gunther would describe the "Fat Man" atomic bomb as "a kind of apocalyptic, demonic child of the Columbia" (1947, 119).

In the mid-1940s, William Stafford (1914-1993), a young and registered conscientious objector to World War II, had a similar view. In fact, when atomic bombs built from materials manufactured in the Columbia River Basin were detonated on Japan, Stafford was engaged in an alternative form of labor with the Civilian Public Service (1941-1947), where he embraced a social posture of nonconformity that he inherited from his parents' teachings. Stafford was the eldest son of Earl and Ruby Stafford, Midwesterners from Kansas who raised their three children in a "non-conformist household" where they preached the values of "justice, individuality, and tolerance." As Judith Kitchen explains, "though neither parent formally belonged to a church, church was a central part of the small Kansas towns, and the family often attended services" (3). During the Great Depression, the Staffords moved frequently, taking up life in small towns throughout Kansas and Indiana, while Earl Stafford worked for American Express,

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[42] During the Cold War, the city of Richland used their rapid growth and identity as an atomic city in the semi-arid desert to re-invent the town's identity. In 1945, immediately following the end of World War II, Columbia High School (now Richland High School) adopted the identity of the "Bombers" and used a B-17 bomber as their mascot. In the 1970s, the mushroom cloud was adopted as the new mascot, an image that remains the mascot of the "Bombers" to this day. Moreover, between 1948 and 1959, Richland sponsored an annual event called "Atomic Frontier Days" and used atomic-western slogans to market the town as a newly settled western atomic village. During this time, Richland dubbed itself as the "Atomic Bustin' Village of the West" and marketed itself as "A New Light on the Old Frontier." For more on this see: John M. Findlay, "Atomic Frontier Days: Richland, Washington, and the Modern American West," *Journal of the West* (July 1995): 32-41. In addition, for a literary depiction of Richland, Washington during the Cold War era, see Debora Greger's, *Desert Fathers, Uranium Daughters* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1996), a collection of poems about growing up as the daughter of a Hanford Nuclear Reserve laborer during the 1950s and 60s.

the Bell Telephone Company and a number of oil stations, often finding himself “jobless, scrambling for pennies, left out by the economic system” (Carpenter 9).

William Stafford completed a bachelor’s degree at University of Kansas (1937) and went on to work toward a graduate degree in economics at University of Wisconsin in 1939. His plans were disrupted, however, when he was drafted for World War II in 1942. As a conscientious objector from 1942 to 1946, Stafford worked at Civilian Public Service camps in Illinois, Arkansas, and California, where he built trails, fought fires and worked on soil conservation teams. He also cultivated the labor of writing and developed the habit of rising at 4:30 a.m. to write poems about his political and moral stance as a conscientious objector to World War II (see Kitchen 4, Carpenter 11). In *Down in My Heart* (1947), a memoir of this time, Stafford recalls the day he caught wind of “a new kind of deadly bomb dropped on a city of Japanese people” (78). Two days later, while working on a soil conservation crew in California, he rose early to write “The Sound: Summer, 1945,” a poem that depicts the “Little Boy” bomb as a venomous snake that towers above the earth to consume its victims. Once detonated, the “living” bomb becomes a “fanged head” of poison that moves across a “planet that’s dead,” searching for flesh (Marchant 82). A few days later, after the bombing of Nagasaki and surrender of Japan, Stafford wrote another poem titled “Victory,” which measures news of U.S. military triumph against the burning victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, those with “choked voice” whose lives “bubbled and blinked out along the floor” in a distant place “so far away” (Marchant 83).

In 1948, with World War II over and duties with the Civilian Public Service program completed, Stafford, a working-class Midwesterner by birth, followed the path of Clevie Carver and Merv Witherup by migrating to the Pacific Northwest in search of work. He left Lawrence, Kansas, to take a job as an English professor with Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and brought his commitment to pacifism and resistance to war with him. In fact, three years after Stafford arrived in Portland, the

conscientious objector put pen to paper again, but this time working with words to question Bonneville Dam and Hanford Engineer Works, the celebrated war machines of the Columbia River Basin that had been built by other Midwestern laborers who, like Merv Witherup, had arrived a few years before him.

William Stafford's Labor of Words:
From Civilian Public Service Camp to the Bonneville Dam

William Stafford arrived in Portland, Oregon, to teach at Lewis and Clark College in 1948. Only a few years later, in 1951, he would return to the Midwest in order to complete a Ph.D. in English at University of Iowa (1951-1954). From Iowa he would return to Lewis and Clark where he taught until his retirement in 1980. Daily writings collected in the William Stafford Archives at Lewis and Clark College indicate that Stafford made a trip to Bonneville Dam in the late 1940s, sometime before his move to Iowa City.[43] A selection from Stafford's daily writings dated "Iowa City 1951," describes a visit made to Bonneville Dam Visitor Center. That day, while presumably standing in line to tour the hydroelectric plant, Stafford was reminded of an "old forgotten sign" which warned him to "be sure you are fighting the right enemy."[44] While the majority of visitors touring the facility interpreted the dam as a remarkable feat of technological ingenuity, Stafford's account of the visit contains phrases such as "a new sign from the conquer" and goes on to describe the dam as a mechanical "hemorrhage" that was killing the Columbia River (Daily Writing, 1951).

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[43] While attending University of Iowa, Stafford made several return trips to the Pacific Northwest, as indicated by much of his daily writing which is dated as having been written in "Portland."

[44] William Stafford's daily writing and early drafts of "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" are digitized and available through the William Stafford Archives, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon. < http://www.williamstaffordarchives.org/.> "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" was first published in *West of Your City* (Los Gatos, CA: The Talisman Press, 1960). However, archival records indicate that Stafford drafted the poem in 1951, most likely after touring the Bonneville Dam Visitor Center when he moved to Portland in 1948.

In only a matter of days, Stafford's casual reflections on the Bonneville Dam evolved into "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" (c. 1951), a poem that articulates the cultural, ecological and physiological anxieties that were beginning to circulate throughout the Columbia River Basin after World War II. The poem opens in a seemingly direct way, but proves cryptic and multi-layered when read within the historical and geographical framework of the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin. Stafford writes:

> Downstream they have killed the river and built a dam;
> by that power they wire to here a light:
> a turbine strides high poles to spit its flame
> at this flume going down. A spot glows white
> where an old man looks on at the ghosts of the game
> in the flickering twilight -- deep dumb shapes that glide.
>
> So many Chinook souls, so many Silverside. (*The Way It Is* 68)

The poem is situated at a salmon fish counting station, where tourists come to watch nameless federal workers employed to count salmon as they pass upriver through the dam's fish ladder. The fish passageway at Bonneville Dam was, in fact, a source of national and regional pride for the Army Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration. In contrast to Grand Coulee Dam, which eliminated more than half of the watershed's salmon spawning grounds, the fish ladder at Bonneville proved that salmon could continue to prosper and migrate up river, even as additional hydroelectric dams would be constructed on the mainline river.

When situated within the history and geography of the Columbia River Basin, "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" critiques regional propaganda that was made and distributed by the Bonneville Power Administration during the 1940s. In a film called *Hydro* (1940), for example, viewers were promised that hydroelectric dams would provide jobs, create cheap electricity, ensure national security, and enhance salmon migration through the use of man-made fish ladders. In fact, the fish ladder at Bonneville, described by the narrator of *Hydro* as "the strangest channel ever made by

man," promised to be a much "easier" passageway for salmon to navigate than the "boiling Cascade rapids" now flooded in the backwaters of the dam. As evidence, the film shows footage of a laborer in a fish counting station, recording the numerous salmon migrating upriver and through the federal work station. This image, joined by the film's narrator who optimistically announces that "the salmon are going through," convinced many citizens that the Columbia River was being improved and streamlined by reclamation technologies (*Hydro*, 1940). From Stafford's perspective, however, the energy produced at Bonneville Dam was also beginning to shed new ghastly "light" on the socio-economic, ecological and international problems entailed by the federal reclamation process. In Stafford's assessment, the fish counter, the salmon, and tourists at the visitors center, are all merely participants in a federally managed "game" that had "killed the river and built a dam" (*The Way It Is* 68).

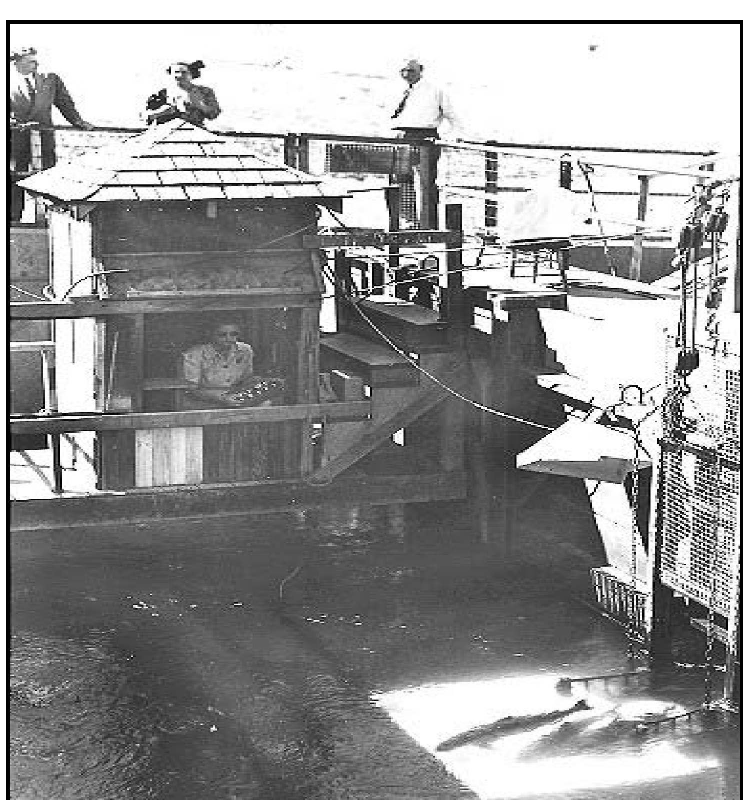

Figure 22. Bonneville Dam, Salmon Counting Station, c.1940s. Penny Postcard.

Turning more specifically to matters of local history, Stafford's reference to "Chinook souls" and "ghosts of the game" illustrate his disgust toward the social economic injustices dealt out to Mid-Columbia River Indian tribes with the construction of New Deal dams. When the water intake gates of the Bonneville Dam closed in 1937, for example, the backwaters flooded Cascade Rapids, the primary salmon fishery of the Upper and Cascade bands of *Chinook* Indians (see Ruby and Brown 21-23, 25-26). Returning to the poem, when the word "Chinook" is combined with Stafford's reference to "souls," the phrase invites a human as well as ecological interpretation of economic and ecological erasure, at once referring to salmon as well Chinook Indians as the voiceless or "dumb" participants in a federal "game" of reclamation politics made to fuel federal desire (*The Way It Is* 68). As a newcomer to the Northwest, Stafford had become acquainted with violent histories between Euro-Americans and indigenous peoples. He sided with Native Americans rather than white settlers, declaring his political stance in a poem titled "In the Oregon County" (c. 1951), written only months before "The Fish Counter at Bonneville." The poem was inspired when Stafford surveyed a "map of the Northwest" and wrote a poem that just started "peeling" history "off the map."[45] Tracing the lines of federal reservations back to nineteenth-century Indian wars in the Pacific Northwest, Stafford's poem pays respects to the Klickitats, Umpqua, Nez Perce and Modocs -- and to "Kamiakin," who "riled the Snakes and the Yakimas," before the tribes became "debris on their own lands" (*The Way It Is* 66).

Moving a slightly different direction, however, takes "The Fish Counter at Bonneville" into international history and the ways that Bonneville Dam was entrenched in the production of energy during World War II. Stafford often referred to the war as a

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[45] William Stafford's early drafts of "In the Oregon Country" are digitized and available through the William Stafford Archives, <http://www.williamstaffordarchives.org/.> The poem was first published in *West of Your City* (1960), but was written in 1951. Stafford's comments about the poem being inspired by a map of the Northwest are from archival records dated 1967.

"game," a political play put on by international leaders at the expense of its "dumb" and voiceless citizens. In the poem "Explaining the Big One" (1989), for example, Stafford describes international leaders such as President Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler as a cast of characters from a deadly skit, while in "They Suffer for Us" (1986), he insists that "these times [of war] have taken our world and turned it into a play" (*The Way It Is* 14-15, *Every War* 113). In "The Fish Counter at Bonneville," a much earlier poem, there are indications that Stafford understood Bonneville Dam's hydroelectric link to Hanford Engineer Works during World War II.

During the Cold War, Stafford wrote several poems against nuclear proliferation and was an active member in the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an international interfaith organization committed to peace, nonviolence and nuclear disarmament. As previously mentioned, depictions of drought, burning flesh, and desolate landscapes permeate Stafford's earliest poems about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But this was not an isolated pattern; he returned to images of bombing and fire in a late poem titled "Entering History" (1993), where he attacks the U.S. Government's habit of collecting taxes from citizens in order to manufacture "lethal tanks and bombs" for a "death rain" (*The Way It Is* 10). Remembering the days of World War II, Stafford concludes in words that resonate with William Witherup's poems about his father's burning cancer in relation to the bombing of Japan:

> Where was your money when the tanks
> grumbled past? Which bombs did you buy
> for the death rain that fell? Which year's
> taxes put that fire to the town
> where the screaming began? (*The Way It Is* 10).

Power generated by Bonneville Dam was integral to the production of plutonium at Hanford -- the element, produced by the harnessed dreams and bodies of laborers as well as the river -- that collectively enabled the "death rain" to fall upon Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is not by chance, then, that after visiting the Bonneville Dam, Stafford

depicts the federal machine as a turbine powered dragon, a monstrous and greedy factory of war that can “spit its flame” of “power” locally and globally (*The Way It Is* 68).

As a conscientious objector and new resident of the Pacific Northwest, William Stafford would become aware of the role that Bonneville Dam and Hanford Engineer Works played in the production of atomic bombs. This knowledge may have sparked “At the Bomb Testing Site” (c. 1953) one of Stafford’s most anthologized and well-known poems. Like “The Fish Counter at Bonneville” (c. 1951) the poem was drafted in the early 1950s and later published in *West of Your City* (1960). The power of “At the Bomb Testing Site” resides in understatement -- the poet’s indirect, even casual response to the violent repercussions of an atomic bomb tested in the desert. Told from the perspective of a lizard with “elbows waiting” and “hands gripped hard on the desert,” the poem gives voice and identity to a small creature as it prepares to survive another atomic test by the U.S. military (*The Way It Is* 67). Other records from the William Stafford Archives indicate that an earlier version of “At the Bomb Testing Site” was titled “Frenchmen’s Flat,” which links the poem directly to the Nevada Test Site of the U.S. Department of Energy (est. 1951), where plutonium produced at Hanford Nuclear Reserve was used to test 119 atomic bombs from 1951-1958, the period in which Stafford wrote both poems.

In the years following World War II, William Stafford was among a very small minority of people who believed that Bonneville Dam had “killed the river” and that the use of atomic bombs to end World War II had taken the United States to “the flute end of consequences” (*The Way It Is* 68, 67). In these same years, more sanguine proponents of federal hydropower and nuclear power, such as The Northwest Conservation League (est. 1937), celebrated Hanford Engineer Works and Bonneville Dam as futuristic models of environmental stewardship. In *The Conservation of Northwest Resources* (1950), Margaret Thompson, executive secretary of the league and author of *Space for Living: A Novel of Grand Coulee and the Columbia Basin* (1944), claims that “the people of the Pacific Northwest are proud to have the Hanford project in their region,” while local

journalists John L. King and Joe Miller looked forward to a day when more than "twenty" dams like Bonneville and Grand Coulee would "impound the water of the Columbia River and its tributaries" and send "electric current through a network of transmission lines to every part of the Northwest to serve the people who live here" (Thompson and Freeman 12, 158-159). These public works projects came with a tremendous price, however, as Richard White explains:

> Marvels, however, come with a cost. Bonneville, Grand Coulee, and their numerous smaller successors reduced the Columbia, which Americans had long celebrated as a symbol of the nation and the West, to a series of lakes. The Columbia no longer ran mightily to the sea; instead, the river ran between its dams like a circus lion jumping through hoops. On the Columbia above the Grand Coulee Dam, where salmon had once run in the millions, the salmon ran no more. The engineers who designed the dam had given no thought to the migration of salmon up the river, and the fish vanished from the upper Columbia. (*It's Your* 487)

In years to come, it would be The Dalles Dam (1957), one of Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams "smaller successors" that would spark a regional turn away from the federal reclamation of the Columbia River and toward a place-based and comparatively bioregional posture of inhabiting the watershed.

When William Stafford toured the Bonneville Dam Visitor Center in the late 1940s, the Bonneville Power Administration was still promising residents of the Pacific Northwest that the needs of the river, the laborers and the indigenous peoples of the Columbia River watershed could be balanced and managed by the federal government. At the time, the upriver preservation of Celilo Falls, the oldest and most productive indigenous salmon fishery on the Columbia River, was held up as a sign of the federal government's good will toward the region and Mid-Columbia River Native Americans. In the Bonneville Power Administration's popular film *Hydro* (1940) viewers were promised that as the federal government continued to harness the latent power of the Columbia River, upriver Indians at Celilo Falls, whose salmon "means their very

existence," would "go on spearing the royal Chinook in the tumultuous roar of Celilo Falls" (*Hydro*).

That promise was broken on March 10, 1957, when the tribes and bands of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Indians watched the backwaters created by The Dalles Dam inundate, and drown, Celilo Falls. In response to this traumatic loss of the fishery, a counter-cultural literary movement of resistance would begin to emerge within the Columbia River Basin, ironically articulated by young white males who had descended from Great Depression laborers, but who now found themselves turning away from dreams of national power and economic success that had shaped their parents paths. In turning from and revising inherited federal and middle-class standards of progress, these young writers of the 1950s and 1960s, especially Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey and Raymond Carver, would counteract the federal reclamation of the Columbia River by identifying with tribes and bands of the Mid-Columbia River, whose lives were being radically transformed and revised by the construction of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls.

CHAPTER III:
LABOR AND THE WATERFALL:
WHITE MASCULINTY, NATIVE RIGHTS, AND
THE MAKING OF NORTHWEST BIOREGIONALISM, 1950s-1960s

In *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest* (2001), Carl Abbott states that although The Dalles Dam "is far less massive than Grand Coulee Dam and less important for regional development than Bonneville Dam," it continues to play a "central role in the narrative of the Pacific Northwest" (129). While Grand Coulee and Bonneville may boast staggering heights and ingenious fish ladders, the legacy of The Dalles Dam rests squarely on the fact that it caused the inundation of Celilo Falls in 1957, an ancient fishing and gathering site continuously inhabited by Mid-Columbia River Indians for at least 10,000 years.[46] Like its New Deal predecessors, The Dalles Dam was designed to transform the Columbia River Basin into an electrified Promised Land, but the consequential loss of Celilo Falls has also generated stories of literary resistance, a fact well evidenced by Abbott himself, an urban planner who traces opposition toward The Dalles Dam through a confluence of regional writers, most of whom remain unknown to literary critics or readers outside the Pacific Northwest.

Since the late 1950s, the socio-economic and ecological repercussions of The Dalles Dam have spawned more poetry and prose than any other site or event in the Pacific Northwest.[47] When the Army Corps of Engineers closed the gates of The Dalles

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[46]Virginia L. Butler, "Relic Hunting, Archeology, and Loss of Native American Heritage at The Dalles," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108.4 (Winter 2007), 624-643; David French, "Wasco-Wishram," in *Perspectives in American Indian Culture Change* (Chicago, IL: U of Chicago P, 1956), 337-430.

[47]No literary critics or historians have proposed even a tentative collection of writings on The Dalles Dam and Celilo Falls; however, cultural critics, historians and urban planners are beginning to move this direction. In *Greater Portland: Urban Life and Landscape in the Pacific Northwest*, urban planner Carl Abbott discusses of The Dalles Dam and Celilo Falls through the prose and poetry Elizabeth Woody, as well as Craig Lesley's, *River Song* (1999); David James Duncan's, *My Story as Told by Water* (2002); and Robin Cody's, *Ricochet River* (1992). In addition to Abbott's literary infused interpretation of greater Portland, essays by historian William L. Lang and literary critic, Michael Powell, also highlight the literary significance of Celilo Falls. Lang's, "The Meaning of Falling Water: Celilo Falls and The Dalles in Historical Literature," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108.4 (Winter 2007), traces nineteenth century accounts

Dam on March 10, 1957, they not only completed another step in the reclamation of a watershed, but they also sparked an outpouring of prose and poetry that continues to challenge federal approaches to watershed management by regional writers who call for more localized and ecologically sustainable methods of inhabiting the Columbia River Basin. Remarkably, much of this work has gone unrecognized by literary critics, making it time to consider how and why The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls have contributed to the aggressive posture of literary and environmental activism that has characterized Pacific Northwest literature since the early 1960s.

The Army Corps of Engineers first proposed The Dalles Dam in 1932, but Mid-Columbia River tribes from the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce reservations had remained in control of the site until 1948, when President Harry S. Truman ordered the Army Corps of Engineers to complete a new study of the Columbia River's untapped energy potential. His order was issued in response to the Vanport Flood (1948), a catastrophe triggered by a railroad dike that broke on the Columbia River over Memorial Day weekend. The flood killed thirty-two people, left seven others missing, destroyed 5,000 homes, forced over 50,000 people to evacuate, and caused an estimated 100 million dollars in damage (see Maben 104-132). After Truman visited the affected area, he promised that such "disastrous floods will never happen again" and ordered federal agencies to revise and expedite reclamation efforts "for the benefit of the people." By treating the Columbia River as a public enemy, Truman used the disastrous flood to justify U.S. reclamation efforts, advising that unruly and flood prone rivers of the West "should reinforce our determination to build the dams and other structures needed

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of the falls and the Native Americans who inhabited the Mid-Columbia River, while Powell's essay, "Oregon" in *Updating the Literary West*, Western Literature Association, eds., (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian UP, 1997), identifies the inundation of Celilo Falls as a key historical moment that continues to shape Pacific Northwest literature. He notes the importance of the falls in works by H.L. Davis, Craig Lesley, David James Duncan, Ed Edmo, Ken Kesey, Robin Cody and Sallie Tisdale.

to control the nation's river basins" (Robbins, *Storied* 69-70). The Vanport Flood of 1948 expedited hydroelectric dam production on the Columbia River Basin, evidenced by the fact that after the flood and revised Army Corps of Engineers' proposal, new "dams came on line at the rate of one to three a year between 1952 and 1958" (White, *Organic* 75).

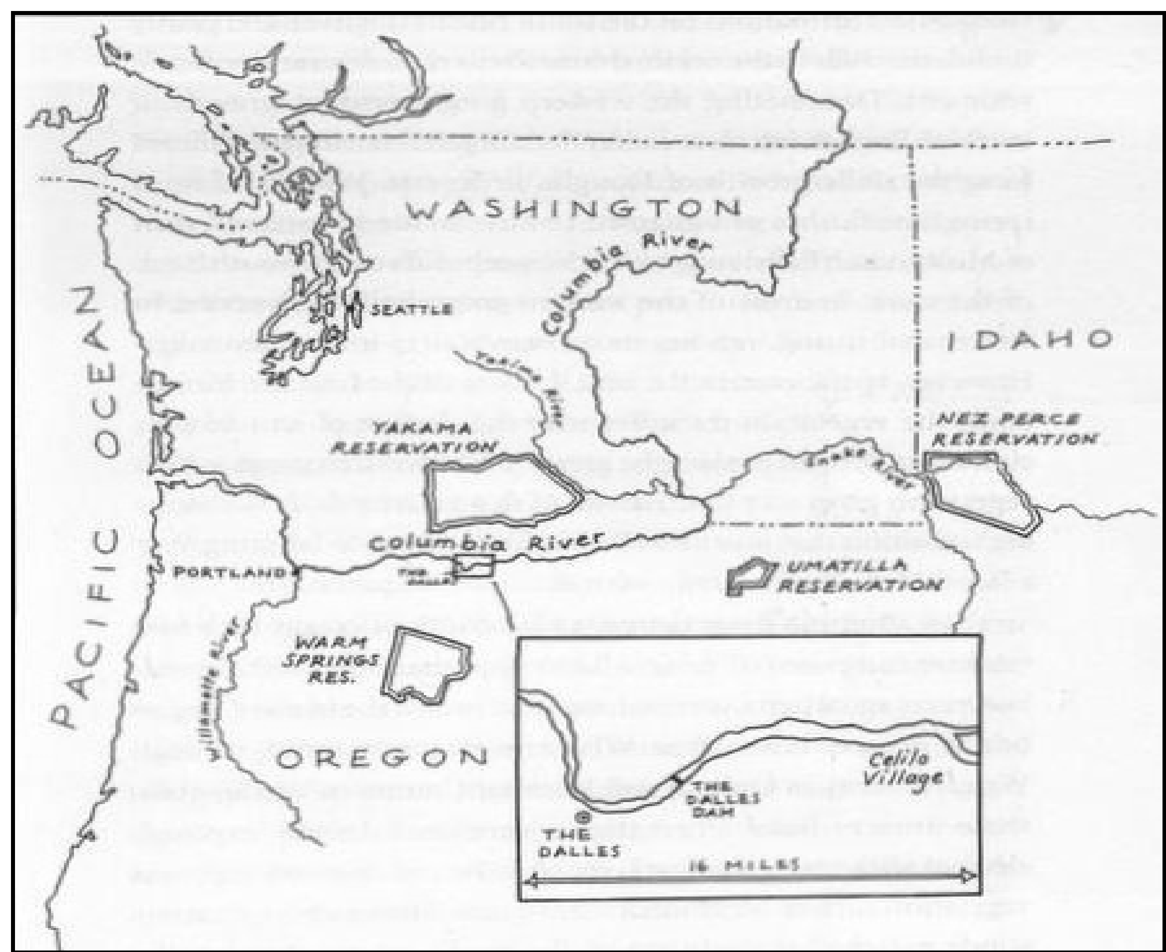

Figure 23. Map of Celilo Falls, The Dalles Dam and Compensated Columbia River Indian Reservations. Katrine Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls* (2005).

While the Army Corps of Engineers focused their attention on The Dalles Dam, Columbia River Indian tribes entered into a period of vigilant resistance. The Native

community of Celilo Village, as well as Indians from the nearby Yakama, Warm Springs, Nez Perce and Umatilla Reservations protested construction of The Dalles Dam on the grounds that it breached treaty agreements between Columbia River Indian tribes and the U.S. Government.[48] The 1855 treaty had guaranteed each of the tribes "exclusive right" to fish and gather "at all usual and accustomed places" beyond reservation boundaries, and Celilo Falls was the last and most important fishery on the main-stem of the Columbia River (Kappler 699). Moreover, in 1929, the federal government had authorized the transfer of 7.4 acres of land on the Oregon side of the river from the Department of War to the Department of the Interior, "for the use and benefit of certain Indians now using and occupying the land as a fishing camp site," otherwise known as Celilo Village (McConnell 197; see also Beckham 413- 415). In 1942, Tommy Thompson -- the most vigilant and best remembered Native opponent of The Dalles Dam -- used "his mark" to sign a sworn affidavit testifying to the social, economic, and religious significant of Celilo Falls to all Indian people of the Columbia River Basin (Beckham 402-407). Thompson's resistance was supported by William Brophy, Bureau of Indian Affairs commissioner (1945-1948), who wrote a letter to the U.S. Department

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[48] The Confederated Tribes of the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Nez Perce Indians are the four major tribal groups that received compensation for the inundation of Celilo Falls. The Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation is located on a reservation in south-central Washington and consists of the following fourteen tribal bands: Kah-milt-pah, Klickitat, Klinquit, Kow-was-say-ee, Li-ay-was, Oche-chotes, Palouse, Pisquose, Se-ap-cat, Shyiks, Skinpah, Wenatshapam, Wishram, and Yakama. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is located in south eastern Washington and consists of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Indians. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation is located in south central Oregon and consists of three major bands of Indians; the Wasco, comprised of Dalles, Ki-gal-twal-la, and Dog River bands; the Warm Springs, comprised of Tygh (Upper Deschutes), Wyam (Lower Deschutes), Tenino, and John Day bands; and the Northern Paiutes, who were incorporated into the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in the 1880s. The Nez Perce Reservation is located in north central Idaho. In 1977, these four reservations formed the Intertribal Columbia River Fish Commission, an organization committed to renewing Native American legal authority to manage the Columbia River and its fisheries. For more on this see: Robert H. Ruby, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman: U of Oklahoma P, 1986); Jeff Zucker, Kay Hummel and Bob Hogfoss, *Oregon Indians: Culture, History & Current Affairs.* (Portland, OR: Oregon State Historical Society, 1983); Katrine Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls* (Pullman, WA; U of Washington P, 2003), 155-172.

of Interior in 1946, requesting that the federal government postpone the construction of additional hydroelectric dams on the main-stem of the Columbia River. Brophy insisted that Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams had diminished salmon migrations to intolerable levels and was concerned that The Dalles Dam would "flood Celilo Falls and make impossible any fishing at this most important Indian site."[49]

In 1950, however, with federal approval for construction of The Dalles Dam secured, the Army Corps of Engineers informed indigenous families living at Celilo Village that the dam and the relocation of a Northern Pacific Railway line would force them to move away from the river. Thompson and Charles Quitoken, leading indigenous resistors to the federal reclamation project, circulated statements of protest to local newspapers.[50] They reiterated the Mid-Columbia River Indians' historical and sovereign right to use the 7.4 acres of land that the U.S. Government had reserved as the home of Wyam Indians, who permanently occupied the primary salmon fishery at Celilo, along with hundreds of seasonal fishers from the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce reservations (Beckham 413-414). However, while tribal leaders such as Thompson and Quitoken restated their legal position concerning land and water rights on the Columbia River, they did so at a time when state and federal legislators consistently turned a deaf ear to Native American arguments, proposing instead, the termination of treaties and federal reservations across the United States.

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[49] The complete text of William Brophy's letter to the U.S. Department of Interior is available through Center for Columbia River History's website. The original letter is located in the National Archives of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Pacific Northwest Region, Portland Area Office, Celilo Falls file, RG75. <http://www.ccrh.org/comm/river/docs/bia.php>

[50] From the 1930s-1950s, Chief Tommy Thompson, Celilo Village salmon chief from 1875-1955, made several statements against The Dalles Dam through the Bureau of Indian Affairs and regional media sources. Letters were often reproduced and discussed in regional newspapers. For more on this see: "Indian Orators Take Stand Against Dam," *The Dalles Optimist*, 27 April 1945; "Plans for New Celilo Falls Indians Village Attacked in Letter from Chief Thompson," *The Oregonian*, 23 May 1949; "Celilo Indians Strike Back at Critics, *The Dalles Chronicle*, 23 April 1936; and *Oregon Indians: Voices from Two Centuries*, Stephen Dow Beckham, ed., (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 2006), 401-407, 413-414.

H.L. Davis (1884-1960), the Pacific Northwest novelist who won the Pulitzer Prize for *Honey in the Horn* (1935), embodied the spirit of termination legislation espoused during the 1950s. Davis, who graduated from The Dalles High School in 1912, returned to his hometown in the early 1950s, and soon after published an account of the Celilo Falls fishery in *Holiday* magazine (1953). According to Davis, the falls were a thing of indescribable beauty, "enough to make any man catch his breath and forget to let go of it" (38). Photographers had tried to capture the falls, but Davis claimed even the "pen-and-ink drawing" of celebrated author Theodore Winthrop, in *The Canoe and the Saddle*, "comes no farther from it than any of the modern photographs" (38).

Davis was awestruck by the river, but the rundown "old Indian village" nearby represented a backward way of life that he could not tolerate. It was a place for "helpless" people who lived in "unpainted board shacks" that were "dirt-floored and completely unsanitary" (38). Davis was visiting Celilo Village during the annual "salmon festival," a week-long period of rituals that celebrate the seasonal return of the first Columbia River salmon (Aguilar 122, Hunn 153). According to Davis, who presented himself as a regional authority on Columbia River history, the ceremonies were merely an excuse for Indians to put on "their best clothes" (38). He reminded his *Holiday* readers that the rituals were "merely a show piece" and that Indian gatherings at Celilo Falls were always "a little dangerous" and usually "wound up in a big free-for-all fight" (38-39). He concluded by consoling readers, as well as himself, with the fact that "a new hydroelectric dam at The Dalles" would soon "back the river up so there will no longer be any rapids, or any salmon fishing either" (39).

Figure 24. The Dalles Dam, c. 1957. Columbia River Gorge Discovery Center, The Dalles, Oregon. No. 1999.59.14a.

When the water intake gates of The Dalles Dam finally closed on March 10, 1957, federal visionaries celebrated with fanfare and pageantry, but even before the gates of reclamation had shut, local citizens and writers were questioning the federal management of the river. Unrest was evident in 1956, when popular historian Stewart H. Holbrook, published *The Columbia* as part of the "Rivers of America" series. With the inundation of Celilo Falls looming on the horizon, Holbrook confessed that although the Pacific Northwest was rapidly changing, he still loved "the Columbia as it was more than as it is, or as it is likely to be next year" (329). Moreover, Martha Ferguson McKeown, a school teacher from nearby Hood River, Oregon, wrote letters of protest to newspapers and magazines. During the construction of The Dalles Dam, McKeown emerged as a local advocate for Indians at Celilo Falls by marketing herself as an "adopted daughter" of Chief Tommy Thompson, the salmon fishing chief of Celilo Village who had managed

the religious and fishing practices of the falls for over fifty years.[51] In 1955, McKeown and local representatives of the Daughters of the American Revolution met at the Oregon State Annual Convention to issue a statement on behalf of Indians at Celilo Village. They presented a scathing litany of injustices inflicted upon Columbia River Indians and called for state and federal officials to right a "grave wrong against a helpless, loyal people."[52] On other occasions, McKeown worked in collaboration with her husband, Archie Ferguson, a local photographer, to collect stories and images for *Linda's Indian Home* (1956) and *Come to Our Salmon Feast* (1959), two pictographic children's books she wrote about Chief Tommy Thompson and Celilo Village Indians.

While Martha Ferguson McKeown was using her status as an adopted Columbia River Indian to speak on behalf of Native Americans at Celilo Falls, participants in a less visible, but equally outspoken movement of resistance were also looking to Indians from the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce reservations for identity formation and cultural renewal. As Stewart Brand, editor countercultural publications such as *The Whole Earth Catalog* (est. 1968) and *CoEvolution Quarterly* (est. 1974) observes, environmentalist subcultures gained momentum through the 1960s, as a generation of middle-class youth experimented with more communal and sustainable ways of living. In the process of turning from Euro-American standards of progress based on education and economic mobility represented by their parents, these young counterculturalists

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[51] Martha Ferguson McKeown, "Celilo Indians: Fishing Their Way of Life," *The Oregonian* (6 October 1946); "The Wy-ama-pums of Celilo," *Christian Century* 77 (24 August 1960). For more on McKeown's role as an "adopted" Celilo Village Indian, see: Bob C. Hall, "Plans for Indian Chief Tommy Thompson's Funeral Revealed," *Hood River News* (14 April 1959); Martha Ferguson McKeown, *Linda's Salmon Home* (Portland, OR: Binfords and Mort, 1956), 78-79; and Katrine Barber, "Stories Worth Recording: Martha McKeown and the Documentation of Pacific Northwest Life." *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 10.4 (Winter 2009): 546-569.

[52] A copy of the resolution from the 41st Annual State Conference of the Oregon State Society of the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, is available at the Oregon State Historical Society Research Library (*OHS* #044249).

attempted to reconstruct their identities in the image of older ways of inhabiting place. As Brand explains:

> American Indians, ever the object of romantic interest, were a particular study of this new group. From a distance Indians looked perfect: ecologically aware, spiritual, tribal, anarchistic, drug-using, exotic, native, and wronged, the lone genuine holdouts against American conformity and success. ("Indians and Counterculture . . ." 570)

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, emerging young writers from across the Pacific Northwest watched as Tommy Thompson and other members of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce reservations resisted the Army Corps of Engineers' work of watershed reclamation at Celilo Falls. In many cases, these white writers supported the rights of Indians impacted by The Dalles Dam and viewed them through a romantic and counterculture lens, as the last and most profound resistors to a vision of federal progress that was destroying the ecological fabric of the Pacific Northwest. By seeking a revised way of identifying with Columbia River Indians, under new and changed cultural and historical conditions, these writers were replaying the national version of identity formation that Philip J. Deloria calls "playing Indian" (Deloria 3). However, in contrast to nineteenth-century writers like Theodore Winthrop (1928-1861), these writers claimed Indian identification under politically potent, bioregional conditions of local reclamation, that make their prose and poetry more than mere colonial co-optation of Native American histories

Accounting for the complexity of white Pacific Northwest writers' attraction to Native American beliefs and practices throughout the 1950s and 1960s is no easy matter. As Richard White explains, modern environmental activists are often attracted to the so-called "ecological otherness" of Native American peoples, but "few contemporary environmentalists have acquired more than a superficial acquaintance with Indian practices of beliefs" (125-126; see also Krech 15-28). More often than not, as Deloria explains, "Americans have returned to the Indian," not for purposes of historical

authenticity, but out of a need to reinterpret "the intuitive dilemmas surrounding Indian-ness to meet the circumstances of their times" (7). For this reason, despite their often superficial identification with Native American rituals and practices, young white writers who identified with the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce peoples during this period are best understood as critics of the socio-economic and environmental instability of the Columbia River Basin during the 1950s and 1960s. These writers did not fully grasp the complexity of Native languages, traditions and anti-colonial resistance that was taking place in response to The Dalles Dam. Nevertheless, the engagement with Native history by three important Pacific Northwest writers -- whose race, class, and gender identities were also enmeshed within the Columbia River Basin -- constitutes a crux of literary history that has been far too often overlooked.

This chapter focuses on the early work of Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey, and Raymond Carver, among the numerous countercultural literary responses to The Dalles Dam and the inundation of Celilo Falls. It points out that these three emerging writers were male descendents of Great Depression laborers, who used their own familial and regional expressions of socio-economic marginalization to identify with Columbia River Indians who were revising their existence after the traumatic loss of Celilo Falls.[53] In the process, the early work produced by these writers during the 1950s and 1960s, constitutes a collective critique of the socio-economic and environmental transformation of the Columbia River Basin as it appeared during the construction of The Dalles Dam and following the inundation of Celilo Falls.

[53]The number of white male writers from the Pacific Northwest who have identified and allied with Columbia River Indians since the late 1950s is vast and worth noting. In addition to Snyder, Kesey, and Carver some other writers include: William Stafford, David Wagoner, Don Berry, William Witherup, Barry Lopez, Craig Lesley, William Kittredge, Robin Cody, Chuck Williams, Timothy Egan and David James Duncan.

While Gary Snyder and Ken Kesey are now synonymous with the countercultural tenor of Pacific Northwest literature, their work is rarely read as a geographically specific critique of the U.S. socio-economic and environmental policies that transformed the Columbia River. Similarly, the interpretive pattern of reading Raymond Carver as a minimalist who supposedly wrote impersonal and geographically irrelevant stories has caused critics to overlook the way his work remains intimately connected to the palimpsest of Pacific Northwest history. By restoring contexts of the Columbia River and inundation of Celilo Falls to key examples of work produced early in their careers, Snyder, Kesey and Carver emerge as some of the first and most significant literary voices to resist the federal management of the Columbia River Basin on the grounds of local economic and labor history, as well as in relation to their understandings of Native American history in the region. Though far from accurate in their renderings of indigenous peoples, this confluence of writers provides the earliest indication that when the Army Corps of Engineers constructed The Dalles Dam and flooded Celilo Falls in 1957, the federal government not only inundated an ancient fishing and gathering site, but set the conditions for a style of literary and environmental activism that now circulates throughout the entire Columbia River Basin.

Playing Indian, Playing Wobbly:
Gary Snyder on Warm Springs Reservation

In 1946, a group of well-known writers from the Pacific Northwest met at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, for an event titled: A Writers' Conference on the Northwest. They came with lofty intentions, for everyone there was certain that the region was capable of producing a literary voice that could rival Great Britain or any other part of the United States. The problem was that it had failed to do so. Stewart H. Holbrook and James Stevens, well known regional authorities on the timber industry, argued that the voice of the Northwest was tied to the idiomatic speech of timber working Wobblies; however, they doubted that logging camps could ever produce a Homer or

Shakespeare. Meanwhile, Philip H. Parrish, an editor for the *Oregonian*, suspected that regional voices might be linked to the Columbia River, but regretted that “the regionalism of the Columbia” had no rival to Mark Twain and his rendering of the mighty Mississippi (Chittick 58). After three days of presentations and quarrels, the conference speakers were unable to generate even a tentative list of features that defined the literary identity of the Pacific Northwest. But they did agree on one thing: they met at Reed College because they believed the institution itself was a progressive place “bound up with the future” of the Northwest (Chittick 14). In a limited way, they turned out to be right. However, in coming decades, the literary future of the Pacific Northwest would not be grounded in tributes to federal dams and timber industries such as Richard L. Neuberger’s *Our Promised Land* (1938) and Stewart H. Holbrook’s *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack* (1938), but would be revised by the voices of writers that descended from Great Depression laborers who had built the modern infrastructure of the Pacific Northwest.

One year after the Pacific Northwest Writers’ Conference ended, Reed College admitted an undergraduate student named Gary Snyder, a third generation descendent of Northwest timber workers. As it turns out, Snyder’s combined commitments to working class laborers, environmental sustainability, and indigenous peoples would help to define, critique, and reshape the Pacific Northwest’s literary and social identity for decades to come. As a freshman at Reed College in 1947, Snyder found himself in a close-knit liberal arts community that blended socialist politics and public engagement with scholarship. For Snyder, a descendent of “grassroots radicals” and the “Northwest socialist tradition,” the atmosphere felt something like home (O’Connell, *FE* 367). At the time, Snyder was curious about the interplay between poetry and anthropology, which led him to David and Katherine French, a husband and wife team of anthropologists who

conducted ethnographic fieldwork at Warm Springs Indian Reservation from 1950-1956.[54] The timing of their research was pivotal, for the Warm Springs Reservation -- along with the Yakama, Umatilla, and Nez Perce reservations -- was in the midst of being socially and economically revised by the construction of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls, a place that David and Katherine French described as "one of the most important trade centers in Aboriginal America" (368).

Reed College students who worked at Warm Springs investigated the relationship between the Columbia River and Mid-Columbia River Indian communities, but as anthropologist Robert E. Moore observes, the most astonishing thing about the Warm Springs Project was not what the participants actually did during their time as student researchers, but what the project's graduates went on to do later (12). Dell Hymes, for example, a prominent anthropologist on indigenous cultures of the Pacific Northwest, worked at Warm Springs in 1950 and fished for salmon at Celilo Falls, before returning to the reservation the next year as a graduate student to investigate indigenous languages.[55] Meanwhile, Harry C. Paget, an experimental filmmaker, composed a documentary called *Return to the River* (1952), an "unforgettable and irreplaceable" film about indigenous fisheries at Celilo Falls that includes footage taken only years before its inundation (Moore 12).[56] Then, there was Gary Snyder, an aspiring poet and anthropologist who worked at Warm Springs and later memorialized Celilo Falls in "The

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[54] For more information on the Warm Springs Project see: David French, "Gary Snyder at Reed College," in *Gary Snyder: Dimensions of a Life*, Jon Halper, ed., (San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books), 16-23; Dell Hymes, "A Coyote Who Can Sing," in *Dimensions of a Life*, 392-404; Robert E. Moore, "Listening to Indians," *Reed Magazine* (Winter 2008), 12-17; and Rebecca Koffman, "Ways We Speak," *Reed Magazine* (Winter 2008), 28-31.

[55] Dell Hymes' poem, "Spearfish Sequence" (Baltimore, MA: Corvine Press, 1983), recounts his memories of the Warm Springs Project and Celilo Falls.

[56] Harry C. Paget's thesis, "An Approach to Documentary Filming through Anthropology and Drama" and short film *Return to the River* (1952), are located in the Special Collections and Archives, Hauser Memorial Library of Reed College, Portland, OR.

Flowing" (1974), a poem about a global network of rivers that meander and merge into a universal ocean. Throughout the poem, Snyder alludes to many river systems and defines the Columbia River by the presence of Celilo Falls, that place where "all the Yakima / Wasco, Wishram, Warmspring" gather to dip net salmon while "the whole Columbia River thunders" beneath a "rickety scaffold rigged to rocks" (*Mountains* 69).[57]

After graduating from Reed College as a self-proclaimed socialist, Snyder felt the need to "de-educate" himself and planned to live as a "hobo and worker" while navigating the Pacific Northwest according to the creeds and codes of the Industrial Workers of the World, the internationalist Union that had dominated the region's timber industry throughout the early-twentieth century (*Real Work* 64; *M&T* vii). David French, who co-directed Snyder's undergraduate thesis and was curious about the emerging countercultural spirit he saw in his students, remembers the unusual route that Snyder took after graduating from Reed College:[58]

> In the early 1950s, [Snyder] spent time working at logging-related projects on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. He came to know Indians there, and he collected oral literature. Such experience, as well as his formal and informal education, is reflected in some of his poetry . . . . It is as if he has been a teacher of anthropology to an audience who did not always know that it was anthropology they were learning. (21-22)

After graduating in 1951 with a dual degree in literature and anthropology, Snyder's labor experiment began when he returned to Warm Springs Reservation -- not as an undergraduate student -- but as a timber scaler for the Warm Springs Lumber Company. He then traveled up and down the West Coast corridor, taking Asian language courses at

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[57] "The Flowing" was originally published in *Kyoi-Kuksu* (1974) and later included in *Mountain and Rivers Without End* (1996).

[58] David French was intrigued by the countercultural spirit of post World War II students at Reed College. He admired how they were not "culture-bound" or prone to believing that "one's own culture, including its morality, religion, and arts, are the world's best universal standards" ("Gary Snyder" 16). He published an article that discussed characteristics of the countercultural movement at Reed College titled, "The Concept of Culture-Bondage," *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Series II, 17.4 (1955), 339-345.

University of California, Berkeley during the academic year and working as a fire lookout for the U.S. Forest Service in the Northwest Cascades throughout the summer. This pattern of life shifted in 1954, however, after Snyder was blacklisted as a socialist from Reed College and thus, denied employment with the U.S. Forest Service (see Suiter 85-93; *Practice* 119-120).

In 1954, the Velde Committee arrived in Portland, Oregon and held hearings on communist infiltration into educational institutions in the Pacific Northwest. Reed College, known by many from the Northwest as "Red College," was targeted as a dangerous haven for un-American activities (B. Clark 160). By the time the search for socialist sympathizers was finished, the President of Reed had resigned, some professors were fired, and the entire academic community was pitted against itself under a frenzy of media speculation (B. Clark 160-161). Despite having graduated three years earlier, Snyder, whose politics were unabashedly radical, was not able to escape the reach of the Velde Committee's Communist witch hunt. Years earlier, in 1948, he had boarded a passenger-freighter ship using a trip card from the leftist Marine Cooks and Stewards Union. This had landed him "on the Coast Guard's blacklist" and flagged him as a national security risk (Suiter 87). The FBI visited Snyder at Reed College in 1949, but at the time the interrogation had seemed like a joke. Six years later, however, while hitch-hiking from California back to Oregon and living out the footsteps of his working-class socialist past, the strong arm of a paranoid government was no longer comical. As Snyder remembers, during the summer of 1954:

> I never was more broke and down.
> got fired that day by the USA
> (the District Ranger up at Packwood
> thought the wobblies had been dead for
>   forty years
> but the FBI smelled treason
>   --my red beard). (1965, *Six Sections* 19)

Snyder, whose family is "German on one side, Scotch Irish on the other," packed his I.W.W. "red beard" back to Warm Springs Reservation and took a job as a choker-setter

with a reservation timber falling operation (*Old Ways* 16, *Six Sections* 19). Broke, jobless, and rejected by his own country, he found himself in a working community of socio-economic outcasts -- resilient men such as Ray Wells -- a "big Nisqually Indian" who told stories about life on the Warm Springs Reservation, and Ed McCullough, an old Wobbly logger who survived the Great Depression, but was reduced to nothing after "the advent of chainsaws" (*M&T* 12, 9).

Snyder's labor experiment was published as *Myths & Texts* (1960), a collection that "grew between 1952 and 1956," while spending days in Forest Service lookouts, "setting chokers for the Warm Springs Lumber Company," and gathering insights from Columbia River Indians he "used to hang around" (*M&T* vii). At first glance, it is tempting to say that Snyder's poetry from the Warm Springs Reservation is simply the work of a white, amateur anthropologist who borrowed Native American stories and rituals in order to play at being an Indian, but this would be a mistake. Leslie Marmon Silko and Wendy Rose have, in fact, labeled Snyder a father of the "white shamans," white male writers who are more committed to occupying the "stolen [cultural] property" of Indians than confronting their colonizing heritage as white Americans (Silko 215).[59] The fiercest criticism is usually reserved for "the bastard children of Snyder," but Snyder himself also continues to be vilified as the modern patriarch of this longstanding and problematic expression of white male identity formation (Hobson 105).

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[59]Leslie Marmon Silko, "An Old-Time Indian Attack Conducted in Two Parts," in *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Contemporary Native American Literature*, Geary Hobson, ed., (Albuquerque, NM: U of New Mexico P, 1979), 211-216; Tom Henighan, "Shamans, Tribes, and the Sorcerer's Apprentices: Notes on the Discovery of the Primitive in Modern Poetry," *Dalhousie Review* 59.4 (1979-1980), 605-620; Geary Hobson, "The Rise of White Shamanism as a New Version of Cultural Imperialism," in *The Remembered Earth: An Anthology of Native American Literature*, Geary Hobson, ed., (Albuquerque, NM: U of New Mexico P, 1979), 100-108; Wendy Rose, "The Great Pretenders: Further Reflections on Whiteshamanism," in *The State of Native America: Genocide, Colonization, and Resistance,* Annette Jaimes, ed., (Boston, MA: South End, 1992), 403-421; and Mark Shackleton, "Whose Myth is it Anyway? Coyote in the Poetry of Gary Snyder and Simon J. Ortiz," in *American Mythologies: Essays on Contemporary Literature*, William Blazek and Michael K. Glenday, eds., (Glasgow: Liverpool UP, 2005), 226-242.

Myths & Texts was, indeed, written while Snyder, like many other white counterculturalists, was trying to access Native American "secrets" and "rituals" through social infiltration and the use of "peyote," what Stewart Brand has called the drug of choice for countercultural whites seeking Native American identification (*M&T* vii, Brand 570).[60] And he does present himself as a white visionary who sits alongside a reservation "log-road / Hatching a new myth" that reflects and even appropriates Native American rituals (*M&T* 19). However, while working for the Warm Springs Project and later as a timber laborer, Snyder also came to realize that "American Indian spiritual practice is very remote and extremely difficult to enter. . . . Its intent is not cosmopolitan" (*Real Work* 94). In other words, a more sympathetic reading of *Myths & Texts* suggests that Snyder was involved in something more complicated than a replay of nationalist and cosmopolitan patterns of colonizing Native American groups. In fact, the "success" or failure of the book should not be measured only by Snyder's ability or inability to authentically inhabit Mid-Columbia River Indian rituals and stories, but by his willingness to confront and critique the personal and socio-economic history of his own heritage as a working class laborer (*M&T* vii).[61] By situating himself in the geography of the Warm Springs Reservation, Snyder was able to document and identify with the ostracized status of both white *and* Native American workers and then use the anarchist spirit of the I.W.W. to mount an aggressive expression of socio-economic and ecological resistance in an assault on the exploitive labor practices that built the modern infrastructure of the Columbia River Basin.

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[60] David French and Michael Mahar have both commented on the "peyote cult" that came from the Lambert Street house, where Snyder was living at the time (French 20; Mahar 13).

[61] The authenticity or accuracy of Gary Snyder's use of Mid-Columbia River Indian materials is a topic that I do not pursue in this chapter. It is worth noting, however, that when Dell Hymes, a prominent anthropologist of Pacific Northwest indigenous cultures, read *Myths & Texts* for the first time in 1960, he stated that "words from the Pacific Coast Indian texts leaped out at me, seemed blazoned on the page, echoed in a chanted voice" (395).

During the early 1950s, the Pacific Northwest was just beginning to emerge from decades of racist labor practices that were defined by ethnic stratification. At Seufert Brothers Salmon Cannery, which operated just east of The Dalles from 1884-1970s, only Chinese laborers were hired for the butchering process, a procedure that had taken place since 1896 (Seufert 100-116). At the Columbia River city of Vanport, Oregon, a migration of African-American shipbuilders who worked for the Kaiser Company during World War II, turned the federally subsidized city into the largest and first non-white region in the state. In 1944, there were approximately 7,500 non-white workers living in the Portland area and 7,250 were employed in the shipyards (Schwantes, *Pacific* 336). Japanese laborers, however, faced the most severe forms of discrimination. In 1942, immediately after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, 7,000-8,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were living in Portland and Seattle (approximately two-thirds of whom were American citizens), were relocated to "inland camps by the Wartime Civil Control Administration" (Schwantes, *Pacific* 335).[62] Although the Industrial Workers of the World were by no means exempt from racist labor practices, the internationalist stance of the organization did stress that all laborers would eventually unite as "One Big Union" by revising "the structure of the new society within the shell of the old" (qtd. in Smith 180).

Identifying Snyder's contribution to the re-inscription of socialist labor traditions in the Pacific Northwest requires a familiarity with his own inheritance as a working-class descendent of Great Depression timber workers. As laborers, previous generations of the Snyder family knew and experienced the Pacific Northwest through logging, one of the most powerful economic interests in the region. Snyder's paternal grandfather was a homesteader who settled a plot of logged land in Kitsap County, when Washington was still a territory. He spent much of his life as an "active IWW and socialist speaker and

[62] For an excellent overview of labor history in the Pacific Northwest see Carlos A. Schwantes, *Hard Traveling: A Portrait of Work Life in the New Northwest* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1994).

thinker" who "soapboxed for the Wobblies in Seattle's Yesler Square" (*Practice* 124). In addition, Snyder's father, Harold, was born in 1900 and -- along with his four older brothers -- worked in Northwest woods and camps. As the unstable and low-paying market for timber laborers ebbed and flowed throughout the early-twentieth century, Snyder's grandfather, father, and uncles were confronted with recurrent strikes that called for improved working conditions and shorter work days. By 1917, the International Workers of the World, more often known as Wobblies, had closed eighty-five percent of timber operations in the Pacific Northwest (Tyler 85; Holbrook, *Holy* 214).

After the series of strikes between 1912 and 1919, the Wobblies remained a powerful presence in the woods, but by the end of the First World War, anti-socialist sentiment, a burgeoning commitment to nationalism, and murderous confrontations between the I.W.W. and timber industries in Everett (1916) and Centralia (1919) sent Washington's union timber workers into a state of instability and disillusionment.[63] Prior to violent outbreaks in Everett, Walter V. Woehlke reported on the working conditions of shingle manufacturers in an issue of *Sunset Magazine* (1916) and spoke of laborers whose occupations were defined by "mutilated hands and the dead grey pallor of their cheeks" (Smith 28). The typical shingle laborer worked ten hour days in thick sawdust, facing two unguarded saws that were reached across hundreds of times a day. As Woehlke explains:

> For ten hours a day the sawyer faces two teethed steel discs whirling around two hundred times a minute. To the one on his left he feeds heavy blocks of cedar, reaching over with his left hand to remove the rough shingles it rips off. He does not, he cannot see what his left hand is doing. . . . Sooner or later he reaches over a little too far , the whirling blade tosses drops of

[63]For more on the "Everett Massacre" and "Centralia Massacre" see Norman H. Clark, *Mill Town* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1970); Walker C. Smith, *The Everett Massacre* (Chicago, IL: I.W.W. Publishing, 1917); Robert L. Tyler, *Rebels of the Woods: The I.W.W. in the Pacific Northwest* (Eugene, OR: U of Oregon P, 1967); Tom Copeland, *The Centralia Tragedy of 1919* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1993); and John McClelland, Jr., *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story* (Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society, 1987).

> deep red into the air, and a finger, a hand, or part of an arm comes sliding down the slick chute. (qtd. in Smith 27-28)

In an effort to achieve shorter work days and safer working conditions, the laborers went on strike. After a four month stand-off, the I.W.W. arrived in Everett to assist threatened workers, but was denied the right to assemble by local authorities. Protestors were arrested and beaten with axe handles. Not to be deterred, the Wobblies took more extreme measures of mobilization.

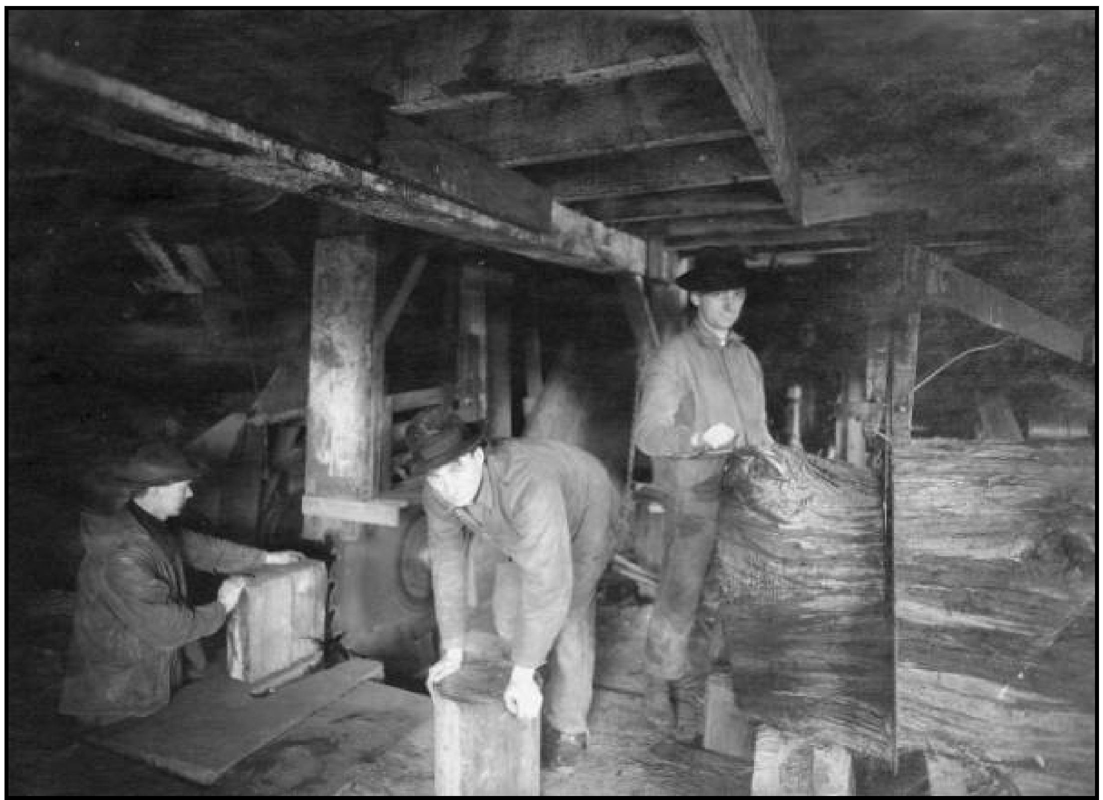

Figure 25. Seaside Shingle Mill with Workers; Everett, Washington, 1907. Digital Archive, Everett Public Library; Everett, Washington.

In 1919, about three hundred members of the I.W.W. boarded two steamers in Seattle and were determined to dock in Everett for a parade and protest on behalf of the shingle workers union. The *Verona* sailed first, while the *Calista* followed closely behind. In the meantime, County Sherriff Donald McRae formed a coalition of two

hundred armed citizen-deputies to ward off the anarchists from Seattle. The *Verona* arrived with its members singing the I.W.W. anthem "Hold the Fort," but McRae held the steamer at gunpoint and refused to allow the protestors to dock. After insults were exchanged and threats were made, a Wobbly organizer dropped the gangplank to disembark and a shot came from the dock, which triggered ten minutes of successive gunfire upon the steamer. When the smoke cleared, two citizens were dead, along with twenty others left wounded on the dock. Meanwhile, the Wobblies, who were nearly unarmed, claimed five dead and twenty-seven wounded, although further investigations have suggested that more than a dozen I.W.W. workers were killed and disposed of at sea by local authorities (N. Clark 186-187). Federal legislators responded to violence between Wobblies and local governments with the Criminal Syndicalism Act (1919), a decision that squelched union organizing by empowering government officials to raid Wobbly Halls and systematically arrest its leading members on the grounds that the I.W.W. endorsed acts of violence, crime, and sabotage.[64]

Snyder's father and grandfather may have experienced the glory days of radical labor unions, but by the time Snyder was born in 1930, the I.W.W. was becoming a political artifact. The word "Wobbly" was once spoken with pride or trepidation, but as Robert L. Tyler observes, by the Great Depression, socialist timber laborers were little more than a "relic" and "an anachronism" throughout the Northwest (218). Snyder, who grew up during the Great Depression and identified himself as a Wobbly, understood that the marginalization of union timber workers was "not romanticized, but real" and that his German and Scots-Irish family had been marked by the regional economic struggle ("Oral History" 2, *Old Ways* 16). When the timber market crashed in the 1930s, Snyder's

[64]This same year, Zane Grey also published *Desert of Wheat* (1919), an anti-union historical novel set in the Columbia River Basin. In the novel, Grey links the Industrial Workers of the World to German nationalism and portrays unionist field laborers as promoters of sabotage who undermined the U.S. war efforts.

parents explored economic possibilities outside of logging and Snyder, who was only six at the time, remembers how his father dynamited stumps from their Lake City property and "cleared two acres and fenced it for three Guernseys. He built a two story barn with stalls and storage for the cows below and chickens above. He and my mother planted fruit trees, kept geese, sold milk" (*Practice* 116). Despite the best of intentions, the dairy farm failed and Snyder's father "was out of work for eight or nine years," which left the family doing odd jobs and living "in a house that was covered with tar paper" (O'Connell, *FE* 365). During this time, Harold Snyder returned to his union roots and worked as a representative for the League of Unemployed Voters and organized with left-wing labor groups who were employed at the Grand Coulee Dam construction site (Martin 148).

But socialist timber workers were not the only ones struggling to make ends meet during the 1930s, evidenced by the fact that Snyder also encountered impoverished Salish Indians who lived on a plot of land just down the road from his family's stump filled dairy farm. One old Salish man, whom Snyder alludes to "Night Highway 99" (1962), *The Old Ways* (1977) and *The Practice of the Wild* (1990), came by "about once a month . . . selling salmon that his people smoked" (*Practice* 118). The presence of neighboring Salish Indians near Snyder's home raised a number of historical and cultural questions in his young mind. For starters, he suspected that these people knew more about the Pacific Northwest than anyone he had met (*Old Ways* 183-184). Moreover, as Snyder wandered through places with "stumps twelve feet high and twelve feet across" he came to realize that it had only been "thirty-five or forty years since all those hills had been logged" and that the timber industry had contributed to the economic marginalization of neighboring Indians (Moyers 367). In retrospect, Snyder suspected that the "ghosts of those ancient trees" and his early encounters with Salish Indians called him to "do something" about a living in a society that was exploiting people and "destroying its own ground" (*Practice* 118; Moyers 367, *Real Work* 94).

Snyder's early and idealistic commitment to renewing the socio-economic sustainability of Kitsap County was curtailed when his parents divorced in 1942, sending Snyder and his mother to Oregon, where they lived along the Columbia River for a time in northeast Portland. After graduating from Lincoln High School in 1947, he entered Reed College, a nearby institution known for the radical politics espoused by his own family. Some of Snyder's earliest ideas about the relationship between labor and environmental degradation would be worked out at 1414 SE Lambert Street, an old Victorian house not far from Reed. Snyder moved to Lambert Street simply to find affordable housing, but in retrospect, he recognized the house as a haven for white poets, anthropologists, and political activists. He shared a room with poets Phillip Whalen and Lew Welch, and anthropologists and novelists such as Dell Hymes and Donald Berry circulated throughout the house on a regular basis.

Those who spent time on Lambert Street remember that Snyder was committed to educating his peers on the economic principles of the Industrial Workers of the World and the history of Pacific Northwest socialism. Michael Mahar, a fellow student and anthropologist, recalls that Snyder "knew a large repertoire of labor and Wobbly songs, which he sang with great vigor while whacking away at his guitar" (Maher 13). Likewise, Carol Baker, one of two women who lived at the house, remembers that Snyder often talked about "growing up as a Depression boy" who inherited the working class values of the I.W.W.:

> He told me the story of the Wobblies, the local name for the Industrial Workers of the World, a radical union formed early in the century by loggers and others who worked in the forests. They'd formed their union to work for equitable rights in a time when exploitation of workers by the rich was the name of the game. Gary explained that right up the road in Centralia was the site of one famous conflict between the Wobblies and the wealthy lumber kings. (25)

The Centralia Massacre (1919) had been the final and bloodiest stand-off between the I.W.W. and local businesses in the Pacific Northwest. The Wobblies attempted to

open an organizing hall in Centralia, Washington, but were repeatedly evicted and forced to leave town on the grounds of their socialist politics. Tensions between labor activists and local citizens simmered for five years and peaked when the I.W.W. and American Legion exchanged gunfire during an Armistice Parade in 1919. The outcome was horrific: one police officer was murdered; four Legionnaires were killed, and another five were wounded. Eight I.W.W. members were tried for murder, but not before a vigilante mob broke into the Centralia jailhouse and captured Wesley Everest, a Wobbly who was believed to be one of the murderers. The mob beat the young man, dragged him out of town, and tied a noose around his neck at Mellon Street Bridge. They hanged him three times -- the third time breaking his neck.[65]

Despite such horrifying eruptions of violence, Snyder, a third-generation timber laborer himself, was profoundly committed to socialism and to the re-emergence of radical labor politics during the 1950s. The problem, however, was that while timber workers of the I.W.W. espoused the anarchist spirit of activism that Snyder admired, they had been agents in the wider process of ecological destruction which had also displaced Native American peoples. After graduating from Reed College in 1951, Snyder had reached a crossroads, one that forced him to confront a seemingly irreconcilable problem of living within an economic system that celebrated productive labor while exploiting people and land. As Snyder was attempting to work out his ambivalent attraction and growing repulsion toward his timber working heritage during the early 1950s, he wrote a poem called "Makings," a retrospective account about growing up during the Great

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[65] Wobbly journalists and legal representatives claim that Wesley Everest was also shot several times and castrated. For more on the conflicting histories of this event see Tom Copeland, *The Centralia Tragedy of 1919* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1993); John McClelland, Jr., *Wobbly War: The Centralia Story* (Tacoma, WA: Washington State Historical Society, 1987); and Ben Hur Lampman, *The Centralia Tragedy and Trial* (Tacoma, WA: The American Legion, 1920).

Depression.[66] The poem, split in two stanzas, is structurally indicative of the apparent choice Snyder was confronted with: to either embrace or reject the laboring tradition of his family's socialist past.

"Makings," later published in *Left Out in the Rain, New Poems 1947-1985* (1986), opens with a sense of nostalgia and longing for a labor tradition lost to progress and industrialization:

> I watched my father's friends
> Roll cigarettes, when I was young
> Leaning against our black tarpaper shack.
> The wheatstraw grimy in their hands
> Talking of cars and tools and jobs
> Everybody out of work. (*Left Out* 56)

In the 1930s, Snyder had watched with envy as his father's companions rolled smoke and talked of work and tools. At the time, he wished for larger overalls and "hammer-slings like theirs," but by the early 1950s -- after the splitting of his family in divorce and the awakening of Snyder's own environmental consciousness -- a split between past and present expressions of masculinity and working-class identity formation was pressing down on him (*Left Out* 56). This sense of division is indicative of a post-World War II culture that marginalized and threatened definitions of working-class masculinity by forcing laborers from the Great Depression into what Suzanne Clark calls an "impossible – splitting – position" (9-10).

During the 1930s, masculinity in Snyder's family was tied to radical labor politics, versions of manhood that were then marginalized by post-World War II expressions of U.S. nationalism that equated masculinity with the accumulation of wealth and material possessions. Snyder confronts and rejects the monetary temptations of the 1950s in the second stanza of the poem, when he imagines himself as a masculine hero

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[66]"Makings" was written sometime between "1952 and 1956," while Snyder was living out his economic experiment as a "hobo and worker" and writing materials for what would become *Myths & Texts* (1960). See Gary Snyder, *Left Out in the Rain, New Poems 1947-1985* (San Francisco, CA: North Point, 1986) and *Myths & Texts* (vii).

and a hold-out from the Great Depression -- the last one from the "thirties" who has "stayed poor" (*Left Out* 56). After two World Wars, Snyder writes, radical laborers from the past had become content with "jobs and money," a fact that was evidenced by Snyder's own father, who, after divorcing his wife Lois in the 1940s, moved into "a big suburban home" in San Francisco where he worked for the state government (*Left Out* 56, Mahar 9).

At first, it seems that Snyder will separate himself from his father in a characteristic pattern of western masculinity formation, but the poem's last stanza ultimately communicates something far more complicated and unpredictable. At the end of the poem, Snyder resists conforming to a dualistic choice between the past and present by stepping into a state of contradiction that simultaneously binds him to and separates him from the socialist labor tradition of his family's past. Taking up residence in his own imaginary "shack" and rolling his own smoke of "wheatstraw," Snyder recovers images of 1930s laborers, even as he disowns the capitalist and suburban economies that seduced and misdirected his father. Snyder, in fact, concludes the poem like an old Wobbly by stating:

> It's good to sit in the
> Window of my shack,
> Roll tan wheatstraw and tobacco
> Round and smoke. (*Left Out* 56)

As the title of the poem suggests, Snyder has not separated from his past, but recommitted himself to the process of "Makings." Perched in the window of his shack, he *rolls* out lines of poetry onto pages made from timber pulp. In this regard, Snyder, the laboring poet, fulfills the Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World, which calls its followers to use acts of labor and politics to form "the structure of the new society within the shell of the old" (qtd. in Smith 180).[67]

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[67]Walker C. Smith, *The Everett Massacre* (Chicago, IL: I.W.W. Publishing, 1917). Snyder was familiar with this phrase from the Preamble of the International Workers of the

During the early 1950s, Snyder imagined himself to be "the only one" who remained committed to the laboring spirit of the Industrial Workers of the World (*Left Out* 56). His perceived status as a relic-laborer aligned him with other so-called anachronisms of the Columbia River Basin's working class, but also, it turns out, with members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Indians who were no longer fishing for salmon at Celilo Falls, but running chainsaws and working for the Warm Springs Lumber Company. Snyder, as well as Native Americans living at Warm Springs, knew how linear visions of capitalist progress can dismantle and consume both property and people. As a product of the Great Depression, Snyder had watched timber laborers and his own family become "something of an anachronism," just as Indians at Warm Springs Reservation were struggling against federal control of land and waterways on the Columbia River (Tyler 21). More importantly, enrolled members of the Warm Springs Reservation, like Snyder, were also *re-making* themselves in language, literature and cultural change after a long history of socio-economic persecution.

In 1952, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the U.S. Government reached a settlement that sold Celilo Falls for the construction of The Dalles Dam, a decision that devastated all of the Mid-Columbia tribes, but allowed the Warm Springs Tribes, in particular, to restore their socio-economic and political independence under a self-sustaining government. Following the Walla Walla Treaty of 1855, enrolled members of Warm Springs had been relocated away from the Columbia River and Celilo Falls, which made hunting, fishing, and gathering near the Columbia River "impractical if not impossible" (Baughman and Hadella 4).[68] However, the Warm Springs

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World, as indicated by the poem "Night Highway Ninety-Nine," in which he speaks of the I.W.W. and the" night of the long poem / and the mined guitar . . . / 'Forming the new society / within the shell of the old'" (*Six Sections* . . . 17).

[68] For more on the significance of Celilo Falls to the Warm Springs Indian Reservation, see: George W. Aguilar, *When the River Ran Wild! Indian Traditions on the Mid-Columbia River and the Warm Springs Reservation* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 2005); *Warm Springs*

Reservation was and is rich in timber. In 1942, the Bureau of Indian Affairs advised tribal leaders to move beyond the practice of harvesting timber strictly for reservation needs by entering into the commercial timber industry. That same year, the Warm Springs Lumber Company was formed by the tribe and overseen by a committee of reservation-appointed foresters who determined how much old growth timber was to be harvested.[69] Then, in 1952, following a four-million-dollar settlement with the federal government as the compensation for the drowning of Celilo Falls, elected tribal leaders voted to distribute only five hundred dollars to each enrolled member and then invest the balance of the funds in the communal future of the reservation.[70] Elizabeth Woody, a poet and member of Warm Springs explains that after Celilo Falls was sold for the construction of The Dalles Dam, "the tribe took action and did not spend much time in despair." Instead, leaders focused on the promotion of "self-sufficiency based on the

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Millennium: Voices from the Reservation, Michael Baughman and Charlotte Hadella, eds., (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2000); *The People of Warm Springs* (Warm Spring, OR: Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, 1984); Cynthia D. Stowell, *Faces of a Reservation: A Portrait of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation* (Portland, OR: Oregon Historical Society Press, 1987); and Elizabeth Woody, "The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon," in *The First Oregonians*, Carolyn M. Buan and Richard Lewis Buan, eds., (Portland, OR: Oregon Council for the Humanities, 1991), 193-207.

[69] The most comprehensive and historicized study of Warm Springs and the forestry industry is Richard Logan's, *Historical Perspectives: The Warm Springs Forest Through 1980.* (Unknown Binding, 1980).

[70]After receiving compensation for the inundation of Celilo Falls, elected leaders of Warm Springs Reservation earmarked one hundred thousand dollars to conduct a survey of the reservation's economic resources by Oregon State University. The survey resulted in a five-volume study of recommendations, including the construction of a recreational resort, hydroelectric dams, and the purchase of a timber processing plant. The tribe followed these suggestions by constructing Ka-Nee-Ta Resort (1964), a popular attraction for tourists and visitors, as well as well as two hydroelectric projects, Pelton Dam (1959) and Round Butte Dam (1964), both of which are now jointly owned and operated by Warm Springs Water and Power Enterprises and Portland General Electric. The tribe also purchased Warm Springs Forest Products Industries in 1967, and structured the corporation so that reservation laborers are owners and processors of their heavily timbered lands (*People of Warm Springs* 53-54). By the 1980s, the Warm Springs mill was the "reservation's biggest and most successful enterprise," employing over two hundred Indian men and women living on the reservation (Stowell 84).

development of sustainable resources on tribal land while still caring for the land as a cohesive community" ("Confederated" 202, 198).

While working for the Warm Springs Lumber Company in 1954, shortly before the inundation of Celilo Falls (1957), Gary Snyder met Ray Wells, an Indian who set chokers for the reservation timber company. His account of the Indian laborer points to qualities of socio-economic and ethnic resilience that Snyder suspected would prevail despite the federal government's attempt to terminate reservations and stream-line the Columbia River. As choker setters, Snyder and Wells wrapped cables around logs and then hooked them to the backs of Caterpillars that hauled the timber to a truck loading platform. While sitting "on the butt-logs of two big Larch . . . / waiting for the Cat to come back," Wells often told Snyder stories about life on the reservation. On one occasion, Wells spoke of his father-in-law, "a Wasco" Indian who "don't speak English." He told Snyder how just yesterday the two men had "gelded some ponies" on the reservation (*M&T* 12). Quoting fractures of the narrative in verbatim, Snyder remembers being told how the animal is bound and "skin on the balls is cut." Then, undergoing the pain of emasculation, "the ball jumps out, the horse screams / But he's all tied up" (*M&T* 12). With the story of emasculation finished -- and the Caterpillar clanking a linear path down the hill -- Snyder considers the socio-economic conditions of men laboring in the "shadow of diesel and iron tread" on the Warm Springs reservation. He reaches the following conclusion:

> I thought of Ray Wells' tipi out there on the sage flat
> The gelded ponies
> Healing and grazing in the dead white heat. (*M&T* 12)

The parallel lines and subject-object placement of "Ray Wells" followed by "The gelded ponies" healing in "dead white heat," invites a natural comparison between the so-called confined and colonized status of members of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and the ponies in 1954 that are "tied up" in an oppressive "white heat." But Snyder's

interpretation of the situation is far more complex than a surface reading of colonization will allow.

The socio-economic emasculation of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Indians in 1954 is inseparable from the federal purchase and inundation of Celilo Falls in 1952; nevertheless, Snyder senses that Ray Wells' way of life will persist against all federal attempts at socio-economic erasure. In contrast to white suburban consumers who live in the pallor of "square gray / houses" from wood "bulldozed" by corporate timber giants like "Luther and Weyerhaeuser," Wells lives in a round "tipi," out on "the sage flat" (*M&T* 15,13,12). The ponies, although gelded, will heal and even graze in the "dead white heat" of colonization. The situation is deadly and oppressive, but the colonizing forces or capitalism are doomed to destruction -- for they are built upon an exploitive economic system where nameless labors are disconnected from corporate interest, functioning as tools in a process where "someone killed and someone built, a house, a forest wrecked or raised" (*M&T* 4). By contrast, the old growth Lodgepole Pine harvested by Wells and Snyder, will survive, in Snyder's telling, due to its "wonderful reproductive / power" (*M&T* 4). When the logging operation is finished, the underbrush will be burned by the timber company, yet the trees, possessing the uncanny ability "to endure a fire / which kills the tree without injuring its seed," will reproduce despite the appearance of death. In short, Ray Wells and his gelded ponies -- like the land itself -- will survive the "white heat" of colonialism and endure, long after capitalist consumers are cursed to "starve" as a result of their economic and ecological exploitation (*M&T* 13).

Snyder's assertion that economies at Warm Springs will outlast the United States' colonizing of environmental consumption also runs throughout "A Berry Feast," the best known poem from his days at Warm Springs Reservation.[71] In 1954, while working for

[71] "A Berry Feast" was first published in *Evergreen Review* 2 (1957): 119-124. It later appeared in *The Back Country* (1968).

the Native American timber company, Snyder was invited to attend "this big Berry Festival at Warm Springs, a very big cultural thing, the first fruits celebration, when they brought the first ripe huckleberries down from the mountains" (*Oral History* 22). He remembers:

> [As part of the gathering] they would have a three or four day celebration where nobody ate huckleberries till they all ate them together, sacramentally. And a lot of dancing and gambling. Native dancing, and bone game gambling. And big stakes, people coming down from Yakima and setting up teepees to gamble. What a marvelous scene. The logging camp shut down because half of the crew were Indians. Probable three-quarters of my group were Indians, so the whole show shut down during the celebration. I was over there. I got to wander around, tagging after some Indian choker-setter guys that were my crew members, who'd say, "Oh, he's one of the choker-setters. He's Billy's friend." So I got right to be right part of it." ("Oral History" 22)

Participation in the Berry Feast allowed Snyder to consider his own economic heritage against the ancestral rituals of the tribes of Warm Springs.

"A Berry Feast," which commemorates the annual event, contrasts two worlds, the first made up of white capitalists and consumers and the second comprised of indigenous survivors. The whites dwell in a world managed by capitalists, where "suburban bedrooms" constructed from fallen boards of pine are designed as economic tools "to catch the biped in." The other world is managed by Coyote, "a smooth loper . . . a drifter . . . the ugly gambler, / Bringer of goodies," who survives the marginalizing world of linear progress and exploitation (*BC* 13). While white consumers travel straight-line highways from suburbs to work are seen "collecting and junking, gibbering all day," Coyote is out digging in the brush -- discovering the fertility of blackberries -- the presence of which arrives via a pile of "bearshit . . . in August" (*BC* 13). By the final lines of the poem, the world of white consumers has been reduced to "one naked man" who will starve to death after "frying his horsemeat on a stone." Set against the apocalyptic "sunrise" of a new beginning, Coyote will scavenge the white man's remains

and with "long tongue panting," set about the work of re-creating a "dead city" and, once again, turn it into place "where berries grow" (*BC* 16).

While working for Warm Springs Lumber Company, Snyder not only met resilient Indians such as Ray Wells, but numerous "old white guys who had worked in the lumber industry all their lives" and were struggling to re-invent themselves in an economic system intolerant of the past (*M&T* 9). One of these men was an old Wobbly laborer named Ed McCullough, "a logger for thirty-five years," who kept an axe so sharp that he "could shave a paper-thin slice of a Day's Work plug, his chew, with his blade" (*M&T* 9; *Practice* 124-125). McCullough survived the dissolution of the I.W.W. and lived in "shanties / At Hooverville" during the Great Depression, but by the age of sixty-five he and his axe were reduced to the menial labor of "chopping off knots at the [truck loading] landing" due to "the advent of chainsaws" (*M&T* 9). He claimed he didn't "have to take this kind of shit," but his age and anachronistic status left no options for respectable employment (*M&T* 9). Snyder talked with McCullough about days when Wobblies ruled the woods and corporate giants were at the I.W.W.'s mercy and the old laborer, who "hadn't had anyone talk Wobbly talk with him in twenty years . . . relished it" (*Practice* 124). This sort of talk provides the working class vocabulary for Snyder's poetry, which is laden with lumber jargon and references to a "crummy-truck," "flapjacks," "D rings," "piss firs," "butt hooks," and a "scissorbill stooge."[72]

Throughout the summer of 1954, Snyder would tell Ed McCullough stories about his own socialist relatives, especially his grandfather and Uncle Roy and Roy's wife Anna, who had worked as a cook at a logging camp at Gray's Harbor around World War I. In exchange, the old Wobbly retold the history of labor strikes at Everett, Washington,

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[72] This jargon appears in various dictionaries of I.W.W. slang, such as Stewart H. Holbrook's, "A Loggers' Dictionary and Compendium of Useful Knowledge" in *Holy Old Mackinaw: A Natural History of the American Lumberjack* (New York, NY: Macmillan Co., 1938), 258-265; and "Language of the Migratory Worker," in *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology*, Joyce L. Kornbluh, ed., (Ann Arbor, MI: U of Michigan P, 1964), 405-408.

the time when "thousands of boys [got] shot up and beat up / for wanting a good bed, good pay, decent food in the woods –" (*M&T* 9). The five I.W.W. protestors killed in the Everett Massacre had been immortalized by the Industrial Workers of the World as martyrs who resisted capitalist greed and opposed a military minded government. In years following the violence, the I.W.W. continued to use their names and deaths to mobilize laborers toward organization and retaliation. In Snyder's account of Ed McCullough, the poet replays the ritual practice of memorializing the dead by offering a roll call of those killed in the massacre, a rhetorical maneuver that was standard practice at I.W.W. events:

> Felix Baran
> Hugo Gerlot
> Gustav Johnson
> John Looney
> Abraham Rabinowitz
> Shot down on the steamer Verona
> For the shingle-weavers of Everett
> The Everett Massacre November 5 1916. (*M&T* 9)

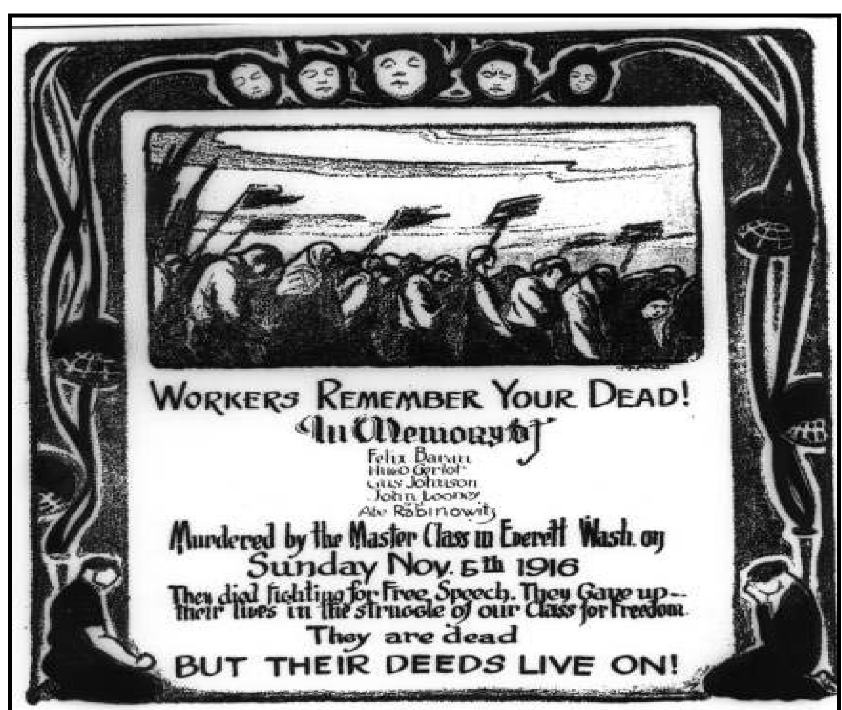

Figure 26. Wobbly Memorial Poster: "Workers Remember Your Dead," 1916. Digital Archive, Everett Public Library; Everett, Washington.

While the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs had managed to survive the treaties and termination efforts deployed by the federal government during the 1950s, the Wobblies had not. Before closing the "Logging" section of *Myths & Texts*, Snyder returns to the theme of "whiteness" and a seemingly failed labor movement, leaving readers with the image of "a ghost logger" who "wanders" through Warm Springs Reservation in search of work (*M&T* 11). In the poem, night falls quickly upon the old Wobbly and Snyder wonders where this man, who arrived "fifty years too late, and all his money spent," will finally be able to find rest (*M&T* 11). The old ghost -- whose way of life is now extinct -- is tormented by environmental and economic exploitation and asks questions once posed by Snyder: "What bothers me is all those stumps: What did they do with the wood?" (*M&T* 11-12).

While allowing for grief and memorialization, the Native American practices and local economic solutions that Snyder offers throughout *Myths & Texts* offer revitalizing alternatives to the industrialization of the Columbia River Basin, despite the fact that the drowning of Celilo Falls continues to haunt the memories of both Native and non-native peoples. Given the socio-economic and cultural impact of the inundation of the falls, it is not surprising that the reverberations of collective socio-economic trauma caused by The Dalles Dam appear in other works written and published in the 1950s and 1960s.

In fact, Ken Kesey, another young writer from the Pacific Northwest, was also drawing from historical and geographical circumstances along the Mid-Columbia River to write *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), a work published just two years after Snyder's *Myths & Texts.* Unlike Snyder's biographical poetry, Kesey's novel often appears to be outlandish, seemingly more connected with territories of the mind than actual time and space in the Pacific Northwest. However, as "Chief" Bromden, the schizophrenic narrator of the novel insists, the story at hand "is the truth even if it didn't happen," a statement which, in fact, proves to be accurate (*CN* 8). Kesey has situated *Cuckoo's Nest* in a very specific time and place, and constructed two main characters

whose lives have been traumatized by the federal reclamation of the Columbia River. Bromden, a Columbia River Indian from Celilo Village, has been displaced by The Dalles Dam; while Randall P. McMurphy is a marginalized white laborer who has no place in an exploitive economy that uses and disposes of its abundant labor population at will. Appropriately, the two men meet in a Pacific Northwest psychiatric ward and form an alliance to undermine the "Combine," a federally managed hydroelectric machine based on The Dalles Dam, a concrete monument of federal power that in Kesey's telling, inundated Celilo Falls and attempted to dispose of both unwanted white and indigenous citizens of the Columbia River Basin.

Breaking Out of the Combine: The Dalles Dam and Hydroelectric Oppression in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*

Among literary critics, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) is read primarily as a record of Ken Kesey's experimental use of hallucinogenic drugs that supposedly led to enlightenment and outpourings of artistic brilliance. It is well known that Kesey wrote his first novel in less than a year, from 1960 to 1961, while taking courses at Stanford University by day and working at Menlo Park Veterans Administrative Hospital by night, where he also enrolled in an experimental psychedelic drug program managed by the Central Intelligence Agency. Critics link the narrative pace and style of the novel to Kesey's drug use, working from the assertion that "Chief" Bromden, the Native American protagonist of the novel, appeared to Kesey during a drug induced vision.[73] According to John Daniel, who sums up the iconic status of the novel and its author quite

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[73] The accounts of Ken Kesey's drug use while writing *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* were originally deployed by Kesey himself and then reinforced by Tom Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), a work of literary journalism that promoted "Chief Bromden" as a vision of drug induced inspiration. Kesey, of course, was using hallucinogenic drugs while writing the novel; however, excessive critical focus on this aspect of the work has obfuscated the work's relationship to historical events that took place on the Mid-Columbia River during the 1950s.

well, the enduring "miracle" of *Cuckoo's Nest* is that Kesey was able to respond to the vision of Bromden and write a countercultural masterpiece in less than a year, even while "blasting his head with hallucinogens" (131). These critical histories have turned Kesey into a cultural icon, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, where he is viewed as one of the most important literary figures of the region, but rarely as a writer caught up in the socio-economic and ecological histories of the Columbia River Basin.[74]

Once romantic notions of reading the novel as a product of drug fueled inspiration are put to rest, an investigation into the geographical and historical framework of the novel indicates that the germination of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* was not grounded in a high flying peyote trip, but in Kesey's countercultural opposition to the construction of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls.[75] Initially, the act of reading *Cuckoo's Nest* alongside socio-economic and environmental histories of the Pacific Northwest may cause interpretive resistance, for it cuts against a critical tradition that surrounds a highly mythologized writer.[76] The influence of experimental drug usage

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[74]In 1981, *Pacific Magazine* called upon a panel of well known writers to generate a list of the top twenty-five books on the Pacific Northwest and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962) and *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1964) appeared near the top. When the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* compiled a similar list in 1997, Kesey was ranked as the most important literary voice of the region (Marshall D1). Finally, in 2003, two years after Kesey's death, the city of Eugene, Oregon, a place with a "thriving anarchist population," unveiled a bronze sculpture of their countercultural hero titled, "Storyteller," a monument located in Broadway Square. This public gathering site has taken on the unofficial name of Kesey Square (Palmer 1A; Wright 44)

[75]Only a few literary critics have linked *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* to the inundation of Celilo Falls. The following critics allude to this event, but do not analyze the novel's relationship to The Dalles Dam or Celilo Falls: Stephen L. Tanner, "The Western American Context of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 19.1 (Spring 1973), 291-320; Robert Faggen, "Introduction," *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (New York: Penguin, 2002), ix-xxii; George Rohrbacher, "Ken Kesey Meets Lewis and Clark," *Common-Place* 6.2 (2006); and Scott MacFarlane, *The Hippie Narrative: A Literary Perspective on the Counterculture* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2007), 33-34.

[76] Forty years of criticism about *Cuckoo's Nest* has produced a very limited set of conversations. The novel is most often read as the product of hallucinogenic drugs, the manifesto of a countercultural generation, a work of western mythology, an indictment against mental institutions, or a misogynistic and racist book that might just as well be shelved for the benefit of future generations. These longstanding interpretative patterns are evident in several collections

and Menlo Park Veterans Administration Hospital are, of course, transparently obvious throughout *Cuckoo's Nest*, as well as in letters that Kesey wrote to Ken Babbs, a friend and fellow Stanford University classmate. In correspondence dated between 1960 and 1961, Kesey wrote to Babbs about incidents at Menlo Park Hospital that had crept into his current project; more importantly, he talked about dabbling with peyote, and how this "warm drug" opened his mind to a world only "Indians saw" (*CN*, Critical Ed., 335-343). As Kesey tells it, one night at the hospital, after choking "down eight of these little cactus plants," an Indian apparition appeared to him and evolved into Chief Bromden, the Columbia River Indian and narrator of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. High on peyote, Kesey scrawled out Bromden's words -- which became the opening to the novel -- and called it a "masterstroke" of enlightenment, particularly since he had "never known an Indian before" (*GS* 14).

When placed within a larger historical and geographical framework, Kesey's encounter with Chief Bromden was no masterstroke of enlightenment, but the result of a white, male counterculturalist playing Indian on the West Coast during the 1960s. At the time, Ken and Faye Kesey were living at Perry Lane, a West Coast countercultural community with a reputation for "wine drinking, marijuana smoking, wife swapping" and superficial imitations of Native American rituals and practices (Yablonsky 362; Tanner, *KK* 14). As Timothy Miller, author of *The Hippies and American Values* explains, identification with Native Americans was by no means uncommon, particularly on the West Coast, where counterculture communities "admired and often imitated Indian ways" and pursued their practices with selfish motivations. Miller writes that Native Americans used peyote as a means of sustaining "ancient native traditions" that were

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of essays: George J. Searles, ed., *A Casebook on Ken Kesey's* One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (Albuquerque, NW: U of New Mexico P, 1982); Lawrence Kappel, ed., *Readings on* One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (San Diego, CA: Greenhaven, 2000); and Harold Bloom, ed., *Ken Kesey's* One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (New York, NY: Infobase Publishing, 2008).

mediated by tribal elders and largely hidden from the view of outsiders, but more often than not, counterculture reactionaries just "wanted to get high" and were open to any drug or "vision that might be conjured up" (32). While Kesey claimed an authentic moment of enlightenment through his experiences with peyote, a less mythologized reading suggests he was posing as an Indian apprentice, a white male reactionary more committed to exploring uncharted territories of the mind than finding ancient wisdom.

By the late 1960s, however, Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968) propelled Kesey's so-called mystical encounter with Chief Bromden into a problematic urban legend. Wolfe's best selling travelogue of the Merry Pranksters almost singlehandedly bolstered and sustained Kesey's mythic status as a pill-popping writer of brilliance. According to Wolfe, *Cuckoo's Nest* came into being because Kesey kept piles of peyote around, "huge goddamed boxes of the stuff, one thousand buds and roots" (46). Day and night, Kesey and his Perry Lane cronies concocted mind-tripping experiments, by grinding the plants up and packing them into capsules, or brewing them into a horrible broth "that was so foul, so unbelievably vile, you had to chill it numb to try to kill the taste" (Wolfe 46). Then, one night at the Menlo Park Hospital, something strange and fortuitous happened. After Kesey sucked down a handful of the Indian plants, he descended into an altered state of reality and started to see faces -- hundreds of them:

> Faces
> Faces
> Faces
>
> . . . so many faces rolling up behind the eyelids, faces [Kesey] has never seen before, complete with spectral cheekbones, pregnant eyes, stringy wattles, and all of a sudden: Chief Broom. For some reason peyote does this . . . Kesey starts getting eyelid movies of faces, whole galleries of weird faces, churning up behind the eyelids, faces from out of nowhere. He knows nothing about Indians and has never met an Indian, but suddenly here is a full-blown Indian – Chief Broom – the solution, the whole mothering key, to the novel . . . (47)

With Wolfe's imprimatur, Kesey's persona as a peyote-eating guru was solidified as fact, so much so, that Kesey began to wonder if he was becoming "Tom Wolfe's Creation" (*GS* 14). As *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* grew in popularity alongside *Cuckoo's Nest*, Kesey felt obligated to tell "admiring fans" that Chief Bromden was, indeed, the creation of a peyote induced vision; however, by the early 1970s, the author confessed that it was not drugs that brought the Indian narrator into existence, but "something else" that Kesey chose not to define or indentify (*GS* 14).

At about the same time, literary critic Stephen L. Tanner, who insists that *Cuckoo's Nest* is a "product of the American West," was reading through the author's manuscripts, correspondence, and unpublished materials at the University of Oregon, where Kesey was an undergraduate student from 1953 to 1957. After a rigorous investigation of unpublished materials, Tanner concluded that Kesey and his critics had "attributed too much to the peyote" and claimed that there was actually something "disingenuous" about *Cuckoo's Nest* being called a "drug-generated" work of fiction (*KK* 22). Tanner, in fact, worked to revise the tradition of reading the novel in this way by insisting that Kesey's career as a writer and "cultural hero" was better understood in relationship to place, particularly "western Oregon and the San Francisco Bay area" (*KK* 2). In many ways this generalization is true, although critics have long overestimated the influence of California and overlooked Kesey's lifelong intellectual and social engagement with the Pacific Northwest, where he spent the majority of his life.[77]

Kesey was born in La Junata, Colorado in 1935, but his ancestors, who have often been compared to the Stamper family of *Sometimes a Great Notion*, migrated "from

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[77] For assessments of Ken Kesey's life and work that are specifically attached to the Pacific Northwest see: Michael Powell, "Oregon," in *Updating the Literary West*, Western Literature Association, Eds. (Fort Worth, TX: Texas Christian Univ. Press, 1997), 239-245; Bob Welch, "Kesey and Oregon are Inseparable," *The Eugene Register-Guard*, 15 November, 2001; Glen Love, "Words on the Page," in *Spit in the Ocean #7*, Ed McClanahan, Ed. (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2003), 83-87; and Nicholas O'Connell, *The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington Press, 2003), 79-82.

Tennessee and Arkansas to Texas and New Mexico, then to Colorado, and finally to Oregon" (Tanner, *KK* 3). As Tanner explains, Kesey's forbearers, like the Stampers, were not prophets or visionaries, but a clan of "restless and stubborn west- walkers" who were looking for "new opportunities" for social and economic advancement during the Great Depression (*Sometimes* 18, Tanner 3). According to Wolfe, Kesey's parents "had been part of the 1940s migration from the Southwest – not of 'Oakies' but of Protestant entrepreneurs who looked to the West Coast as a land of business opportunity." In 1946, they set down roots in Springfield, Oregon, "with next to nothing" and by 1960 they had "founded a marketing cooperative for dairy farmers, the Eugene Farmers Cooperative, and built it into the biggest dairy operation in the area, retailing under the name of Darigold" (Wolfe 37).

Kesey graduated from Springfield High School in 1953 and stayed close to home. That fall, he moved across town and spent the next four years at University of Oregon, enrolled as a Speech and Communications major. After graduating in 1957, Kesey and his new wife Faye, returned to nearby Springfield and spent a year working for the family dairy business. However, after Kesey was awarded a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship for short stories and screenplays he had written in literature and communications courses with professors James B. Hall and Dean Starlin, the couple headed to California, where Kesey studied creative writing at Stanford University.

By 1959, Faye and Ken were living in Menlo Park and juggling the complexity of two divergent lifestyles. By day, Kesey was taking courses at Stanford and working with well-established writers such as Wallace Stegner, Malcolm Cowley and Frank O'Connor; however by night, much to his professors' chagrin, he was gaining a reputation as the "Pied Piper" of Perry Lane, a haven renowned for counterculture politics and

experimental drug usage (Fradkin 131).[78] Before acquiring literary fame, Kesey had already established himself as a legend amongst his countercultural peers by telling embellished stories about growing up as a hard traveling descendent of Great Depression laborers. According to Wolfe, somehow everyone at Perry Lane "got the idea that his family were Oakies, coming out of the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression, and then up to Oregon, wild, sodden Oregon, where they had fought the land and shot bears and the rivers were swift and the salmon leaped silver in the spring big two-hearted rivers" (Wolfe 35).

When not spinning tales of life on the so-called western frontier, Kesey worked at the Menlo Park Veterans Administration Hospital, the same place he participated in an hallucinogenic drug program managed by the Central Intelligence Agency. One night at work, while taking some drugs of his own, Kesey insisted that he experienced a peyote inspired vision of an Indian sweeping the hospital floors, and that he wrote the inspired account of Chief "Broom" Bromden with minimal revisions; however, when Stephen Tanner pursued this claim further at the University of Oregon, he discovered numerous changes and revisions made between the first and final drafts (Strelow 17-23). Moreover, although Kesey claimed to know nothing about Indians before encountering the apparition of Chief Bromden, Tanner located several documents in the archive which indicated that "he did know a great deal about Indians and had thought and written about them" before writing *Cuckoo's Nest* (*KK* 22).[79]

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[78] Malcolm Cowley and Wallace Steger have both written about Ken Kesey's years at Stanford University. Stegner, in particular, was deeply annoyed by Kesey's extra-curricular activities in what he called a "ragged little bohemia" (Fradkin 136). See Malcolm Cowley, "Ken Kesey at Stanford" in Kesey, Michael Strelow, ed. (Eugene, OR: Northwest Review Books, 1977), 1-4; and Philip L. Fradkin, *Wallace Stegner and the American West* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 131-136.

[79] In addition to a short story about two displaced Klamath Indians titled "The Avocados," the Ken Kesey Collection includes a recorded interview with Kesey in which he states: "I've been around Indians my whole life." Kesey goes on to talk about an Indian teammate he played football with, an Indian man named "Charlie Blister" who did odd jobs for

The most ambitious of these early attempts was an unpublished screenplay titled "Sunset at Celilo," a project that Kesey wrote sometime between 1956 and 1957, while taking a radio and screenwriting course with Dean Starlin at the University of Oregon. During this time, Kesey learned about the death of a Native American man who had protested the construction of The Dalles Dam. The undergraduate responded by writing an ambitious screenplay. In an interview with Gordon Lish, editor and founder of the literary magazine, *Genesis West*, Kesey himself spoke of these events only a year after *Cuckoo's Nest* was published. While returning from Pendleton, Oregon, on a bus -- probably during the summer of 1955 or 1956 -- Kesey approached The Dalles Dam on Highway 30 and the bus stopped.[80] He explained how the driver was informed that an Indian man had just rushed toward the highway, "racing headlong from the mountain side to attack with his knife the grillwork of a diesel hurtling down the highway paved through his grandfather's land" (Lish 19). According to Kesey, the man was "suddenly crazed with the recollection of his blood," and was driven to rage by the reclamation of indigenous land at The Dalles Dam. The protestor collided with the semi-truck and died "bravely and badly," but came to live again, as Kesey explains, "in the idea for Chief Broom Bromden, the narrator of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*" (Lish 19).

Thirty years later, in 1994, after years of cultivating and then suppressing the drug-induced myth of Chief Bromden, Kesey's story of the Columbia River Indian at The Dalles Dam resurfaced, this time in an interview with *The Paris Review* (1994). In a

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his family, and numerous Umatilla Indians he hung out with each year at the Pendleton Roundup. Ken Kesey Collection, AX 279, Division of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

[80] "Sunset at Celilo" was written as an assignment for a University of Oregon course titled, "Radio and Television Script Writing," a three part sequence that Kesey was enrolled in from 1956 to the spring of 1957. Kesey likely learned of the Indian man's death during September of 1955 or 1956, on his way back from the Pendleton Roundup, an event that takes place each year in mid-September.

fuller and more detailed rendition of the earlier account, Kesey told Robert Faggen how the Columbia River had changed in the 1950s due to the work of the Army Corps of Engineers. Kesey talked about making annual trips to the Pendleton Round Up (est. 1910), a historic rodeo held each September in northeastern, Oregon, with participants ranging from local ranchers to members of the nearby Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.[81] Year after year, Kesey passed the ancient fishery in route to Pendleton, but in the mid-1950s, he learned that life at Celilo Falls was about to change dramatically. As Kesey explains:

> My father used to take me to the Pendleton Roundup in northern Oregon. He would leave me there for a couple days. I spent time hanging around the Indians in the area. I used to take the bus back down through the Columbia River Gorge where they were putting in The Dalles Dam to provide electricity to that part of Oregon so the fields could be irrigated. But it was also going to flood the Celilo Falls, an ancient Indian fishing ground along the Columbia. The government was using scaffolding to build the dam. When I first came to Oregon, I'd see Indians out on the scaffolds with long tridents stabbing salmon trying to get up the falls. The government had bought out their village, moved them across the road where they built new shacks for them. (73)

With the construction of The Dalles Dam nearing completion, Kesey witnessed an event that would shape his writing:

> One time, as we got closer to this dam project, we were pulled over by the cops. We were in a big line of traffic. The bus driver got out and walked up to see what was happening. He came back and told us, "One of them crazy drunk Indians took a knife between his teeth and ran out into the highway and into the grill of an oncoming diesel truck, which was bringing conduit and piping to

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[81] Ken Kesey and Ken Babbs wrote a fictionalized history of the Pendleton Round Up titled, *The Last Go Round: A Real Western* (New York, NY: Penguin, 1994). The novel focuses on the year 1911, when George Fletcher, an African American cowboy raised in Pendleton, and Jackson Sundown, a famous Nez Perce cowboy from Culdesac, Idaho, were competing for the top prize. According to historian Andrew P. Duffin, Kesey uses "historical and imagined characters and situations, analyzes a multitude of historical angles germane to the early twentieth-century inland Northwest: race relations and racial diversity, the ubiquity of market capitalism and acquisitive behavior, growth and development problems, and the cultural meaning of rodeos. We end up with a modernized dime western, one that complicates the old formula by giving nonwhites leading roles and by exposing the pecuniary impulses that affected heroes, villains, and everyone in-between in the Northwest" (99).

> the dam project." I thought, "Boy that's far out." Finally, he couldn't take it anymore. He just had to grab his knife, go out into a freeway and run into a truck. It was really the beginning of Cuckoo's Nest--the notion of what you have to pay for a lifestyle. (73)

The story of this Celilo Falls protest was significant enough for Robert Faggen to mention it in his introduction to *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, but what Kesey failed to tell either Lish or Faggen was that after hearing about the death of the nameless Indian, he returned to the University of Oregon and wrote "Sunset at Celilo," a fictionalized documentary that was his first attempt at imagining the socio-economic, psychological, and environmental repercussions of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls.

The most interesting moment in "Sunset at Celilo" does not appear in the actual screenplay, but in a postscript that Kesey wrote to his professor, Dean Starlin. After introducing the project, Kesey makes a plea for the historicity and urgency of the story he was trying to tell:

> This story is almost true – it hasn't all happened yet. But it is happening. In a few months the dam at The Dalles is going to be completed and the ancient and beautiful falls at Celilo will be gone and the tribe will be forced from their village. These people are real. Their trouble real, it is today, right now. . . . It is a story worth doing. (Synopsis 8)[82]

Starlin responded with marginalia, agreeing that the screenplay was worth producing, while also informing Kesey that he had written "a fictionalized story . . . based on a few facts," something that was by no means a "documentary in the true sense of the word" (Synopsis 8). This comment is important, for it addresses Kesey's impulse to speak historical truth through fiction, a contradiction that was ultimately reconciled in the character of Chief Bromden, who claims that a story can be "truth even if it didn't happen" (*CN* 8). Nevertheless, Kesey's attempt to anchor "Sunset at Celilo" in historical

[82] "Sunset at Celilo" is composed of two parts, the first consisting of a seven page synopsis, followed by a thirty-six page screenplay. It will be cited using the title "Synopsis" or "Screenplay," followed by the page number. Ken Kesey Collection, AX 279, Division of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

time and space is fraught with problems that appear almost immediately, largely because the screenplay combines stereotypical characters from the West with misrepresented historical figures who are situated at Celilo Falls, the well-known and controversial site on the Columbia.

Drawing from personal experiences about his return trip from Pendleton, Oregon, the screenplay opens with the death of a Celilo Indian man, who dies in protest after colliding with a construction truck on its way to The Dalles Dam. A bus of passengers is stopped in traffic and the driver is told that "some drunk Indian . . . smashed himself into the grill of a truck" (Screenplay 6-7). One of the travelers onboard is "a young Celilo Indian" named Jim Smith, who is returning home after serving five years in the Korean War. Smith is anxious to get back to salmon fishing among "a small tribe of poor but happy people who have lived on the Columbia River for years," but stepping off the bus finds the place barely recognizable. The community is littered with "TV antennas on all the shacks, rich furniture strewn about the village and dusty Cadillacs at every house." Jim's father tells how the federal government -- in complete "breach of treaty" -- purchased the village and gave "permission for a dam to be built down river at The Dalles," a project scheduled to "flood out the beautiful falls" and village in only a matter of months (Synopsis 1). The fictional character Smith seeks advice from "Tommy Thomson," the historical and well-known salmon chief of Celilo Village, who served as a tribal leader for eighty years and vehemently opposed the construction of The Dalles Dam.[83] When questioned about resisting the dam, Thompson tells Smith that he had just

[83] From the 1930s-1950s, Tommy Thompson, Celilo Village salmon chief from 1875-1955, made several statements against construction of The Dalles Dam. For more on this, see: "Indian Orators Take Stand Against Dam," *The Dalles Optimist,* 27 April 1945; "Plans for New Celilo Falls Indians Village Attacked in Letter from Chief Thompson," *The Oregonian*, 23 May 1949; "Celilo Indians Strike Back at Critics, *The Dalles Chronicle*, 23 April 1936; and *Oregon Indians: Voices from Two Centuries*, Stephen Dow Beckham, ed. (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 2006), 401-407, 413-414.

traveled to Washington on behalf of the village, put on "head-feathers," and demanded that Oregon Governor Douglas McKay recognize the Indians' treaty rights -- but was silenced by a twenty-eight million dollar check that compensated the Indians of Celilo Village for the inundation o f the falls.

By introducing Tommy Thompson (c.1855-1959) and Governor Douglas McKay (1949-1952) into the screenplay, Kesey creates the illusion of writing a documentary, but offers a representation fraught with falsification and predictable stereotypes. Kesey describes Thompson as a 103 year old "thin Indian, with long, white hair and a very sad silence," a description of the stereotyped "ecological Indian" that is also not far from the truth, considering that Thompson was over 100 years old when he died in 1959, only two years after the falls were inundated (Synopsis 8, 1).[84] But Kesey also gives the impression that Thompson was a "weak, old man" who only half-heartedly confronted state and federal officials on behalf of Indian peoples (Synopsis 3). Nothing could be further from the truth. Although the federal government did compensate the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes a total of twenty-three million dollars (an amount Kesey exaggerates), the money was distributed to individual tribal members, who received an estimated three thousand dollars each, roughly one year's compensation for salmon fishing (Barber, *DCF* 155-182). Indians living at Celilo Village were the last group to receive financial compensation, due to that fact that most inhabitants lacked legislative representation because they refused to enroll with one of the four Mid-Columbia River reservations recognized by the federal government in 1855 (Barber, *DCF* 170-172). Moreover, contrary to Kesey's screenplay, Thompson was not "the only one who signed a contract" with the federal government, but a leader known for "the ferocity

[84]For more on this see Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York, NY: Norton, 1999).

with which he defended Native fishing rights and opposed The Dalles Dam" (Synopsis 6; Barber, *DCF* 153). His leadership as salmon chief lasted eighty years and was marked by a defiant refusal to "signature away" his land and fishing rights in exchange for monetary compensation from the federal government (Barber, *DCF* 153).

In "Sunset at Celilo," Tommy Thompson's so-called lack of leadership and passivity toward the Army Corps of Engineers sends the fictional Jim Smith into vigilantism and rage. After parting ways with Thompson, Smith heads into The Dalles and starts a fight with white cowboys in a bar. He then manages to fulfill nearly every white masculine stereotype of the western film or pulp novel by parting ways with his father, accidentally killing his brother in a fight, and leaving town after unsuccessfully attempting to dynamite The Dalles Dam. After a final stand-off with the local sheriff, Smith heads into the sunset, unable to spark violent resistance against the federal government. The screenplay then ends in a dramatic moment of closure, with the sun setting over the roaring falls and the old Indians gathering on the river bank to watch "the water rising rapidly over the ancient fishing rocks." The backwaters from The Dalles Dam swallow the site, leaving behind only "a lazy calmness" that takes the place of "the once mighty churn of the water," descriptions that again wrongly accuse Native Americans of passivity toward the Army Corps of Engineers (Synopsis 7).

The historical and geographical context of "Sunset at Celilo" resurfaced when Kesey began working on *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* at Stanford University. Here the story of the Celilo Indians reappears in the form of Chief Bromden, a schizophrenic Celilo Indian and member of "a defunct Columbia Gorge tribe," who believes that a federally managed "Combine" has taken over his body, rewired his mind, and left him incapacitated in a Pacific Northwest psychiatric ward (*CN* 23).[85] Despite

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[85]Manuscript drafts of *Cuckoo's Nest* contain references to Bromden as a "Celilo Indian," but for reasons unknown, Kesey or his editors dropped the term "Celilo" as an ethnic and geographical signifier, while still retaining dozens of allusions to Celilo Village, The Dalles Dam,

being over six feet tall, and the son of Chief Brickenridge -- a fictional Celilo Village leader who is possibly another misrepresentation of Chief Tommy Thompson -- Bromden is a voiceless and passive man whose life and masculine identity has been confined by a psychiatric ward where nearly everything he encounters is white. He believes the entire ward is an electrically charged machine that "hums" with circuits of "hate and death and other hospital secrets" (*CN* 1).[86]

The rhythms and patterns of the machine-like ward are monitored and controlled by Nurse Ratched, the wrench-like regulator of the combine, who operates more like an hydroelectric engineer than a medical practitioner. Like other hospital laborers -- garbed in white -- Ratched enters the ward each morning with a "bag full of a thousand parts she aims to use in her duties . . . wheels and cogs polished to a hard glitter, tiny pills that gleam like porcelain, needles, forceps, watchmakers' pliers, rolls of copper wire . . ." (*CN* 4). Her tools and physical features, all of which suggest regulatory control, figures Ratched's totalizing power as an emasculating woman capable of making mechanized "installations" that can turn a man's eyes into "blown fuses" (*CN* 26, 15). From Bromden's perspective, Nurse Ratched is a high-ranking agent of the "Combine," a voracious and exceedingly complex technological "organization that aims to adjust" the rhythmic output of the "Outside" world according to the patterns of life "Inside" the psychiatric ward (*CN* 26).

Some critics have interpreted the Combine quite literally, which turns the novel into a social commentary on the technological manipulations of patients in psychiatric

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and the inundated falls. Ken Kesey Collection, AX 279, Division of Special Collections and University Archives, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403.

[86] George Rohrbacher, a Northwest writer, suspects that Chief Brickenridge was based on Tommy Thompson. In an article titled, "Ken Kesey Meets Lewis and Clark," *Common-place* 6.2 (January 2006), Rohrbacher discusses the many ways Kesey misrepresented the Celilo Village salmon chief. <www.common-place.org/vol-06/no-02/talk/>

wards and asylums.[87] Others, such as gender critics, Ruth Sullivan, Elizabeth McHahan, and Robert P. Waxler see the Combine as a problematic representation of feminine power, a masculine "ball-cutter" that Kesey uses to vilify women seeking to subdue, control, or emasculate his misogynistic version of masculinity (*CN* 57-58).[88] Finally, Bruce Carnes, Don Kunz, and Stephen Tanner read the Combine as the conglomeration of seemingly unidentifiable forces that reconfigure the relationship between humans and the natural world through technology.[89] Kunz, in particular, connects the Combine to the U.S. Department of the Interior, noting that Bromden's "hallucinated association of the hydroelectric dam with the hospital/factory makes the psychiatric ward the historical extension of the Department of the *Interior*; it continues to eliminate systematically those it defines as misfits according to its theory of adjustment" (86). Kunz's assertion is absolutely correct, but the association between hydroelectric progress and socio-economic marginalization is by no means a generalized reference or hallucination, for Kesey ties the Combine -- quite concretely -- to The Dalles Dam.

According to Bromden, the Army Corps of Engineers used the powers of the Combine to steal his voice when he "was about ten years old" and "still living in the village on the Columbia" (*CN* 198). He was outside at the time, working at a "shack sprinkling salt on salmon for the racks," when a white government car turned off the highway and drove into the village (*CN* 198). Bromden knew these weren't typical

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[87]John W. Hunt, "Flying the Cuckoo's Nest: Kesey's Narrator as Norm," in *Lex et Scientia: The International Journal of Law and Science* 13.1-2 (1977), 27-32.

[88]Ruth Sullivan, "Big Mama, Big Papa, and Little Sons in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*," *Modern Fiction Studies* 19.1 (Spring 1973), 34-44; Elizabeth McMahan, "The Big Nurse as Ratchet: Sexism in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest*," *College English Association Critic* 37.4 (1975), 25-27; and Robert P. Waxler, "The Mixed Heritage of the Chief: Revisiting the Problem of Manhood in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*," *Journal of Popular Culture* 29 (Winter 1995), 225-235.

[89] Don Kunz, "Mechanistic and Totemistic Symbolization in Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*," *Studies in American Fiction* 3.1 (1975), 65-82; Bruce Carnes, *Ken Kesey* (Boise, ID: Boise State UP, 1974); and Stephen Tanner, *Ken Kesey* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1983), 25-26.

"tourists with cameras," or even visitors looking to buy salmon, for they came too close to the village and their white car signaled nothing but trouble (*CN* 198). The officials were looking for Chief Brickenridge -- Bromden's father -- and had come to tell him about the "government's plans" to purchase the village because a dam being built at The Dalles was going to flood the falls and the entire Indian community. The agents, whose race is underlined by the repeated use of "white," wanted everyone in the village to "understand the advantages of having a hydroelectric dam and a lake instead of a cluster of shacks beside a falls" (*CN* 202). Bromden listened and watched as they measured, calculated, and jotted down the monetary value of the shacks and fishing racks with mechanized eyes that popped up "like numbers in a cash register," as they joked about primitive living conditions and the general ignorance of Indians. The boy spoke up in defense of his father and the villagers, but was surprised when the agents kept talking and calculating like they never "heard [him] talk at all." Standing not "but two yards away," one of the agents finally pointed him out as an "overdone little Hiawatha" who reeked of filth and fish, but was distracted again when he saw men "standing their places on the scaffolding in the falls," lunging "fifteen-foot forked" spears into "flopping salmon" from a "fifty-foot veil of water" (*CN* 199-201).

As the federal officials calculate the value of Celilo Falls and its ancient fishery, young Bromden catches a glimpse of the mechanized Combine whose cogs and gears have been installed into the bodies of the robotic government officials. Under the immense heat of the semi-arid Columbia River landscape, "time stops and hangs" for a moment and Bromden sees the "*seams* where they are put together" as well as the "apparatus inside" that drives the federal government's linear decision making process (*CN* 201). Moments later, the "spell breaks" and the officials turn from the falls and decide to speak with Brickenridge another day. After taking a final look at "the men on the ancient, rickety, zigzagging scaffolding that has been growing and branching among the rocks of the falls for hundreds of years," the agents of the Combine drive away,

leaving the boy to wonder “if they ever even *saw* [him]” at all (*CN* 202-203). In that moment, like Tommy Thompson, Bromden understands that these machine-like agents would “take” and distort “the words” of his people and dispose of their village “like they weren’t even there” (*CN* 201).

Figure 27. Celilo Falls on the Columbia River, 1953. Columbia Gorge Discovery Center, The Dalles, Oregon. No. 1999.10.4.

Ed Edmo, a Shoshone-Bannock poet and storyteller who lived at Celilo Village between 1946 and1957, was twelve years old when Celilo Falls were flooded, roughly the same age as the fictional Bromden.[90] His memories of tourists and the machine-like federal agents who visited Celilo Village during the mid-1950s are consistent with

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[90] In an oral history, Ed Edmo mentions that during the early1960s he was reading Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs. At that time, Kesey encouraged Edmo to keep writing and the two men eventually became friends. In the mid-1970s, Edmo was a reader at Ken Kesey’s poetry festival, The Poetic Hoohaw, an all day poetry reading held from Mid-Day to Mid-Night on the University of Oregon campus (Edmo, “Oral History” 14).

observations described by Kesey's narrator, reinforcing the historicity of Bromden's memoires in *Cuckoo's Nest.* While Edmo was accustomed to seeing white tourists and highway travelers like Ken Kesey at the falls, on one occasion he met a U.S. Government official whose appearance and mannerisms were strikingly similar to the mechanistic agents of the Combine. He describes the memory of this encounter in "Celilo Blues" (1985), a poem that begins with a staggered current of lines that literally fall in a series of steps, like the tumbling of the falls. As Edmo explains:

> he arrived
> automation-atomic-government-man
> with briefcase in hand
>
> wire rimmed glasses
>   that hung from his nose
>
>   his whining voice
>   came out in a
>   never ending drone (*These Few* 13)

The multi-hyphenated title of the nameless visitor gives the impression that the federal agent is welded together and operated by a series of cogs and wheels that drive the "whining voice" and "never ending drone" that comes from his mechanized body. Edmo's use of the word "drone" and repetition of long humming vowels cast the man as a worker bee, a laborer who literally hums the turbine-tune of The Dalles Dam, while chanting a litany of "promising / promises," rehearsed to browbeat Columbia River Indians into federal compliance. From Edmo's perspective, this mechanized government man has no capacity to hear and is programmed with "deafened / ears" that are separated from his body by a line break and "paid / not to hear" (*These Few* 13).

As "Celilo Blues" continues, the visual and auditory structure of the poem moves from a cascading descent into a linear channel of oppression that ends on the word "drowned." More than a word, "drowned" is a pointed visual marker that enacts the

burden of the federal government's version of progress as it has fallen on Mid-Columbia River Indians. When the federal agent was finished, Edmo remembers:

> mouthing
> words of pre-recorded
> briefing sessions
> behind armed guards
>
> again
> we drowned (*These Few* 13)

Edmo places the phrase "we drowned" in a position of submergence, burying it at the bottom of a linear current that enacts the consequences of The Dalles Dam. More important, the phrase is offset by the word "again," calling readers to consider the older and deeper pattern of injustice experienced by Columbia River Indians. In fact, when framed within a larger historical trajectory of treaty making and federal land and water policies, the inundation of Celilo Falls becomes what Katrine Barber, author of *Death of Celilo Falls*, calls something "shockingly unremarkable and predictable" (184).

Additional texts by Ed Edmo also point to ways *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* provides commentary on relations between the U.S. Government and Columbia River Indians during relocation negotiations that took place during the mid-1950s. Before Celilo Falls was inundated, representatives of the Army Corps of Engineers had ordered that Celilo Village be moved in order to accommodate the rerouting of a Northern Pacific Railroad line that would otherwise be flooded by The Dalles Dam. Ed Edmo's father (Edward Edmo, Sr.) worked for Union Pacific Railroad as a laborer and constructed his home along the river from salvaged railroad ties (Edmo, "Oral History" 1). Although the railroad offered him steady employment and materials, in 1955 Edmo Sr. protested the rerouting of the railway, the relocation of the village, and the construction of dam by serving as chairman of the Celilo Community Club, an organization of community members that held weekly meetings to resist federal encroachment and the relocation of Celilo Village.

At one particular Celilo Community Club meeting, as depicted through historical records of the negotiation, Henry Thompson, the son of Celilo Chief Tommy Thompson, insisted that the U.S. Government was failing to recognize the value of the villagers' property and possessions, particularly when it came to salmon drying sheds. He informed federal representative Percy M. Othus, who often attended on behalf of the Army Corps of Engineers, that the Indians use the shacks to "butcher salmon, dry it and trade it for cash, blankets, or dry goods. They seem to you to be tumbling down; but they are part of the Indians' livelihood. They're valuable." Unconvinced and not to be deterred, Othus responded by claiming that the Army Corps "had no legitimate authority to give relocation funds beyond the market appraisal of the buildings" (Craig 700-701). A child at the time, Edmo remembers that when the Community Club pressed for adequate compensation, the "government man got angry and told us Indians that we should accept their 'fair' offer and that if we didn't, he would go to the judge at Wasco County and have our land condemned and bulldoze everything without paying us anything" ("After Celilo" 71).

Despite the Celilo Community Club's frustration and resistance, disputes over compensation and relocation were put to rest in 1955, when the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Department of Interior reached an agreement that rerouted the Union Pacific railway and moved thirty-six families at Celilo Village away from the river and to the southern side of the railroad (Craig 699; Barber, *DCF* 149-150). In *Cuckoo's Nest*, Bromden remembers that during this period of relocation the "U.S. Department of Interior" started bearing down on the village "with a gravel crushing machine" (*CN* 131, 198). Likewise, Edmo, who experienced federal encroachment first hand, as of course Kesey had not, remembers how federal "engineers began leveling the earth to make a new right-of-way for the Union Pacific Railroad." While federal workers worked to survey and mark the land, Edmo and his friends would "pull out the stakes from the ground, fill the holes, and make a small fire out of the stakes. Others would climb the

cliffs and shoot BB guns at the big dump trucks as they hauled dirt. . . . In our own small way, we tried to stop the dam" ("After Celilo" 71-72). When it came time to leave the village, Edmo watched his father take a "torch" and put "gasoline on the house" until it "went up in flames." To this day, the process of relocation is among the most difficult and traumatic memories that Edmo can remember ("Oral History" 36).

Understanding the record of federal injustice against Indians at Celilo Village leads to a more historically and geographically informed reading of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and of the trauma that Chief Bromden articulates as a victim of hydroelectric oppression masked as progress. In *The Return of the Vanishing American* (1968), Leslie Fiedler claims that the West Kesey represents in *Cuckoo's Nest* is the "West of Here and Now, rather than There and Then – The West of Madness" (185). However, this is not a merely generalized or a hallucinogenic "West," but a West grounded in the collective trauma caused by the federal reclamation of the Columbia River at Celilo Falls. Given that context, it should be no surprise that throughout the novel, Bromden's every horror is tied to electricity, engines, and water. When Bromden becomes terrified by the fog pouring from the Combine, for example, or the "vicious hiss of water on the green tile" in the electrical "Shock Shop," his thoughts return to "the village and the big Columbia River," where he and his family used to hunt and fish near "The Dalles" (*CN* 6, 8). On some occasions, the subduing music played over the speakers by Nurse Ratched, reminds him of the constant "sound of the falls on the Columbia," but most of his days are spent in silence, abuse, and constant fear of relocation, so much so, that every time Bromden hears the "sound of water" in the ward he feels the need to "start gathering up [his] belongings" (*CN* 77, 10).

Bromden's understanding of the Combine develops into clarity upon the arrival of Randall P. McMurphy, a Pacific Northwest laborer and new initiate to the psychiatric hospital, who subverts and destroys the regulatory powers of the Combine. McMurphy, who carries the initials R.P.M (mechanical Revolutions Per Minute), has a free flowing

voice that belts out “clear and strong” when “slapping up against the cement and steel” of the hydroelectric ward (*CN* 88). He arrives on the scene like a one-time Great Depression laborer or a timber Wobbly, when he takes off his cap and “goes to beating a dust storm out of his thigh” (*CN* 11). His skin is tanned “the color of oxblood leather from working in the fields so long” and his hands read like “a road map of travels up and down the West” (*CN* 23). He has harvested pea fields, traveled with carnivals, and worked as a “catskinner for every gyppo logging operation in the Northwest,” all of which makes him smell of “dust and dirt from the open fields, and sweat, and work” (*CN* 19, 98). When McMurphy meets Bromden and learns of his status as a Columbia River Indian, the itinerant laborer offers a friendly handshake. Bromden, who has pretended to be deaf since arriving at the ward, reaches out in silence and is met with an energetic force that “rang with blood and power” like McMurphy “was transmitting his own blood” into Bromden’s hand and fusing the identity of a marginalized white laborer and a displaced Columbia River Indian together (*CN* 24).

Fuelled by a renewed sense of energy and the possibility of resisting ward policies, Bromden follows McMurphy’s agitating lead and begins to undermine the regulatory powers of Nurse Ratched and the Combine. One night, after refusing to take the “little red capsule” prescribed by the nurse and her agents, Bromden enters into a traumatic and horrifying flashback that takes him into The Dalles Dam to confront the Army Corps of Engineers. With his mind cleared for the first time, the droning hum of the ward reminds him of the bowels of a hydroelectric dam and he comes to the following realization:

> The low whine of the devices in the walls get quieter and quieter, till it hums down to nothing. Not a sound across the hospital – except for a dull, padded rumbling somewhere deep in the guts of the building, a sound that I never noticed before – a lot like the sound you hear when you’re standing late at night on top of a big hydroelectric dam. Low, relentless, brute power. (*CN* 82)

At that point, a ward worker flips off a light switch, the room turns to darkness, and Bromden imagines that a platform from a grain elevator has opened to swallow him into the heart of a hydroelectric beast. He finds himself in "a huge room of endless machines stretching clear out of sight, swarming with sweating shirtless men running up and down catwalks." Everything Bromden sees "looks like it sounded, like the inside of a tremendous dam" (*CN* 83). There are "brass tubes" running out of sight, along with wires that run to "transformers" and humming motors. Standing deep in the belly of the beastly machine, Bromden watches robotic laborers move about the catwalks with faces that flash like lightening and "twinkle in all directions." He then witnesses a horrifying fact. The power of the dam is generated by "a hundred blast furnaces" that are indiscriminately fueled by human lives. He watches as a robotic laborer gets snatched by "two of his buddies" and thrown into the furnace that "whoops a ball of fire" and joins the "whir and clang of the rest of the machines" (*CN* 84).

As this nightmarish vision of a human butchery continues, Kesey draws some of his historical and geographical imagery from the Seufert Brothers Salmon Cannery at Celilo Falls, a prosperous business on the Columbia River that began in 1884, when Francis Anthony and Theodore J. Seufert, arrived to construct a cannery and fish wheels throughout The Dalles area. Originally, fish wheels were monitored by laborers who watched the salmon being caught and descended into the collecting boxes with a pike pole. They gaffed and tossed the fish into a mechanized elevator that delivered the harvest to a dock where the salmon were transported to the nearby cannery. When the state of Oregon banned the use of commercial fishwheels in 1926, the cannery started a gillnetting operation that was supplemented by dipnet Indian fishermen at Celilo Village who sold their daily catch to cannery fish buyers stationed at the falls (Seufert 40-61).

By the 1930s, the Seufert Brothers Cannery was so successful that an intricate system of cableways and trolleys were installed to allow laborers to travel above the falls and access key islands and dipnetting channels (Seufert 14-16). With the advent of these

cableways, Celilo Indians -- who previously navigated the channels by canoes -- began using the new technology to reach more than 480 fishing platforms throughout the falls. It was a mutual economic exchange for both parties, for as Indian fishermen increased their own harvest they also sold salmon to the Seufert Brothers Cannery, the builders and operators of the cableways. As Katrine Barber explains:

> The cableways guided small motorized or hand-cranked cable cars that could hold the weight of four adult men or the equivalent weight in fish. The three-by-five-foot cars replaced cedar canoes that earlier Indians had used to ply the river. Fish buyers built cableways as an inducement to fishers to sell their harvest to the buyer whose cable they used to cross the river. (*DCF* 44)

Indian women also used the cableways to transport salmon and relied on "large burlap sacks to collect the fish" that were then delivered to the cannery buyer's weigh station (Barber, *DCF* 44). The installation of cableways at Celilo Falls increased the regular Indian fishery at Celilo Falls from approximately 30-40 families prior to the 1930s, to well over a thousand seasonal fishers by the 1940s (Seufert 40-41).

Figure 28. Motorized Cableway at Celilo Falls, 1951, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. No. 65984.

In *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest,* Kesey incorporates images of these canneries, cableways, and trolleys into Chief Bromden's nightmare about The Dalles Dam. While navigating the bowels of the hydroelectric furnace, Bromden finds a room that resembles a cannery, where men in white suits manage an assembly line of laborers to collect and "butcher" human bodies in order to feed a voracious furnace of power. The factory operates much like the technologically developed fishery at Celilo Falls, equipped with aerial cables, catwalks, and numerous landings where bodies are harvested and thrown into "burlap" sacks for the cannery. One laborer, whose mechanized face is "brutal and waxy like a mask," pulls a human victim out from a collecting box and "drives the hook through the tendon back of the heel." He then stuffs him into something "like a burlap sack" and sends him down "trolley clicking back over the trestle to the catwalk," where plant administrators -- dressed in white -- pull out a "scalpel" and gut the man. Bromden prepares to scream out for help, but stops when he fears white butchers will want to "see what the insides of an *Indian* are like" (*CN* 84-85). With this knowledge, he remains silent and buries his head, waiting to be released from another traumatic nightmare.

While Bromden confronts the demons of his hydroelectric nightmare, McMurphy begins to undermine the structural foundation and regulatory power of Nurse Ratched and the Combine. He takes control of her electrical devices -- the radio and television -- and at one point, after a heated quarrel, disrupts the structural integrity of the hydroelectric ward by smashing a chair through her office window which sends "water splashing" everywhere (*CN* 190). He then circulates a petition throughout the ward, requesting that inmates be allowed to go on a salmon fishing field trip at Siuslaw Bay on the Oregon Coast (*CN* 196). Bromden, supposedly deaf, listens to McMurphy's tales of open water and "fishing for Chinook salmon," and the more he listened "the more [he] wanted to go" (*CN* 197). At night, before the trip, Bromden breaks his silence and tells McMurphy about The Dalles Dam and how federal officials came to the village to destroy "the tribe,

the village, the falls . . ." (*CN* 208). In an attempt to reclaim a lost way of life, Bromden "signed up" for the fishing trip and caught a salmon "bigger'n any fish [that was] ever caught at the falls" (*CN* 197, 236).

Cuckoo's Nest concludes with Randall P. McMurphy sacrificing his life Christ-like, for the "twelve" fishermen who joined him on the salmon trip in an attempt to dismantle the powers of the Combine (*CN* 227). Significantly, however, it is Bromden who completes the process of conquering oppression by crushing and freeing himself from the walls of concrete that hold the hydroelectric ward together. After McMurphy atones for white laborers of the Promised Land by being lobotomized on a table "shaped ironically, like a cross, with a crown of electric sparks in place of thorns," Bromden frees himself from the hydroelectric machine that has colonized his mind and body (*CN* 67). He breaks out of the Combine by smashing a "control panel" through a "window with a ripping crash" (*CN* 67, 310). In this moment, "wires and connections" of manipulation are destroyed and a new life emerges "like a bright cold water baptizing the sleeping earth" (*CN* 310). Bromden escapes from oppression with plans to return to "The Dalles" in order to see "that big million-dollar hydroelectric dam" (*CN* 311). There are hints of future acts of resistance, as he imagines the possibility of joining Indians to build "old ramshaklewood wood scaffolding" for "spearing salmon in the spillway" of the dam (*CN* 311). His future remains uncertain, but his voice is reclaimed from the Combine and the novel has now become a story of confession and renewal that will "roar out of [him] like floodwaters" from the toppled walls of the hydroelectric ward (*CN* 8).

When the Columbia River Basin is returned to the center of interpretive inquiry, urban legends and cultural mythologies concerning Ken Kesey and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* fall away, leaving behind space for historically and geographically situated readings of novel that illustrate how The Dalles Dam and traumatic loss of Celilo Falls served as a catalyst for local expressions of watershed reclamation that have come to define the literary voice of the Columbia River Basin. As readers continue to discern

the multiple layers of meaning embedded within Kesey's most controversial novel, it will be essential to continuing excavating the history of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls for, as Bromden puts it, this nightmarish story is "the truth even if it didn't happen" (*CN* 8).

Stepping onto the Yakama Reservation:
Land and Water Rights in Raymond Carver's "Sixty Acres"

While Gary Snyder and Ken Kesey are names synonymous with Pacific Northwest literature and culture, it is standard interpretive practice to stress the placeless aspects of Raymond Carver's work, a writer from the Pacific Northwest, who like Snyder and Kesey, went to California in the early 1960s in order to test his literary voice outside the Columbia River Basin. In many ways, the pattern of divorcing Carver from discussions of the Pacific Northwest can be traced to the author himself, who claimed that most of his stories are not set "in a specific locale" and "could take place anywhere" (Gentry and Stull 247). After decades of retracing this problematic interpretive path, it is now more common to find Carver and his work erased from the Pacific Northwest, than situated within the socio-economic and geographical contexts that shaped his work for more than twenty-five years. Granted, much of Carver's work moves far beyond the boundaries of the Columbia River Basin, but "Sixty Acres," an early story set on the Yakama Indian Reservation, near his hometown of Yakima, Washington, undermines the qualities of placelessness so often associated with Raymond Carver.[91]

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[91] I am not particularly interested in locating an origination point for the critical articulation of Raymond Carver's so-called placeless style. However, in 1981, Donald Newlove described Carver's second mainstream short story collection, *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, as "seventeen tales from Hopelessville" (77). The coinage and popularization of this term continues to give readers the impression that Carver's stories take place in generic locations, void of historicity or geographical significance. The persistence of this interpretive approach has overshadowed his work for nearly thirty years, as evidenced by two recent assessments of Pacific Northwest regionalism. Nicholas O'Connell's, *On Sacred Ground: The Spirit of Place in Pacific Northwest Literature* (2003), barely mentions Carver's name, while John M. Findlay's, "Something in the Soil? Literature and Regional Identity in the 20th-Century Pacific Northwest," (2006) dismisses Carver from the region because his stories "tend not to be set in any recognizable Northwest" (180).

"Sixty Acres" was written in 1964, while Carver was struggling to gain recognition as an emerging writer at the University of Iowa from 1963 to 1964. The story was later published in a small literary magazine, but first gained substantial recognition when Curt Johnson selected it for *The Best Little Magazine Fiction, 1970.* The story made a final appearance in Carver's first major short story collection, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, a volume that was nominated for the National Book Award in 1977. [92] "Sixty Acres" was pushed into an all-but-forgotten existence, however, when Carver published *Where I'm Calling From*, shortly before his death in 1988. The collection has stood as his last will and testament, a chronology of the hand selected work that Carver wanted his readers to remember him by. "Sixty Acres" was left out and has been considered to be among the stories that he no longer "like[d] and would never write again" (Gentry and Stull 238). This, in turn, has caused critics to either side-step the story or gloss over it as an unusual and "atypical" piece about a Native American among the mass of Carver stories dealing with white protagonists (Meyer 46).[93] Unfortunately,

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[92] Recent articles in the *New York Times Magazine* (9 August 1998) and *The New Yorker* (24 and 31 December 2007) have fueled an ongoing controversy concerning Raymond Carver, Gordon Lish, and the authorship of *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?* (1976) and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* (1981). Given the volatile nature of this controversy, it is worth noting that there are substantial differences between the published versions of "Sixty Acres." The first two publications are the same and were written before Carver met Gordon Lish in 1967. However, the last version, published in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?,* is considerably different, which raises a number of questions. In the recently published, *Raymond Carver: Collected Stories*, William L. Stull and Maureen P. Carroll indicate that Lish edited all of the stories published in *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?,* and made alterations such as "changes of words and phrases, deletions of sentences and paragraphs, and of changes of titles" (979-980). There is certainly a strong indication of Lish's editorial presence in "Sixty Acres." However, given the geographical and historical focus of this project, I offer no comparative reading or speculations concerning the two differing versions. At this point, it is enough to say that one version was written and published before Carver worked with Lish and that the second version was probably edited by Lish when *Will You Please Be Quite, Please?* was prepared for publication.

[93]Since Carver's death, only a few critics have discussed "Sixty Acres" and none have done so with any historical and geographical contextualization. Building on Arthur M. Saltzman's cursory thoughts (1988), recent work by Arthur Bethea (2001) and G.P. Lainsbury (2004) offer some generic insights concerning the social and economic pressures that Lee Waite

by following Carver's lead in marginalizing this early and reputable story, critics have also failed to see how "Sixty Acres" reflects the author's experiences as a young writer who was unsuccessfully struggling to gain validation at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop; even more important, they have missed the ways the story functions as an historical and geographical commentary on the socio-economic and environmental repercussions of federal land and water management policies in the Northwest during the 1950s, as well as injustices that have oppressed the Yakama Nation and other indigenous groups of Columbia River Basin for over one hundred and fifty years.

In an essay titled, "My Father's Life" (1985), Carver links his socio-economic identity and generational past to the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin. In the summer of 1929, "in response to response to economic hardship in Arkansas caused by the floods of 1927, the loss of farms, collapse of cotton and timber prices, and unemployment," Carver's father, Clevie, left his home at age sixteen, hoping to find work with his family in the Pacific Northwest (Stull and Carroll, *Collected* 957). As Raymond Carver would later explain, my father's relatives were "about to starve down there, and this wasn't meant as a figure of speech" (*Fires* 13). But out West things were different. In 1929, after decades of struggling through unstable timber and cotton markets, Clevie Carver and his relatives left Arkansas for Omak, Washington, with hopes to reap the benefits of a stable timber industry and federal irrigation projects in the Pacific Northwest. The itinerant laborers worked in a timber mill and "picked apples for a time," but Clevie's big break came in 1936, when he landed a job as a construction laborer on "the Grand Coulee Dam" (*Fires* 13).

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faces as a Native American. There is no reason to dispute these rather abbreviated claims, but understanding the socio-economic challenges faced by Yakama Indians requires a more contextualized understanding of ways the federal reclamation of land and water has shaped the social and environmental fabric of the Pacific Northwest.

Riding high on New Deal optimism, Clevie went back to Arkansas, met and married Ella Beatrice, and brought his new wife to settle out West in a newly discovered Promised Land (*Fires* 14). However, Clevie's employment with the Bureau of Reclamation ended in 1938, which sent the couple looking for "steady work at decent pay" once again (*Fires* 13). Like many itinerant laborers of the time, Carver's parents followed the Columbia River because water meant work. After the Grand Coulee job went dry, the couple spent a few years in "Clatskanie, Oregon, a little town alongside the Columbia River" (*Fires* 14). Clevie settled into a job with a Crossett Western Company, "part of an Arkansas timber conglomerate" and their first son, Raymond, was born in 1938 (Stull and Carroll, *Collected* 958). As Carol Sklenicka observes:

> Living near the great river and remembering the hardships at Grand Coulee, the Carvers could see the paradoxes inherent in the economic development of the Northwest. In light of such knowledge, Raymond Junior's birth by the side of the great northwestern river seems auspicious. The salmon and the dams, the forests and sawmills, the orchards and the fragile human settlements of the Columbia Basin would shape this boy just as Arkansas had shaped his parents. (9)

In 1941, the Carvers moved to Yakima, Washington, and were followed by members of their extended family, who left Arkansas to join Clevie at the Cascade Lumber Company.

Raymond spent the next fifteen years roaming, hunting, and fishing in the Yakima Valley, while his father worked in the timber mill and his mother waited tables at local diners (*Fires* 14; Maryann Carver 3).[94] He graduated from Yakima High School in 1956

[94]Carver's attentiveness to the fields, rivers, and towns of the Yakima Valley permeate his poetry, but these details also appear in his short fiction, as well as *Carver Country* (1994), a collection of writings and photographs that map the socio-economic and environmental landscape of Carver's life and work. In a letter Carver wrote to Bob Adelman, the photographer who compiled images for the collection, Carver narrates a literary map designed to guide Adelman through local landmarks, fields, and creeks of the Yakima Valley that have shaped his work. At one point, Carver talks about the importance of Ahtanum Creek, a waterway that reaches "way up into the valley, toward Indian reservation country," the land inhabited by Lee Waite in "Sixty Acres" (25-29). See Bob Adelman and Tess Gallagher, *Carver Country: The World of Raymond Carver* (New York, NY: Arcade, 1994).

and tested the waters of millwork for six months, but hated it and knew he "didn't want to do that for the rest of [his] life" (Gentry and Stull 34). A year later, he married Maryann Burk, a sixteen year old girl from Yakima who was carrying their first child. Raymond, only three years older than Maryann, knew one thing for certain: he wanted to be a writer. And this meant getting out of Yakima and away from timber mills and orchards. Maryann was tired of working at the local fruit packing plant, stacking "rows of little cherries just so," and Raymond, already sick of millwork, was certain that no one at Yakima Community College knew much about writing. So, with dreams in their pockets, the couple and their new baby set out to find their own version of paradise by leaving working-class Yakima, "the self-proclaimed 'fruit-bowl of the nation,'" behind them (Maryann Carver 9).

In a rather ironic twist, Raymond and Maryann relocated to Paradise, California, where Carver enrolled in a creative writing class with John Gardner, a new faculty member at Chico State University (*Fires* 34, 36). The transition from working-class laborer to part-time student was often difficult and Carver's father did not always understand the path his son was traveling. But Clevie was in no position to offer much advice. Shortly before Raymond and Maryann left Yakima, he had suffered a "nervous breakdown" and entered the Yakima Memorial Hospital where a psychiatrist was ordering "electroshock treatments" like a scene out of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (*Fires* 17-18). Unable to work for the next six years, Clevie and Ella "lost everything . . . home, car, furniture, and appliances." During that time, Carver told his father that he wanted to become a writer, but later remembers that he "might as well have told him [that he] wanted to become a plastic surgeon" (*Fires* 19).

Raymond Carver found the paternal insight he needed in John Gardner and Dick Day, early university mentors and teachers who offered sympathetic ears, close line editing, and plenty of encouragement to the young writer. At Chico State University, Gardner seemed to understand what was at stake in Carver's life. He knew, for example,

that Carver was working a number of odd jobs, had two children at home, little money, and "cramped quarters" to work in. He offered a key to his office and a quiet place to work, a gift that Carver later called "a turning point" and "a kind of mandate" that pushed him into some first "serious attempts at writing" (*Fires* 40-41).[95] A few years later, at Humboldt State University, Dick Day helped Carver with his first significant literary publications: pieces of poetry, a few short stories, and a one act play that was produced by the university. Money was tight, but his writing was good -- so good that Day encouraged Carver to attend the Writers' Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he and Gardner had both studied.

Raymond and Maryann moved to Iowa City in 1963, with plans for him to complete a two-year degree, get a good job, and increase his reputation as an emerging writer. But problems surfaced almost immediately. At Iowa things were different. During the first semester, Carver's professors sliced through his prose with "blanket criticism" and complained his work was "unjustifiably pessimistic," held together by characters that faced "circumstances beyond their control" (Maryann Carver 173). After a year of being "dissatisfied and restless," the couple called it quits and returned to California, where they continued to struggle financially before filing for bankruptcy in 1967 (Halpert 7). But all was not lost. That year at Iowa, between 1963 and 1964, Carver completed some important work, including "Sixty Acres," a story about a Yakama Indian named Lee Waite, a young man, like himself, whose social and economic identity was being threatened, not by university faculty, but by the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers, the federal organizations responsible for the equitable

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[95]It is difficult to overstate John Gardner's influence on Carver's early development as a writer. According to Jay McInerney, Carver once told him "that all of his writing life he had felt Gardner looking over his shoulder when he wrote, approving or disapproving of certain words, phrases, and strategies (Stull and Carroll 124). After Gardner's tragic death in 1982, Carver wrote two pieces in his mentor's memory: "John Gardner: The Writer as Teacher" in *Fires* (1983) and "Work" in *Where Water Comes Together With Other Water* (1985).

management and distribution of water in the semi-arid West, the natural resource that John Mack Faragher and Robert V. Hine have called "the most contentious environmental issue" of the latter twentieth century (558).

The federal reclamation of land and water has left behind a long history of injustice throughout the Yakima Valley and larger Columbia River Basin, a history that culminated in 1957 with the completion of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls, the oldest and most productive salmon fishery on the Columbia River. "Sixty Acres" comments on the consequences of this period of reclamation and is, in one sense, an historically and geographically informed account of life on the Yakama Reservation at mid-twentieth century. However, the numerous similarities between Raymond Carver and his protagonist also indicate that Carver was projecting his own socio-economic, gender, and class anxieties onto the image of a Yakama Indian. While Carver participates in acts of playing Indian that so many countercultural writers of the period indulged in, his story should nevertheless push readers back to the Columbia River Basin and, more specifically, to the injustices embedded within the environmental history of the Yakima Valley, The Dalles Dam, and inundation of Celilo Falls.

The federal reclamation of the Yakima Valley began in 1855, when the U.S. Government negotiated treaties with Mid-Columbia River tribes, including The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the confederation of fourteen tribes and bands that have inhabited the Columbia River plateau for millennia. That year, when the Yakamas ceded twelve million acres of the Washington Territory, they retained "exclusive right" to hunt, fish, and gather "at all usual and accustomed places," including Celilo Falls, which was among "the most important trade centers in aboriginal America" (Kappler 699, French 368). After the Yakima War (1855-1858) cleared the land for Euro-American railroads and settlement, questions of water management came into play with increasing urgency in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, heightening exponentially when the Bureau of Reclamation (est. 1902) targeted the rich volcanic soil

of the Yakima Valley as an ideal location for irrigated agricultural production. In less than a decade, the engineering efforts of the Bureau of Reclamation transformed the Yakima Valley into one of the most heavily irrigated and agriculturally productive regions of the United States.[96] But, at the same time, as Carol Sklenicka observes, "the Yakima Valley is a place of contradictions," where "wild beauty coexists with unremitting desolation. Human community comes at a great cost and often leaves ugliness in its wake" (10-11).

This sense of cultural contradiction and socio-economic desolation impacted Raymond Carver, as well as his fictional protagonist, Lee Waite, a Yakama Indian who farms an allotment of reservation property but also holds rights to a recently inherited sixty-acre parcel of land along Toppenish Creek, property that is prime hunting ground for waterfowl and often trespassed by white hunters. Earlier in his life, Waite had looked forward to making a living on the Toppenish Creek property, but for the last few years, this inherited allotment of land has offered him nothing but trouble. Originally, his father saved the acreage for his three boys, but now that he was gone and "both brothers had been killed," Waite "was the one [the land] came down to, all of it" (SA 65). It is hard enough to earn a living on a marginally irrigated farm, but Waite's problems are compounded by this additional "untenanted" allotment, which has left him unable to manage either portion of land effectively (SA 60). His farm barely yields crops, and he has done nothing with the inherited Toppenish Creek allotment for "four or five years" and cannot "understand where all the time had gone" (SA 65).

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[96] For more information on the Bureau of Reclamation's transformation of the Yakima Valley see: W. Thomas White, "Main Street on the Irrigation Frontier: Sub-Urban Community Building in the Yakima Valley, 1900-1910," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 77 (July 1986): 94-103; G. Thomas Edwards, "'The Early Morning of Yakima's Days of Greatness': The Yakima County Agricultural Boom of 1905-1911," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 73 (April 1982): 78-89; and Dorothy Zeisler-Vralsted, "Hydraulic Cities: The Urbanization of the Mid-Columbia Plateau," in *Change in the American West: Exploring the Human Dimension.* Stephen Tchudi, ed., (Reno, NV: U of Nevada P, 1996): 106-126.

The complexity of Waite's dilemma is increased by numerous phone calls he receives from an "old Indian" neighbor named Joseph Eagle, a man who lives on a "government allotment" that borders Waite's untenanted Toppenish Creek property (SA 60). Joseph Eagle calls each time white hunters are spotted on the land. The phone calls have become routine and as the story opens, Waite receives another, marking "the third or fourth time this winter" he has been called to run trespassers off the reservation (SA 60). Waite has grown so annoyed with the hunters and nagging calls of Joseph Eagle that he considers leasing the land to "one of the duck clubs from Toppenish. Or Yakima," places owned and operated by whites who insist on violating federal policies (SA 72).[97]

The popularity of waterfowl hunting in the Yakima Valley was well documented in a promotional film of 1967 titled *A Land Called Yakima*, a project that was produced by the Greater Yakima Area Chamber of Commerce at nearly the same time Carver wrote "Sixty Acres." According to the narrator, there were once property skirmishes between whites and Indians during the Yakima War (1855-1858), but today everyone honors the treaty of 1855 and lives in a state of "good will and understanding" (Brown, *A Land*). As the documentary continues, however, all signs of the Yakama Nation fade and are replaced by images of white hunters who track migratory birds throughout the valley's irrigated wetlands, following an "irresistible voice" that leads them into fields with loaded guns (Brown, *A Land*). The promotional film -- designed to lure prospective tourists, hunters, and homeowners into the region -- fails to mention that the 1855 treaty, the subsequent years of warfare, and the federal reclamation of land and waterways has systematically displaced and marginalized the Yakama Nation. By the end of the film, the region is merely a simulated landscape of hollow nationalism and consumer

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[97] The leasing of reservation land is a problematic economic option that many members of the Yakama Nation have exercised. When the federal government legalized the leasing of reservation allotments in 1891, only a "few" whites engaged in contracts; however, by 1928, "the number of leases had risen to 957, covering, 57,763 acres" of reservation property (Leibhardt 96).

commerce, a region that claims to be "real without a referent to an actual tribal remembrance" (Vizenor 8).

Although a work of fiction, "Sixty Acres" presents readers with an historically and geographically accurate account of the Yakima Valley's ongoing conflicts over land and water during the early 1960s. In Carver's story, Lee Waite knows that the 1855 treaty between the U.S. Government and the Yakamas stipulates that anyone "from Toppenish or Yakima could drive the reservation roads like anyone else; they just weren't allowed to hunt" (SA 60, see also Kappler 699). Waite respects the terms of the treaty, but the local white hunters -- like the men from the film *A Land Called Yakima* -- cannot resist the temptation of his Toppenish Creek land. At one point, Carver replicates the language and imagery of the promotional film by telling readers that white hunters "cruise by" Waite's "irresistible sixty acres" two or three times before parking their trucks and grabbing their guns (SA 60). Then, like the hunters in the film, they creep through "knee-deep barley and wild oats . . . maybe getting some ducks, maybe not, but always doing a lot of shooting in the little time before they cleared out" (SA 60-61; Brown, *A Land*).

Carver's knowledge of conflicts between Indians and whites in the Yakima Valley was informed by his own experiences as a trespassing hunter and long time inhabitant of the region. According to Carol Sklenicka, when Carver was about sixteen, he asked Frank Sandmeyer, a family friend "to take him down into the Yakima Indian Reservation. They didn't have the permit from the tribe required to hunt there, but cut across the fields toward Toppenish Creek just as the poachers do in Carver's story 'Sixty Acres'" (30-31). In fact, while growing up in the Yakima Valley, one of the most heavily irrigated regions in the United States, Carver spent much of his youth "hunting ducks and geese and upland game" and as he explains in an interview "that's what excited me in those days, hunting and fishing. That's what made a dent in my emotional life and that's what I wanted to write about" (Gentry and Stull 33).

Carver's interest in hunting permeates his early prose and poetry, which often reads as loosely veiled autobiography. A short story titled "Distance," for example, tells of a young couple, "kids themselves" who "were crazy in love." Like Carver and Maryann, these teenagers got married and "not all that long afterwards they had a daughter" who was born in winter, "during a severe cold spell that just happened to coincide with the peak of waterfowl season in that part of the country. The boy loved to hunt, you see, that's part of it" (*Fires* 31). Moreover, in a poem titled "Prosser," Carver pays tribute to the town irrigated by the Sunnyside Canal (1890), where fields "reach to the river" and migrating geese pause to eat "shattered wheat" and sometimes "die for it" (*All of Us* 75, 33). For over one hundred years, Prosser has continued to reap the benefits of the Bureau of Reclamation's "interlaced fingers of irrigation ditches" that push "back the desert with the magical touch of water," but as "Sixty Acres" continues, Carver sets to work documenting the socio-economic disparity between those living in irrigated communities and Native Americans on the Yakama Indian Reservation (Corning 302).

In "Sixty Acres," the Bureau of Reclamation's vision of agrarian prosperity proves to be a bankrupt, at least for Yakama farmers such as Lee Waite. Carver communicates the economic disparity between the Yakamas and local white farmers by focusing on the size of Waite's house, land, and farming equipment, possessions that suggest anything but prosperity or a commitment to agricultural productivity. After a century of treaty-making and the elimination of land and water rights, Waite is depicted as "a small thin man with a thin face" who lives in a "small house" with a "crowded" porch (SA 60, 70, 61). Neighboring white farmers have invested in modern agricultural technologies, but Waite farms with "old yokes and harnesses" and "a row of rusted hand tools" (SA 60-63, 70). In this regard, he represents historical members of the Yakama Nation, who, as Donald J. Pisani explains, "resisted commercial farming because they lacked the machines needed to clear the sagebrush, level the fields, and plow and harvest them" (183).

Waite's problems are compounded by the fact that his farm and house barely meet the needs of his growing family. Two children sleep in one room, while Waite and his wife, Nina, share another attached room with his mother. In the summer, the couple sleeps outside, but most of the time "there was never a place to go," and even when Waite steps outside, he feels squeezed by a "low ceiling of heavy clouds pressing down on everything" (SA 71, 63). While such descriptions are certainly fictional, they are consistent with the socio-economic circumstances faced by Native Americans who lived on the Yakama Reservation during the early 1960s. In 1962, for example, roughly the same time period as Carver's story, the average family income of members of the Yakama Nation was "about one-half that of non-Indian families living on or in proximity of the Reservation" (*A Primer* 3).

The Bureau of Reclamation's vision of allotment farming and agrarian economics depended upon the equitable distribution water, a resource that has been continually withheld from Yakama Nation. As Pisani explains, Yakama Indians such as the fictional Lee Waite, received "most of their [water] supply early in the irrigation season, when the Yakima River ran full. For that reason, they were restricted to low-value crops such as alfalfa" (192). While well-irrigated lands outside the reservation reaped the benefits of water reclamation, "the Yakima seldom grew sugar beets, hops, or fruit, and the alfalfa was used to feed cattle, not sold outside the reservation" (192). In Carver's version of the Yakima Valley, Waite is something of an anomaly, for he does farm sugar beets, however, without much success. When he stands on a make-shift porch, added on just before World War II, he surveys "the wavy flatness of sugar-beet fields" and "an inch or two of grainy snow," all of which gave a "foolish look to the stripped rows of beanpoles in front of the house" (SA 63). Indeed, in the farm's present condition, the few beet sacks that Waite does keep around are more useful for claiming ducks from trespassing white hunters or covering the broken windows of his dilapidated porch than reaping anything close to a bountiful harvest (SA 69).

Figure 29. Yakama Farmer Irrigating an Alfalfa Field, c. 1950. Yakima Valley Regional Library. No. 2002-851-373.

Interestingly, when the circumstances of Carver's own life at the University of Iowa are read alongside Lee Waite's marginal and cramped condition as a struggling farmer, striking similarities emerge, suggesting that Carver was attempting to offer a realistic portrayal of the Yakama Reservation while also grafting his own socio-economic anxieties into Waite's existence as a culturally and economically marginalized Native American in the 1960s. Carver's year at the University of Iowa was a time of disappointment. He felt ostracized by the Writers' Workshop, "wasn't very productive" and "didn't put much work up" (Gentry and Stull 10). Feelings of rejection were compounded when the Writers' Workshop failed to renew Carver's financial aid after the first year. Raymond and Maryann, like Nina and Lee Waite, were already struggling to provide for two children in a house that felt more like a prison than a home. In fact, the student housing Maryann Burk Carver remembers sounds like a replication of the Waite

family home, a place of incarceration with useless windows, small rooms, inadequate heating and splintery kitchen shelves (see SA 60, 73). As Maryann recalls:

> [At the University of Iowa] the housing for married students was in converted Quonset huts, relics of World War II. I sat on our double bed, deposited in the living room, and looked at the cement floors and the high little windows. There was a small heater that smelled of oil fumes. I felt incarcerated. In the kitchen the cupboards were open, bare, splintering. (Maryann Carver 170)

These similarities suggest that Carver, much like Gary Snyder and Ken Kesey, was "playing Indian" by "reinterpreting the intuitive dilemmas surrounding Indian-ness" and then grafting the social and economic plight of Native Americans onto anxieties that he faced at the same time (Deloria 5). As Philip J. Deloria explains, "by the 1950s, detachment, alienation, and anomie had become popular culture buzzwords" and from the perspective of many mid-century writers, Native Americans, more than any other cultural group, were supposedly able to understand and empathize with the social marginalization felt by white American males (130).

In 1964, during a lonely and isolated winter in Iowa City, Carver struggled to write without the paternal encouragement and guidance of mentors such as John Gardner and Dick Day and fabricated a marginalized guide, a young Yakama Indian, who, like himself, was contemplating an uncertain future within a cold and cramped place of social and economic confinement. Carver, as well as the character he created, both lived out expectations to produce work for a judgmental society. In Lee Waite's case, the federal government attempted to convert "Indian people into Jeffersonian farmers by breaking up communal landholdings and allotting parcels to individual owners" (Deloria 104). In this system of allotment economics, initiated by the 1887 Dawes Act, non-Indians were expected to be "neighborly role models" that could teach Indians how "to disappear as discrete social groups and exist only as individuals" (Deloria 104). In contrast, while studying at Iowa, Carver *wanted* to be recognized as an individual; however, when his so-called pessimistic view of society failed to match the expectations of the workshop and

its reigning administrators, he was expected to alter his voice and become a productive participant in "a shallow conformism that turned [white] individuals into automatons" (Deloria 130). But Carver, who was not willing "to play the game and placate the professor," chose to walk away from the system and reestablish his identity elsewhere (Maryann Carver 173). The Carvers left the workshop and returned to the West Coast, where Raymond worked at several odd jobs in California before the coupled filed bankruptcy in 1967. Of course, the tribes and bands of the Yakama Nation were facing a more problematic future, being historically and geographically woven into version of federal exploitation that marginalized Columbia River Indians through the reclamation of land and waterways.

The history of Euro-American settlement and reclamation of the Yakima Valley is enmeshed in the geographical markers that Carver references throughout "Sixty Acres." After receiving word of white trespassing hunters on his Toppenish Creek property, Lee Waite grabs a shotgun, gets in his pickup, and prepares to confront them. Along the way, he passes Fort Simcoe and the history of white colonization weights heavy on his mind. Prior to white occupation, the land at Fort Simcoe was an indigenous, seasonal camp near a trail that led to Celilo Falls, a salmon fishing site that was used by the Yakamas and other Mid-Columbia River Indians for at least ten thousand years. When the Yakima War broke out in 1855, the U.S. military claimed the land and constructed Fort Simcoe in order to ensure safety during eruptions of violence. After the war ended, the fort became an Indian Boarding School, where Yakama children were housed and taught principles of allotment farming and domestic economies (Daugherty 77). By the 1960s, when "Sixty Acres" is set, whites had leased the land and transformed Fort Simcoe into a state park, an expression of regionalized nationalism, designed to tell the history of the white and Indian relations as well as the settlement of the Yakima Valley (*Primer* 3).

The producers of *A Land Called Yakima* (1967) similarly promoted the cultural importance of Fort Simcoe by celebrating its status as a museum and as host of the

Yakima Valley's annual Flag Day Ceremony. In the late 1960s, political dignitaries from the region re-enacted history by riding into the historic fort by stagecoach, while Yakama Indians banged their drums in full regalia and soldiers fired canons and paraded the nation's colors in military formation. But as the film's narrator reminds modern viewers, the days of the Yakima War are over. Now, when the dust settles after the performance, white and Native American leaders can sit cross-legged in a circle and "smoke the peace pipe to affirm their mutual friendship and to acknowledge the pride and dignity of the Yakama Indian Nation" (Brown, *A Land*).

Figure 30. Fort Simcoe Flag Day Celebration, 1964. Yakima Valley Regional Library. No. 2002-850-559

As Waite drives by Fort Simcoe State Park, however, alternative histories surface, particularly as he recalls the time a childhood teacher took his class on a "field trip" to the Fort Simcoe museum. He stayed home that day and has "never bothered to stop" to

see the facility up close. In Waite's eyes, the "reconstructed palisade" with "white-painted tops" has become a glaring reminder of trespassing whites, failed negotiations, and bloodshed (SA 64). In fact, Waite encounters whiteness everywhere he goes -- the whiteness of grainy snow in his fields, the white tops of museum buildings, and the whiteness of trespassing hunters. Even the road he travels, "Lateral B," is a nagging reminder of white farmers and the miles of irrigation ditches that keep him economically squeezed onto a reservation (SA 64). After considering the present in light of the colonial past, Waite leaves his own mark on history as he drives by Fort Simcoe: "he rolled down the window and cleared his throat, hawked it at the gate as he passed" (SA 64). Although Waite wants to undermine white history and influence on the Yakama Reservation, he is, quite literally, spitting into the wind.

After reaching the trespassing hunters on his Toppenish Creek property, Waite steps out of his pickup and finds that local and national expressions of whiteness have become part of his own identity. Moments before he confronts the white hunters, he remembers the day his brother Jimmy was killed and an "enormous figure of a man in a cowboy hat and wearing a gun – the deputy sheriff – fill[ed] the doorway" of his home to deliver the news (SA 66). Now, like the local sheriff, Waite finds himself packing an "old double-barrel" shotgun and pocket full of shells (SA 61). When he confronts the white trespassers, he emerges from the brush and speaks in the voice of a federal lawman, which "sounded strange to him, light, insubstantial" (SA 67). Here the "light" sound of his voice has more to do with shades of ethnicity than vocal volume. Waite discovers the trespassers are two teenage boys. He continues to imitate the ways of a western lawman, but with one considerable difference: this time an Indian drives the pickup and carries the shotgun. On this occasion, Waite has come to serve justice and claim what is rightfully by driving the white trespassers "off the land" (SA 69). Carver writes:

> Not moving, trying to keep his voice steady, Waite said, "Stand there. Put your guns right there on the ground." He edged out of

> the trees and faced them, raised and lowered his gun barrels. "Take off them coats now and empty them out." (SA 67)

Firing off a rapid series of questions at each boy, Waite attempts to learn their identities while keeping them at gunpoint in the glare of headlights. The boys respond with obvious lies, which bring about conflicting feelings in Waite.

Face to face with the whiteness that has forced him into an existence as a marginal farmer, the historical and geographical weight of treaty-making and unjust water rights floods his mind. No longer willing to accept lies or take part in this ironic inversion of cowboys and Indians, rage erupts from his body and for a moment the violence that western white society fears most appears imminent:

> "You're lying!" [Waite] said, shocking himself. "Why you lying to me? You come onto my land and shoot my ducks and then you lie like hell to me!" He laid the gun over the car door to steady the barrels. He could hear the branches rubbing in the treetops . . .
>
> "All right, all right," Waite said. "Liars! Just stand there, liars." He walked stiffly around to his truck and got out an old beet sack, shook it open, had them put all the ducks in that. When he stood still, waiting, his knees unaccountably began to shake. (SA 68–69)

In this scene, placing the shotgun in Waite's angry hands, Carver has resurrected a deep Euro-American anxiety, the fear that the supposedly reservation-bound Indian will somehow break free from his "fenced" land, reacquaint himself with savagism, and rise up to claim what is rightfully his (Fiedler 24). This terror surfaces in the pleadings of the two white hunters, who can say little more than "O God!" and beg for mercy upon their "word of honor" (SA 67, 68). Only now, as Waite can understand, the promises of treaty-making are bankrupt and the trespassing boys fear their own blood will momentarily redeem the sins of white treaty-making fathers -- men such as Washington Territory Governor Isaac Stevens (1853-1857) and Superintendent of Indian Affairs Joel Palmer (1853-1857).

The young white trespassers in "Sixty Acres" are mischievous and terrified teenagers who are old enough to drive, but find themselves sobbing like children before

an angry, but strangely paternal Yakama Indian. This is not by chance. As Deloria explains, there is a long cultural history that identifies Indians with children, “the two being paired rhetorically” as figures who are “natural, simple, naïve, preliterate, and devoid of self-consciousness” (106). This ideological correlation between children and Native Americans is played out under the assumption that young white males revel in wilderness and savagery, hunting and fishing, lawbreaking and border-crossing while their more civilized fathers; who can no longer participate in such activities, can only reflect upon primal behaviors with a sense of longing and nostalgia. In Carver’s story, Waite’s desire for retributive violence fades rather quickly -- as soon as he sees something of himself in the young, white trespassers. In his younger days, Waite, like the white trespassers, loved to hunt and “trap this part of the creek for muskrat and set night-lines for German brown” (SA 65). After linking the hunters to a seemingly purer state of his own past, Waite convinces himself that the boys were just “kids” who loved to hunt, young explorers who lied to him only because were “afraid” (SA 68). Carver may have used the trespassers in the story to reflect upon days when he would “fish and hunt and ride around in cars with other guys” of the Yakima Valley; however, the encounter between Waite and the boys also articulates a longstanding linkage between nationalist assumptions between Native American men and social evolutions of white masculinity (Gentry and Stull 114).

After parting ways with the two boys, Lee Waite drives back to his farm and considers the possibility of leasing the Toppenish Creek property to a local hunting club. Two of his friends have leased land for extra income, and Waite suspects his property, “some of the best hunting ground in the valley,” might earn him an extra thousand dollars a year (SA 72). Upon returning home, he pumps a cup of water from the sink and warms himself at the small woodstove. However, before he can introduce the idea of leasing the land to his wife and mother, Waite catches a glimpse of something from a forgotten -- but very recent past. At this juncture, a gill net and spear radically alter the emotional and

psychological trajectory of the story. On the wall behind the woodstove, Waite sees something "sticking out from the shelf, the brown mesh of a gill net wrapped around prongs of a salmon spear," objects that he "squinted at," seemingly unable to remember what they were used for or where they came from (SA 71).

The spear and net that Waite barely recognizes are fishing tools traditionally used by the Yakamas and other Mid-Columbia River tribes at Celilo Falls before the building of The Dalles Dam in 1957. Recent oral histories from members of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla, and Nez Perce reservations, together with literary records such as Carver's early story, testify to the importance of spear and dip net fishing at Celilo Falls, offering an historical and geographical context for Lee Waite's attraction to these ceremonial and economic tools. Allen V. Pinkham, Sr., a Nez Perce Indian, who lived on the Yakama Reservation for several years, tells of childhood memories from the 1950s, when men and women still harvested salmon at the falls. As he remembers, "the air at the falls . . . would be filled with three or four salmon jumping at the same time. . . . The men at Chinook Rock would be catching salmon at nearly every dip of their nets. The men at the hanging scaffolds just below the falls would be catching two or three fish at a time when the fish ran heavy" (588). Likewise, Wilbur Slockish, Jr., a member of the Yakama Nation, who was recently interviewed by the Oregon Historical Society, recalls watching his father spear salmon "that weighed up to 100 lbs" (Jackson and Slockish Jr. 713-714). For centuries, Celilo Falls was the most important and productive salmon fishing site for tribes and bands of the Yakama, Warm Springs, Umatilla and Nez Perce Indians. As Pisani explains, the Yakamas are among the many cultural groups who depended upon this place. While the nearby proximity of the Yakima River provided tribes with trout and freshwater mussels along with salmon, "the region's largest fisheries were on the Columbia at Celilo Falls" (182).

After federal approval for the construction of The Dalles Dam was secured in 1950, the Army Corps of Engineers dynamited numerous river channels in order to make

the site conducive to large-scale reclamation efforts. *The Dalles Chronicle,* a local newspaper, reported that in 1952, during one of the largest explosions, "sturgeon killed by the underwater blast floated to the water's surface" (qtd in Barber, *DCF* 126). A poem by Carver, titled "The Sturgeon" (1967), alludes to such an event. After recalling sturgeon stories from his youth, Carver refers to a 1951 article about Celilo Falls, a time characterized by federal dynamiting and a dead sturgeon:

> This particular specimen
> --I am quoting –
> was killed in the exploratory dynamiting
> that went on in the summer of 1951
> at Celilo Falls on the Columbia River. (*All of Us* 254) [98]

Such allusions indicate that Carver was well aware of the construction of The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls, for "Sixty Acres" and "The Sturgeon" were drafted just a few years after the falls were flooded. As Sklenicka explains, the poem illustrates his rather "ironic" reading of the "dark oddities" of the federal reclamation process, where a "strange kind of exploration" goes about killing something magnificent "left over from another world" (62, *All of Us* 253). More than likely, Carver sensed that the loss of Celilo Falls was a dividing point in Pacific Northwest ecological and cultural history, an event that Yakama and Umatilla journalist, Richard LaCourse, has called "the darkest day in the common psychological history of the tribe" (qtd. in Ulrich 80).

Given Raymond Carver's awareness of lived experience in the Yakima Valley during the 1950s and 1960s, it is not surprising that "Sixty Acres" documents the psychological trauma that Yakama Indians have suffered since the inundation of Celilo Falls. After Waite sees the salmon spear and net behind the stove, he turns to his mother,

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[98] "The Sturgeon" is a rather obscure poem from Carver's early days as a writer. It was originally published in *Ball State University Forum* (Autumn 1967). Years later, William L. Stull included the poem in an edited volume of Carver's early work titled *Those Days* (1987), a limited edition chapbook that gathers most of Carver's uncollected early work from 1960-1976. Stull suspects that most of the poems in the collection were "written between the fall of 1966, when Carver joined a poetry workshop led by Dennis Schmitz at Sacramento State College, and the fall of 1968, when his first book, *Near Klamath,* was published by the college English club" (25).

a character whose “cryptic presence looms like judgment over the Waite household” (Saltzman 38). More than anything else, this elderly woman exudes cold silence, so much so, that Waite “was sure she had something wrong with her . . . sometimes she went two days without saying something, just sitting in the other room by the window and staring off up the valley” (SA 62). Although there is no explicit indication that Waite’s mother stares “off up the valley” to mourn the death of Celilo Falls, Waite does connect her with images of water, not only through the salmon spear and net, but through her ability to make him “shiver” in response to her cold stare (SA 62). Indeed, each time Waite looks at the spear and net, he turns back to his mother, who, like the inundated falls, torments him with a cold and haunting silence

Recent poetry and oral histories about Celilo Falls illustrate how the silence of this once vibrant place can evoke profound psychological distress for Native Americans who continue to frequent the inundated site. Ed Edmo, a poet who grew up in Celilo Village and remembers the day it flooded, is continually reminded of complex sounds and silences from the past. In a poem titled “There Has Been Something,” he describes hearing fragments of “a song” or “a whisper” and “other times weeping,” all of which cause him believe that something profound “has disappeared / from my mother earth” (*These Few* 5). But sometimes, in other unexpected and unpredictable moments, the sounds from Celilo Falls come roaring back, as indicated by unpunctuated and descending cascades of his free-flowing poetry:

> i’m not sure what it was
> but
>   sometimes at night
>   i can hear it in the wind
>   or
>   it comes to me
>   in my dreams
>   like
>   the smell of salmon
>   cooking (5)

For Pinkham, a man who graduated from Toppenish High School in 1956, the same year Carver earned his diploma from nearby Yakima, the silence of Celilo Falls has been more problematic to encounter. On several occasions, he has stopped at the inundated falls, only to find such moments too difficult to bear. He explains:

> The silence [at Celilo Falls] is a terrible thing to experience. There are no sounds of mothers and grandmothers cooking or washing dishes after a meal. . . . No sounds of mothers and daughters cutting salmon and eels to dry for winter storage and use. No sounds of men chopping wood for cooking or smoke-drying at the old village site. No sounds of children running, playing, and shouting at each other. (592)

In Carver's attempt to re-create the torment of loss caused by the inundated site, Waite is haunted by the silence of his mother's cold and watery presence. He looks at her -- connects her with the spear and net -- but suppresses thoughts of salmon fishing and the loss of the falls. However, by this point, the physical presence of these tools has pulled Waite's mind into a flood of memories. Torn between the past and present, he turns to his wife, Nina, and says: "I was thinking maybe I'll lease out that land down there to the hunting clubs. No good to us down there like that. Is it? Our house was down there or it was our land right out here in front would be something different, right?" (SA 72). The uncertainty of Waite's fractured syntax is answered by "wood snapping in the stove" and "silence" -- sounds that mark past and present -- the remembrance of salmon cooking and the inundation of Celilo Falls, not to mention the volatile cracking of his own nerves (SA 72).

As the story continues, the mere articulation of leasing the land to white hunters sends Lee Waite into a state of physical and psychological instability. His eyes return to the spear and net and his body begins enacting the labor of migrating salmon with a "pulse" that starts "jumping in his arms" (SA 72). All the while, Waite's mother follows him with "narrowed" eyes, the geographical descriptor for the numerous narrows and channels that characterized the topography of Celilo Falls before its inundation (SA

73).[99] With sounds and images of the past bearing down upon him, Waite steps forward to reclaim the tools of a forgotten past:

> He reached up, worked the spear and the mass of netting off the splintery shelf, and turned around behind [his mother's] chair. He looked at the tiny dark head, at the brown woolen shawl shaped smooth over the hunched shoulders. He turned the spear in his hands and began to unwrap the netting. (SA 73)

By now, however, Nina's thoughts are spinning in a more immediate current. She ponders the idea of leasing the acreage, but is concerned that they will lose possession of the property. Waite hears her words, but is now clinging to fragments of a place that has been allocated, dispersed, and consumed by whites. Once again, he finds himself enraged:

> "… it's still my land!" He went over to [Nina] and leaned across the table. "Don't you know the difference, Nina? They can't *buy* land on the reservation. Don't you know that? I will lease it to them for them to use." … "Don't you understand?" he said. He gripped the table edge. "It is a lease!" (SA 73-74)

Not knowing what else to do, Nina poses a final question that tips her husband into a roaring state of turmoil. She asks, "What will Mama say? . . . Will it be all right?" In response, Waite looks closely at his mother who "seemed to be sleeping," symbolic of the death of Celilo Falls and a shift from one way of life to another (SA 74).

Carver's attempt to portray the death of Celilo Falls as loss of a maternal presence is by no means unusual in Pacific Northwest literature. Elizabeth Woody, a poet and enrolled member of Warm Springs reservation, claims that Celilo Falls "was like a mother, nourishing us" through the cyclical rhythms of life, death, and regeneration (*Seven Hands* 67). In Woody's case, the nurturing presence of the falls was murdered two years before she was born, which left her to learn about this place "much as an orphan lives hearing of the kindness and greatness of his or her mother" ("Recalling

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[99] For more on the narrows and channels of Celilo Falls, see the following: Pat Courtney Gold, "The Long Narrows: The Forgotten Geographic and Cultural Wonder," *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 108.4 (Winter 2007): 596-605.

Celilo" 10). In a similar way, Annie Lou Alexander, a member of the Yakama Nation, remembers that when the falls were drowned, her mother and father mourned as though "a close relative had died" (2). But perhaps the most well-known representation of Celilo Falls as maternal presence is found in Craig Lesley's novel *Winterkill* (1984). In Lesley's account of the inundation, the gates of The Dalles Dam closed on the morning of March 10, 1957, but "it didn't seem to make much difference" (179). Then, later in "the afternoon, you could tell the water was rising. A large pool of it stretched all across the river and started eddying back toward the falls. But the falls kept on roaring as if nothing could stop them" (180). When the lake reached the base of the falls, photographers gathered to capture the last images of ancient history. Then, as Lesley explains, everyone -- tourists, photographers, and Indians -- were all shaken by the sound of a "high wail" that was "even louder than the roar of the falls" (180). The Celilo elders "turned their backs to the rising water" and were offering a death chant (180). The "wailing" grew louder until a "shriek" completed the murderous act of inundation. An old chief left the ceremony weeping and told an onlooker, "We sold our mother, and now they have drowned her" (180).[100]

In "Sixty Acres," the recent death of Celilo Falls determines Lee Waite's decision to lease the Toppenish Creek property to a white hunting club. However, as Waite and Nina plan to release the land -- the physical and psychological foundation their people have stood on for centuries -- Waite loses his footing and slides into a roaring current of buried emotions. He attempts to "steady himself" and regain balance, but "his legs began to tremble and he leaned against the wall. He rested there and let his weight slide gently

[100] Lesley's account of the inundation of Celilo Falls is consistent with numerous historical reports of the event. Carol Craig, a member of the Yakama Nation, describes the event like this: "When the fatal day occurred on March 10, 1957, some of the people at the village did not want to witness the drowning and left. Others could be heard wailing at the village with loud moans and crying. Some stood on the hillside, dressed in their regalia, pounding the drums, singing, praying, crying, and mourning the loss of the falls" (701).

down the wall until he was squatting" (SA 74). He reminds himself that it is only a lease, but even as he does the ground below him turns fluid and "seemed to slant his direction; it seemed to move" (SA 74). As this flood from the recent past approaches, Waite allows himself to be enveloped by water and at that point "thought to cup his palms, so that there would come that roaring, like the wind howling up from a seashell" (SA 74).

There is no critical discussion on the unusual acoustic imagery found in the final lines of "Sixty Acres," but the combined references to roaring water and the desire for stability make complete sense when contextualized alongside historical accounts of sound at Celilo Falls. Before the falls were flooded, the geography of this site was defined by The Long Narrows, a five-mile stretch of channels that "narrowed" from approximately 1,000 feet to 180 feet in width, producing a compressed flow of water five times greater than that of Niagara Falls (SA 73, Gold 596). Not surprisingly, the rapid funneling of water produced a tremendous "roaring and churning," the auditory presence that Waite calls upon in the closing moments of the story (Gold 596). Native American oral histories almost always comment on the steady and totalizing roar that came from Celilo Falls. Ron Halfmoon, a Umatilla Indian, remembers, "The roar of the river was everywhere: the roar and the mist, the roar of the falls" (in Landeen and Pinkham 66). In a similar way, Leroy Seth, a member of the Nez Perce tribe, believes he "can still hear the roar of those falls today" (in Landeen and Pinkham 65). For all of these people, the dependable sound of Celilo Falls exists only in memory, and a memories of that "roaring" is exactly what Lee Waite conjures as the watery ground of the past approaches to inundate him (SA 74).

Reading "Sixty Acres" alongside histories of land and water rights on the Yakama Reservation provides numerous insights into ways the Yakama Nation has been socio-economically and emotionally undermined by utilitarian visions of treaty-making, unjust irrigation practices, and the overwhelming loss of Celilo Falls. After the initial success of the Bureau of Reclamation in the Yakima Valley throughout the early-twentieth century,

the New Deal and Reclamation Act of 1939 propelled the Columbia River Basin into a thirty-year period of hydroelectric transformation that radically altered the socio-economic and environmental fabric of the Pacific Northwest. As legal and environmental historian Charles F. Wilkinson explains, the problematic signs and artifacts of this historical vision are everywhere:

> In the entire Columbia watershed, there are now seventy-nine hydroelectric projects with a capacity of 15,000 megawatts or more. Thirty of these are federal dams, which collectively comprise the federal Columbia River Power System. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Throughout the basin, counting dams for irrigation and other purposes, there are more than 450 dams, many of which have no fish passage facilities. The Columbia and Snake rivers have become the most highly developed river system in the world, supplying more than 80 percent of the Northwest's electrical energy. (198)

In the wake of New Deal progressivism, Carver, the son of a Great Depression laborer who worked on the Grand Coulee Dam, used Lee Waite to tell another side of the reclamation story, one that exposes the repercussions of exploitation masked as progress.

This is not to say that "Sixty Acres" presents readers with an ideal account of land and water rights on the Yakama Reservation. Like all literary representations, Carver's engagement with people and place illuminates some historical realities, while also manipulating others in order to satisfy his own anxieties and apprehensions. There is no escaping, for example, that Carver wrote "Sixty Acres" during a lonely winter in Iowa City, a time when he felt his own identity threatened by a swift current that might swallow him forever. It is perhaps for this reason that Carver leaves Lee Waite clinging to rocks of the past, even as the waters of utilitarian progress rise to pull him into a watery grave. As readers, we are led to believe that Waite will soon be washed away and drowned by waters of progress, but this is a problematic conclusion, particularly when we consider the words of Elsie David, a Yakama woman who offers a commentary on the resilience of the Yakama Nation: "I read a lot in books, you know, that [Indians] used to

do this or they used to do that or they had this -- a lot of wording is in the past tense and I just think, geez, do they think Indians just fell off the face of the earth or what?" (654). Such reflections are a potent reminder about problematic assumptions concerning the so-called erasure of Native Americans. When it's all said and done, the washing away of Yakama Indians such as Lee Waite may offer contemporary readers a dramatic sense of narrative closure, but this sort of thing is more in keeping with Carver's own youthful self-pity, and perhaps our own, than with the determination and resilience of the actual tribes and bands of the Yakama Nation.

As this chapter on The Dalles Dam and the inundation of Celilo Falls argues, the literary history of the Pacific Northwest can only be understood when the highly specific historic and geographic environments that shaped the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin are placed at the center of interpretive inquiry. By reading some of the very early work of Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey and Raymond Carver in relation to The Dalles Dam and inundation of Celilo Falls, longstanding interpretive assumptions about all three writers are exposed as limited. However, when we return to the Columbia River Basin and the places where Snyder, Kesey and Carver were intimately connected, cultural mythologies concerning authorship, writing styles, and over simplified accusations of white colonialism erode, leaving space for environmentally and socio-economically informed readings that link white working class labor history and white countercultural identity formation to the marginalization of Columbia River Indians. The traumatic drowning of Celilo Falls became a catalyst for countercultural responses to the federal reclamation of the Columbia River during the 1950s and 1960s; moving forward, we now turn to ways the historic and geographic reference points of the federally managed watershed have continued to define the literary voice and bioregional identity of the Pacific Northwest from the 1970s to the present.

CHAPTER IV:
BIOREGIONAL POETICS:
LOCAL HISTORIES AND THE LIVING LINES OF WATERSHED RECLAMATION, 1970s-2009

In 1956, a Midwesterner named Oral Bullard settled down in Portland, Oregon, thrilled to live near "the Columbia River and the Salmon," two elements of nature he "had learned to love" since moving to the Pacific Northwest a few years earlier (Bullard 9). Growing up in Kansas during the 1930s, Bullard fantasized about heading West, not to California like the rest of his high school peers, but to the great Columbia River, a place famous for its rushing waters and salmon. Shortly after moving to Portland, however, he made a trip to Bonneville Dam Visitor Center and was "deeply disturbed" to find slack water and a disproportionate "ratio of human visitors to the number of salmon passing upstream" (Bullard 9). A local book publisher by trade, Bullard returned to his Portland office, expecting that local writers would soon submit manuscripts on the "current issues" and "problems of the river," but after waiting for nearly a decade, he set to work on the project himself (Bullard 10). He travelled throughout the Pacific Northwest, interviewing conservationists, fish biologists and dam builders in order to trace more than forty years of state and federal legislation that had transformed the complex ecology of the watershed.

Working as an amateur historian, Bullard's interviews and mapmaking led to *Crisis on the Columbia* (1968), the first locally published monograph to explicitly challenge the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin. The book opens with a heart-felt plea for active local resistance against all future attempts to restrain the river with hydroelectric dams built to serve federal agendas. Noting the need to root future action in the recovery of forgotten histories, Bullard writes:

> Only through awareness of what has been, and what is, can ordinary men such as me raise their voices to challenge or to encourage the decisions that are to be made in the years ahead. My purpose has been to create such an awareness; the reader may find further purpose for himself in the pages that follow. Above all, I should hope that no more development is made on the Columbia in the climate of uniformed benevolency that agencies of the Federal

> Government have created in the past four decades. The sacrifices have been too great. (Bullard 10)

The most provocative aspect of Bullard's investigation of the declining health of the Columbia River is his inability to find language to articulate a vision of restoring the watershed's ecological and social health. He seems to have lacked the words. On several occasions, Bullard calls himself a "conservationist," yet is ultimately uncomfortable with the term and would like to find another (100). And rightly so. As Marc Reisner observes in *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (1986), on the eastern side of the hundredth meridian, conservation "usually means protecting rivers," but in the West where the Bureau of Reclamation manages western waterways in seventeen arid and semi-arid states, "water flows uphill toward money" and conservation "means building dams" to restrict and distribute water for irrigation and hydropower (12, see Fig. I.1.).

While researching the history of the Columbia River since the Great Depression, Bullard came to grips with the deep ironies of federal conservation efforts and wanted to disassociate from the movement, but in 1968, lacked the language and nuanced ideological framework to articulate a plan to revise federal policies. He acknowledged that the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration would likely continue to manage the watershed, but he also insisted that economic and ecological engagements with the river must be realigned and balanced with input from local communities, rather than left solely to the discretion of officials who were "conserving" the mainline river for hydroelectric projects that had already damaged the ecological health of the watershed and generated poverty and despair in many areas. He writes:

> The problem is that not a great many people are actively *for* conservation . . . for conservation efforts require time, effort, and money. Thus there is a certain irony in the fact that the bulk of conservation work being done on the Columbia is by government agencies, financed by either national or state governments. So the government, which is the prime mover in all destruction by making

> the means of destruction possible, manages also to be, basically in favor of conservation. (Bullard 100)

Bullard's critical history of federal uses of the watershed, compounded by a desire to rally local groups toward acts of social and ecological renewal, indicates his intellectual and political leaning toward bioregional theory and practice. Although the word was not yet current or well-defined, by the 1970s it was being practiced by West Coast activists, writers, artists, and biologists, who were committed to revising watershed policies and restoring the ecological health of damaged western waterways -- their plant, animal, and human communities.

At first glance, the term "bioregionalist" appears to be misapplied to Oral Bullard, particularly given that in 1968 the term "bioregion" was not even in circulation. Moreover, the historical and geographical roots of bioregionalism as a cultural and environmental movement are not usually traced to Oregon and Washington, but rather to northern California. Indeed, as historian Dan Flores explains, the "genesis" of bioregionalism apparently begins in the 1970s with the "California counterculture and back to the land prophets," activists, biologists, and writers who addressed issues of watershed health in publications such as *The Whole Earth Catalog* (est. 1968), *Planet Drum* (est. 1973), and *CoEvolution Quarterly* (est. 1974).[101] Nevertheless, Bullard

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[101] For more on the historical and geographical roots of bioregionalism see: Dan Flores, "Place: An Argument for Bioregional History" in *Northwest Lands: Northwest Peoples: Readings in Environmental History* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1999), 31-50; Peter Berg, ed., *Reinhabiting a Separate Country: A Bioregional Anthology of Northern California* (San Francisco, CA: Planet Drum Foundation, 1978); "Watershed Consciousness" in *CoEvolution Quarterly* 12 (Winter 1976): 4-45; James J. Parsons, "On 'Bioregionalism' and 'Watershed Consciousness," *The Professional Geographer* 37 (1985): 2; Andrew G. Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and American Environmentalism* (Lawrence, KS: U of Kansas P, 2007); Steward Brand and Art Kleiner, eds. *News the Stayed News, 1974-1984: Ten Years of CoEvolution Quarterly* (San Francisco, CA: North Point, 1986). Van Andruss, Christopher Plant, Judith Plant and Eleanor Wright, eds., *Home! A Bioregional Reader* (Philadelphia, PA: New Society, 1990); Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 2000); McGinnis, Michael Vincent McGinnis, ed. *Bioregionalism* (New York: Routledge, 1999); Thayer, Robert L. Thayer Jr., *LifePlace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (Berkeley, CA: U of California P, 2003); and Mike Carr, *Bioregionalism and Civil Society: Democratic Challenges to Corporate Globalism* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 2005).

approached the Columbia River as a damaged organic system that could be reclaimed and restored by local community activism and mapped -- not by state and federal borders -- but by the intersection of biological ecosystems. By turning to matters of social justice and ecological renewal, Bullard was, then, an intuitive forerunner to the bioregional movement that would emerge only a few years later in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In a seminal essay titled "Reinhabiting California" (1976), Peter Berg and Raymond Dasmann, an activist and a field biologist respectively, introduced the language and conceptual framework for bioregionalism, a movement that not only defines Oral Bullard's impulse in 1968 to realign federal conservation practices, but which went on to shape the cultural and political movement to restore West Coast watersheds (and their historical communities) from Vancouver, British Columbia down to northern California. Berg and Dasmann insisted that locations should not be defined, mapped, and managed by state and national political boundaries, but by ecological factors such as plant and animal species composition; topography and elevation -- ecosystems and regional bio-geographies created and sustained by watersheds (218-219). These characteristics coalesce to define a *bios* (life) *region* (place), or "life-place" that refers "both to the geographical terrain and a terrain of consciousness -- to a place and ideas that have developed about how to live in that place" (218).

Crucially, Berg and Dasmann also introduced the concept of "re-inhabitation," a vision of socio-economic and ecological reclamation that calls for the recovery of local histories in an attempt to actively re-learn how live "in an area that has been disrupted and injured through past exploitation" (217). In contrast to "invader" models of occupational expansion that view local places primarily for short-term economic gain, bioregional visions of re-inhabitation stress the reconstruction and re-creation of local ecosystems, cultures, and societies in an attempt to recover forgotten histories, rituals, and cultures that were submerged by the exploitation and industrialization of regions -- marks of development that then become part of local history and memory. By recovering

suppressed histories and social practices within specific physical places, Berg and Dasmann insisted that local communities could realign, revise, or even remove federal reclamation policies in order to partly heal "watersheds, topsoil, and native species" that have been damaged by short-lived economic development schemes that typically exploit natural resources, dislocate communities, and dispose of regional laborers in the familiar capitalist pattern of economic boom and bust, progress and recession (218-219).

One of the earliest expressions of bioregional theory and practice that emerged from northern California in this period is Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975), a futuristic, utopian novel situated in San Francisco near the turn of the twenty-first century. The novel opens with a West Coast pushed into a state of extended financial and environmental crisis. As a result, the environmentally exploited states of Washington, Oregon, and northern California decide to revolt and secede from the larger nation. After decades of petitioning an ambivalent federal government for more balanced approaches to land and water management, the Ecotopians "were literally sick of bad air" and "chemicalized foods" and decided to establish a revised version of the Promised Land by cultivating local economies and restoring environmental health (47). Breaking from the United States in a future 1980, the Ecotopians appoint new state representatives and establish San Francisco as their capital -- a city filled with recycling bins, organic gardens, and free public transit -- where laborers work a twenty-hour week, with ample time to cultivate gardens and enjoy numerous leisure activities at waterfront parks and museums. The larger United States predicts failure, but after nearly twenty years, the Ecotopians have created a coastal network of interlocking communities in accordance with their commitment to restoring ecological health and general economic equality.

As the plot unfolds -- nearly twenty years after Ecotopia's secession from the United States -- William Weston, a fictional East Coast newspaper reporter for the *Times-Post*, is sent to investigate the values and living conditions of this utopian capital by the sea. At first, Weston is suspicion of the Ecotopians' free-wheeling politics and their

commitment to destroying “the Protestant work ethic upon which America was built,” but he grows fond of their vision to build a classless society where questions of both ecological health are social justice are placed at the forefront of everyday economic and cultural life (43). He is particularly moved by the commitment to free-flowing water and the preservation of salmon. In the capital of San Francisco alone, for example, the journalist is shocked to find private waterfront estates that had once been “fenced” and “guarded” for the capitalist elite, transformed into fishing communes, schools, hospitals and museums of natural history (36). Up the western coastline, “in areas such as Puget Sound, the Columbia and Willamette rivers near Portland,” the easterner hears that “waterways [had become] useful for transportation --small water taxis abound, and ferries cover longer distances” (87). Having reclaimed these watersheds from federal control, “the new government even went so far as to dynamite some of the dams built on the rivers as they “interfered with the salmon runs – which have been reestablished with great effort and enjoy much public support” (36). According to Weston, who eventually relocates to Ecotopia and lives at the meaning of his name, commitments to public services, social and cultural diversity, free-flowing water and the preservation of salmon are the defining values in water-minded communities where nearly everyone spends “time fishing, sailing, rowing, swimming, wading, or just looking at water” (87).

However, not all was perfect in Ecotopia. As noted in Chapter Three, during the 1960s and 70s, models of economic and environmental renewal were frequently grounded in the Romantic fantasy figure of the ecological Native American, an amorphous and stereotypical image that was then synonymous (among white counterculturalists) with environmental wisdom and urban renewal. When the character William Weston travels the western coastline of Ecotopia, for example, it is not by chance that he finds citizens “sentimental about Indians” who had “lost their place in the American wilderness” (29). In an attempt to find solidarity and identification with marginalized Indian peoples, the misguided citizens of the new utopia engage in acts of

tribal warfare, refuse to wear watches and embrace "self-adopted" Indian names; some wear indigenous "clothing and baskets" and nearly everyone strives to "live in balance with nature" by treating the earth as "Mother" (29, 50). These Euro-American attempts at indigenous identification are consistent with Shepard Krech's historical study of white depictions of Native Americans as ecological stewards. In *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999), his history of Euro-American constructions and marketing of indigenous peoples as keepers of environmental wisdom, Krech traces how political campaigns such as Keep America Beautiful (1953) and Earth Day (1970) used images of dejected Indians "to create the groundswell for an environmental movement unprecedented in scale and zeal" based upon the assertion that "there are fundamental differences between the way Americans of European descent and Indians think about and relate to land and resources" (Krech 15-16).

In a related essay titled "Environmentalism and Indian Peoples" (2000), historian Richard White builds upon such insights when he suggests that the image of an "ecological Indian" is ultimately flawed (131). Rather than isolating indigenous peoples from Euro-Americans, or elevating them as sage-like teachers of ecological wisdom, White asserts that within activist organizations categories of ethnicity are often destabilized and blurred, particularly when indigenous peoples and Euro-American environmentalist reformers find common interests in the preservation of local economies and ecological renewal. As White explains:

> Indians have not influenced current environmental thought through what amounts to an accurate ethnographic appreciation by white environmentalists of a fully separate set of cultural traditions. Instead, environmentalist Indians, and non-Indian understanding of their knowledge, have been constructed within what amounts to a lengthy conversation that has included Indians. Indians have had an impact on environmentalist thinking, but environmentalist and Western thinking has at the same time helped construct modern Indians' visions of themselves. (131)

The early stages of bioregionalism did, in fact, elevate and sometimes re-colonize Native Americans in literary representations and mass media; however, since the1980s the

movement has evolved and produced intellectual, political and cross-cultural bonds between Euro-American and Indian writers. The early stages of the bioregional movement and its white participants' interest in indigenous histories of tribal relationships to land and waterways actually helped create a national publishing market for Native American writers. Between the late 1960s and 1980s works such as N. Scott Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* (1968), Simon Ortiz's *Fight Back, For the Sake of the People, For the Sake of the Land* (1980), and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* (1981) provided both Euro-American and Native American readers with textual accounts of western lands and watersheds, uniquely situated between history and imagination, land and language -- produced, however, without the paternalist assistance of white editors or translators.

In the Pacific Northwest, indigenous writers such as Ed Edmo, Elizabeth Woody, Gloria Bird and Sherman Alexie have embraced a growing market for Native American prose and poetry and have worked both to deconstruct and revise the inherited archive of the Pacific Northwest literary history, epitomized by nineteenth-century writers such as Theodore Winthrop. Early works on the Columbia River Basin, ranging from Alexander Ross' *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (1849), Winthrop's *The Canoe and the Saddle* (c. 1853) to Frederic Homer Balch's *The Bridge of the Gods: A Romance of Indian Oregon* (1891), depicted indigenous histories and people through the colonizing lens of Euro-American travelogues and accounts of westward expansion. Later popular works of literary history such as *Cogewea* (1927) and *Coyote Stories* (1933), were written by Mourning Dove (1888-1936), a Colville Indian woman marketed as the first Native American novelist, but were edited, translated and distributed by white editors for a ready-made audience of largely East Coast Euro-American consumers. During the 1960s, however, poetry and prose such as Gary Snyder's *Myths and Texts* (1960) and Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962), worked to revise the region's literary history by including depictions of economic and ecological

injustice incurred by both white and indigenous male laborers, but it was not until the 1980s that indigenous writers of the Columbia River Basin found themselves writing and publishing largely on their own terms, without the colonialist intervention of metropolitan editors, translators, and a wide range of white literary appropriators.

Interestingly, however, Native American literatures of the Columbia River Basin have not divided white and indigenous writers, but led to political and intellectual alliances between white environmentalists and indigenous peoples mutually committed to economic justice and ecological stewardship -- even if for different reasons. The engagement of indigenous and non-Native activist-writers can be traced in the work of Elizabeth Woody, a Warm Springs / Yakama Indian essayist and poet, who uses English -- the colonizers' "tongue" -- to document and re-write the history of Euro-American settlement and the social, cultural, and ecological consequences of federal reclamation at Celilo Falls (*Luminaries* 73). As Woody states:

> One's identity as an indigenous person – an Indian – is a hard and difficult awareness when you look at Indian extermination and removal, much of which was subsidized by the U.S. government for the purpose of westward expansion. And when you really look, you soon realize that this happened in order to ensure that non-Indian newcomers would take root in a way that meant that enormous amounts of people, forests, and animals in this rich homeland would be dispossessed or destroyed. ("Voice" 151-152)

Rather than speaking of Native Americans as people trapped and silenced by colonization -- or as ecological stewards elevated above Euro-Americans and outside of history -- Woody views her indigenous identity as inseparable from the history of federal reclamation that has marginalized tribal people and insists "that what destroys life is part of us and that we are inextricably involved with those who oppose us" ("Voice" 171). In a similar way, bioregional poet and activist Gary Snyder, appeals to the intersection of Native and non-Native cultures when he insists that for "the non-Native American to become at home on this continent, he or she must be *born again*" not to the Promised Land, but "on this continent, properly called Turtle Island" (*Practice* 43).

This bioregional bond between Native and non-Native writers of the Columbia River Basin is at least partially evidenced by a use of metaphor that attempts to reconnect people to land and waterways, linking readers' minds and imaginations (regardless of ethnicity) to new possibilities for concrete acts of social and ecological renewal. This transformative deployment of connective metaphor is explained by writer and activist Jim Dodge, whose essay "Living by Life: Some Bioregional Theory and Practice" (1981), characterizes this unique function of metaphor and figurative language in bioregional literature. As Dodge explains, "a central element of bioregionalism -- and one that distinguishes it from similar politics of place -- is the importance given to natural systems, both as the source of physical nutrition and as the body of metaphors from which our spirits draw sustenance" (5). This assertion needs to be qualified rather carefully, as Dodge, like many other bioregional writers, calls for metaphorical language that leans paradoxically toward literal rather than figurative speech. This is evident when it comes to the connective and permeable relationship between language, watersheds, and human bodies.

In bioregional literature, watersheds are imagined as ecological circulatory systems that co-mingle and disclose "the truth of our own beings," at points where the "literal self" of mind and body must be measured and interpreted in relationship to the ecological health of watersheds being inhabited (Dodge 4-5). In this literalized, metaphoric imaginary, waterways are macrocosmic, inseparable extensions of human biology and circulatory systems. In keeping with this literary fusion of history and myth-narrative in Pacific Northwest poetics after 1980, Dodge speaks a literal as well as metaphorical truth, when he states that "when we destroy a river, we increase our thirst, ruin the beauty of free-flowing water, forsake the meat and spirit of the salmon, and lose a little bit of our own souls" because from bioregional perspectives all systems and organisms are permeable and inseparably woven together within the ecosystems they inhabit (5).

Crucially, then, from the bioregional perspective, the recovery of submerged histories and connective uses of metaphor can actually *re-member*, reconnect, and restore human bodies to the places they inhabit. Unfortunately, this transformative power of language has not been taken seriously by literary critics or environmental historians. In a recent study of environmental writers' relationships to place titled *The Truth of Ecology: Nature, Literature, and Culture in America* (2003), for example, Dana Phillips claims that ecological poets use metaphor and other figures of speech in ways that are "too selfish," subjective, and ultimately ahistorical (201). In Phillips' text, ecological poets are systematically accused of the neo-Romantic "error" of displacing their interior and stilted feelings onto exterior landscapes, producing subjective cartographies that bear little historical or geographical resemblance to the places they claim to represent. Historian William L. Lang criticizes such a pattern in the work of both Elizabeth Woody and William Stafford, Columbia River Basin poets who express an "artistic investment in the region," but have remained suspect for environmental historians committed to more linear and empirical methods of writing historical geography. As Lang complains, when it comes to Pacific Northwest poetry, "so much of the focus is on the internal as contrasted with the external. The domain of place is within the perceiver, the storyteller, the poet, not 'out there' on the landscape" ("From Where" 80).

I argue, by contrast, that while the work of Pacific Northwest poets is indeed personal and affective, their lines communicate and correspond with the tangled topographies of local histories and grapple with the technological and industrial transformation of the watershed. This indicates, contrary to scholarly consensus or overly simplistic critiques of environmental neo-Romanticism, that ecological site-based poetry of the Columbia River Basin is far more complex than what William Wordsworth once called "a spontaneous overflow of power feelings" (xiv). Since the 1980s, in fact, a confluence of Native American and non-Native poets ranging from Elizabeth Woody, Gloria Bird, Ed Edmo and Sherman Alexie to William Witherup, David Wagoner and

William Stafford, have separately deployed bioregional theory and practice to recover submerged histories at federally transformed sites along the Columbia River Basin. Notably, it is with the emergence of bioregionalist poetics since the 1970s that female writers (both Euro-American and Native American) move to the forefront of Columbia River literary culture.

In order to revise common assumptions about Pacific Northwest poets and their subjective and limited depictions of place, then, this chapter focuses on site specific poetry written by Columbia River Basin poets, Elizabeth Woody, William Witherup and Gloria Bird. I argue that although the lines of their poems are often personalized and affectively inflected, they are also historically engaged and indeed scored by the historical topography of this radically damaged watershed. The chapter moves deliberately upriver, following poetic representations of transformed sites from Celilo Falls, to Hanford Nuclear Reservation, to Grand Coulee Dam, and argues that the compression and malleability of the bioregionalist poetic line conflates historical markers of the past with powerful evocations of the Columbia River's future, newly and differently "reclaimed" from and within its colonialist and technocratic past. Such poetic histories and topographies of place are not Romantic and affective escapes from history, but a powerful means of reconnecting readers to places they inhabit, which can allow localized restoration and even healing within the Columbia River Basin to begin.

In an attempt to make this argument, I begin at Celilo Falls to offer an historically and geographically informed reading of selected work by Elizabeth Woody, a Warm Spring / Yakama poet whose poetic lines measure geographic and socio-economic changes to the watershed caused by the construction of The Dalles Dam (1957). From there, the chapter moves upriver to Hanford Nuclear Reservation (1943-1987), where William Witherup, an almost completely overlooked poet of the region, uses poetry to re-trace and enact the ecological and international reverberations of plutonium production at Hanford Engineer Works, where his father manufactured nuclear weaponry for more than

thirty years. Then, traveling further upriver to Grand Coulee Dam (1942), I turn to the work of Gloria Bird, a Spokane Indian essayist and poet, who uses autobiography and poetry to reclaim the site's colonizing history, while also documenting the social impact of the loss of wild salmon at Kettle Falls, an ancient fishery that was inundated with the construction of Grand Coulee Dam.

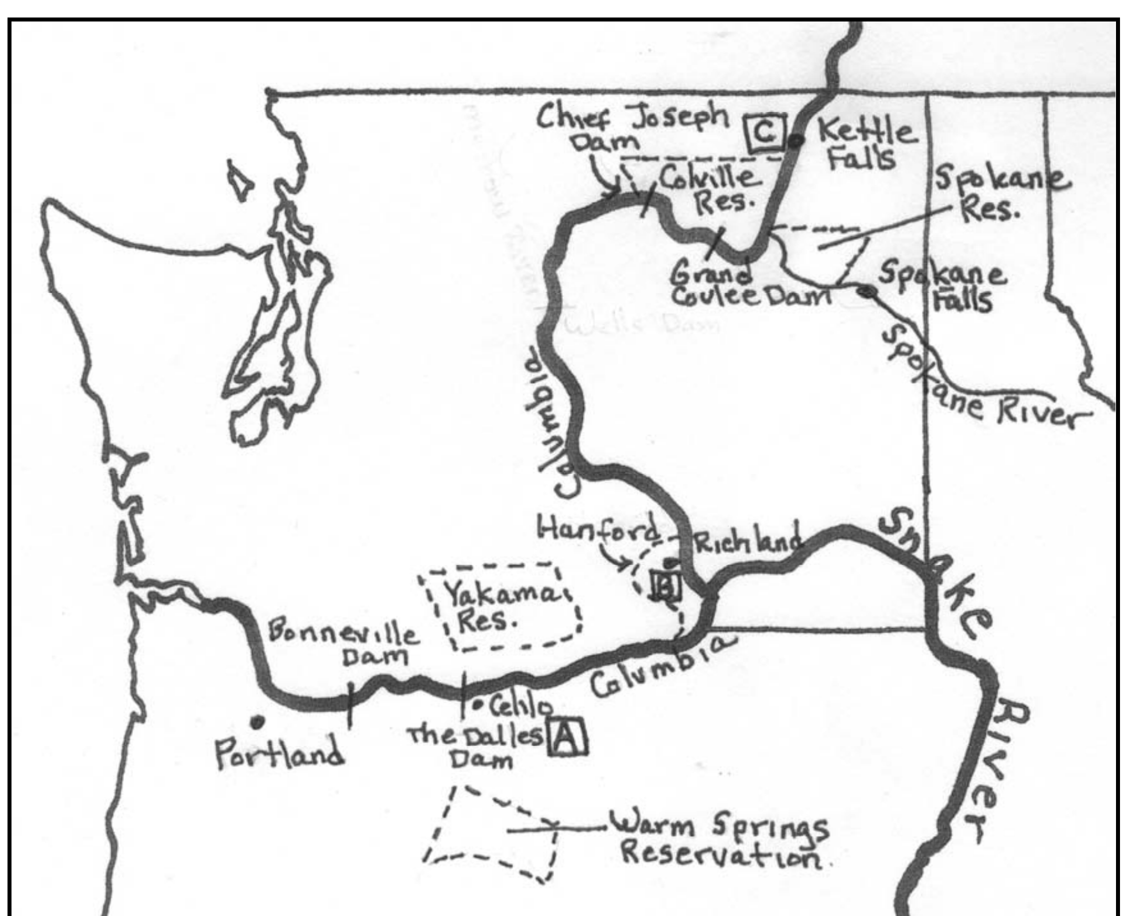

Figure 31. Map of Selected Columbia River Basin Poets in Relationship to Places. A. Elizabeth Woody; B. William Witherup; C. Gloria Bird

At every turn of this investigation of site specific bioregional poetry, the chapter depends upon a literalized metaphor of turning, which defines the geography of reclamation as a place where the (tropic) turning of poetic lines are inseparable from the

local histories, communities, and watershed topographies of each site on the Columbia River. In fact, the textual patterns made by lines of poetry -- as formed by the ever-changing flow of the river -- illustrate how site specific, bioregional poetry about the Columbia River, functions as a living extension of the watershed. Ultimately, then, the chapter approaches the watershed as an historical and imagined palimpsest that can be not only measured, engineered and harnessed by state and federal governments, but also traced, turned, returned and reclaimed by activist poets -- through lines of poetry that are "regulated" by linguistic, communicative tools such as diction, syntax, line breaks, dashes, commas, and periods. While there is certainly no indication that bioregional poetry will topple hydroelectric dams on the mainline Columbia River anytime soon, there are historical reasons to believe that as Native American and non-Native poets work to recover lost geographical histories and use the poetic line -- with its line breaks and patterns of meaning -- to enact the socio-economic and ecological consequences of federally reclaimed sites on the river, their documents will imagine not only how the river was, but how it will be -- might be -- inhabited in the future.

This last, speculative assertion is demonstrated further in Chapter Five, which explores the intersections between bioregionalism and installations of site-specific, public art poetry by William Stafford and Sherman Alexie. In the early 1990s, local interest groups and government employees initiated public installations of both William Stafford's *The Methow River Poems* (1994) and Sherman Alexie's poem "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" (1994) on the Methow and Spokane rivers, two major tributaries of the mainline Columbia River. Since then, local activists on the rivers have used the physical presence of these installations to reorient historical trajectories and to revise how the Columbia River Basin will be historically, culturally, and socially inhabited by future generations.

Elizabeth Woody and Celilo Falls:
Measuring Absence and Presence through the Poetic Line

Elizabeth Woody (1959 – present) was born two years after the inundation of Celilo Falls. As a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation, she grew up hearing stories about the ancient fishery "as an orphan lives hearing of the kindness and greatness of his or her mother" ("Recalling Celilo" 10). Now a local activist, poet, visual artist and educator, Woody insists that as United States communities continue to fixate on the benefits and consequences of globalization, "those who remain grounded in local realities and needs will be assets in protecting local places and communities" ("Confederated. . ." 205). Over the years, Woody has worked for economic justice and ecological renewal, most notably as the former Director of the Indigenous Leadership Program for Ecotrust, a non-profit committed to local environmental and economic sustainability, and more recently as the educational Program Coordinator for the Center for Coastal Margin Observation and Prediction, a national research center devoted to the research and sustainability of coastal ecologies.

Woody is also an active poet and local voice for the Columbia River Basin and its indigenous peoples. Her collections of prose and poetry, *Hand into Stone* (1988), *Luminaries of the Humble* (1994), and *Seven Hands, Seven Hearts* (1994) fuse history laden sites on the Mid-Columbia River with lines of poetry. Woody's commitment to local eco-activism and place-situated poetry is articulated through corrective lines that revise and realign decades of colonization, treaty negotiations, and federal reclamation projects on the Columbia River. In an explicit and direct contradiction to federal reclamation technologies, Woody insists that the vision of hydroelectric prosperity undergirded by the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers aimed to convert the Columbia River and "make an Eden where Eden was not needed" ("Recalling Celilo" 14).

When poet Joy Harjo reviewed Woody's first collection of poems *Hand Into Stone* (1988), she immediately recognized that Woody's voice is constructed from the

history and topography of the Mid-Columbia River. According to Harjo, "Celilo Falls is central to [Woody's] identity and is the mother of the voice she has cultivated from the rich mud along the banks, from the smoked salmon giving life to the people, and from the words of visionaries who also lived there" (95). While this observation may seem to push the boundaries of sentimental hyperbole, Harjo's reading, in fact, points precisely to the way Woody's language is built by way of reference to both geographical and historical tracings and tracks on the Columbia River's deeply storied banks.

This is especially true in "The Markers of Absence," a poem from *Luminaries of the Humble* (1994) that confronts the drowning of Celilo Falls and turns the poetic line in ways that recall the ongoing repercussions of federal reclamation embedded in the inundated site, impacting the collective memory and cultural practices of the nearby community of Celilo Village ("Voice" 382). Reading the river and the lost falls as an historical, cultural, and personal palimpsest, Woody begins the poem by releasing a flood of metaphors that delineate the inscriptions on the river bank that are recent reminders of ways The Dalles Dam re-created the Mid-Columbia River. She writes:

> The leaves denote by their pitch
> the endurance of drought.
> The clouds are sallow exhaustion.
> Tumbleweeds roll a weak case
> for the heart of shadows.
> Flowers known to no one are tiny
> with tough hides, sigh the color of sienna. (*Luminaries* 21)

Like a book, the "leaves" of the sparsely treed landscape score and etch a pitch that is at once auditory and physical, social and communicative, as well as ecological. Some fifty years after the construction of The Dalles Dam, Celilo Village persists as a demographically depleted community of "sixty or so residents," a place of indigenous inhabitants with "tough hides" the "color of sienna" who are historical and real, nonetheless, persons of culture who are unseen and "known to no one" (Barber and Fisher 520, *Luminaries* 21). The tumbleweeds, like voices of survival and resistance,

may reference federal injustices, but as Woody says, they "roll a weak" legislative "case / for the heart of shadows" (*Luminaries* 21).

Moving from the bank of the Columbia to the water itself, Woody locates markers of absence that have been etched by Lake Celilo, now a scene of slack water covering submerged histories in need of recovery. In his critique of bioregional poetry about place, William L. Lang indicates that writers must move beyond the subjective and interior to engage external and quantifiable history -- what he calls "measured" as opposed to "perceptual" reference points ("From Where We . . ." 80). Interestingly, however, as Woody's poem continues, the poet uses the malleability and rhythm of the poetic line to trace the physical movement of the waterway through verse. Most notably, when referencing Lake Celilo, a set of restrictive commas enact -- and bind -- the condition of the river, slowing the current of the dammed-up-river-turned-lake, as well as her lines. She writes:

> The river turns, leveling, from the white
> demarcation on the bank.
> Reminder of stains that tears have left
> as collected, by increments gained and as lost
> as Salmon. No one grows or laughs. (*Luminaries* 21)

Until this point, the poem has moved with minimal syntactical restraint, but here the lyrical current is bound and restricted by dam-like commas, slowing and regulating a line that turns as a "reminder" of the engineered and "leveling" consequences of The Dalles Dam.

When "Markers of Absence" is interpreted as a lyrical palimpsest of Mid-Columbia River history, the river "turns" here to release the history of inundation -- and a potential resurrection -- of Celilo Falls. In Woody's assessment, despite all appearances of death and stagnation, the inundated falls still continue to flow and survive below the surface of the river. Several of Woody's poems, in fact, map the endurance of the falls, most effectively perhaps in "Waterways Endeavor to Translate Silence from Currents," which points readers to Lake Celilo where "the river elegantly marks swirls on its

surface, / a spiral that tells of a place / that remains undisturbed" (*Luminaries* 98). The possibilities of restoring Celilo Falls are not limited to Woody's poetry, however, but spill into other activist and political media, which also remember and invoke the ongoing cultural power of the silenced falls.

In 2007, the fifty-year remembrance of Celilo Falls was commemorated by several indigenous and environmental groups of the Pacific Northwest. Articles about the fishery and nearby indigenous community circulated that year through local newspapers, academic journals, tribal magazines, and television programs. After reading and hearing stories about lost local histories and landscapes, many residents of the area began to wonder if Celilo Falls did remain intact beneath the floodwaters. Many Mid-Columbia River Indians believed the physical framework of the falls was destroyed by federal engineers who dynamited river channels while constructing The Dalles Dam.

Figure 32. Final Dynamite Blast at The Dalles Dam, 1956. The Army Corps of Engineers Used Twenty Tons of Gunpowder to Remove 60,000 Cubic Yards of Land. Oregon Historical Society Research Library. No. 015320.

In 2008, with Euro-American and Native American accusations against the federal government mounting in the Pacific Northwest, Colonel Thomas O'Donovan, an Army Corps Commander, insisted that the rock of the waterfall was not damaged and then assembled a federal team to conduct a sonar reading of the inundated site. The findings and resulting map were circulated in regional newspapers such as *The Oregonian*, *Seattle-Times* and *Indian Country News* to reveal "a virtually unchanged Celilo Falls beneath the murky water of the Columbia" (Rojas-Burke A1). When interviewed by *The Oregonian,* Elizabeth Woody, who had long feared that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers "had blown [the falls] all up," stated that she was "deeply moved" to tears and "relieved" to learn that the falls were still turning below the surface. Meanwhile, her uncle, Louie Pitt, Jr., Director of Government Affairs for the Warm Spring Reservation, reminded readers that "someday those dams will be gone. When that day comes the falls will return. Indians will be waiting" (Rojas-Burke A1, A13).

The discovery of an intact Celilo Falls triggered a poem from Robert Dean McNeil, a retired minister, amateur poet, and resident of Portland, Oregon, who submitted his work to *The Oregonian* in response the newspaper's coverage of the Army Corps of Engineers' report. In the poem, dedicated to "Ed Edmo and all our Native friends," McNeil dreams of the lost Celilo Falls and the time in history that is "gone forever." He remembers Chief Tommy Thompson, "the stately, statesman of the past" and the "wooden platforms, / Out over the rushing water" of the Columbia River (A15). Like Woody, who uses the poetic line to measure personal, cultural and ecological loss, McNeil concludes his poem with a heart-felt statement of repentance that traces historical complexities, as well as his own personal connection to the falls and affections for its indigenous peoples:

> We feel sad for all that is gone,
> It makes you cry.
> A holy place for native tribes,
> Replaced in the name of progress.

> We have dammed up the free flowing river,
> Power plants provide lighting
> For our cities, but oh,
> My God, what have we
> Lost in the name of progress. (McNeil A15)

The moral tension in McNeil's poem illustrates urban planner Carl Abbott's assertion that "to white Oregonians in 1957 the drowning of Celilo Falls seemed a regrettable but manageable economic cost and a fascinating example of progress," however, now some fifty years later, the "flooding of Celilo seems like an ineradicable cultural sin" (132). As Abbott also recognizes, however, community "sin may be ineradicable, but it can always be repented" (134). From this perspective, the poetry of Elizabeth Woody, the occasional work of Portland resident, Robert Dean McNeil, and the sonar map provided by the Army Corps of Engineers are all attempts to reconcile broken social relationships and find ecological and cross-cultural healing within and through the waterways of the Columbia.

Elizabeth Woody's "Markers of Absence" indicates that although attempts at federal and Euro-American atonement can be traced in the region, such words will never undo the colonial fantasy of the Promised Land or create what Ernest Callenbach imagined as an *Ecotopia* (1975) of ecological health, economic justice, and social harmony. In fact, just as Woody uses the poetic line to write another layer on the palimpsest of local history, the river "turns" away from white engineers of progress who have straightened and re-inscribed the once free-flowing lines and life-cycles of the pre-industrial river. Here the straightened and channelized lines of a federally dominated river are witness to the ecological damage caused by The Dalles Dam. Woody writes:

> The river turns, leveling, from the white
> demarcation on the bank.
> Reminder of stains that tears have left
> as collected, by increments gained and as lost
> as Salmon. No one grows or laughs. (*Luminaries* 21)

When joined with "white" the image of the turning river evokes bitterness and betrayal, suggesting that some fifty years after the construction of The Dalles Dam, the federally harnesses river "turns" against "white" engineers of progress, the markers / makers of

absence who have engineered the watershed according to "increments" of profit and loss. Their design is now marked and measured by a "white" line of brine on the river's edge, a line of "demarcation" that is the trace of a legacy of federal reclamation. The briny consequences are depicted in the closing lines of the poem, when Woody describes Celilo Falls as a place stained by human "tears" and "tears." Here, the word serves a two-fold function, at once signifying ways The Dalles Dam has generated cultural sadness and "rent a multi-millennial relationship of a people to a place" by creating both "tears" and "tears" in the Columbia River Basin's evolved and involved ecological fabric (*Luminaries* 21, *Seven Hands* 67). This tear is enacted in the final lines, when Woody breaks the current of her poem with a line-break between "lost" and "Salmon," creating a visual and auditory barrier of separation between the endangered fish and the continuous current of the poem (*Luminaries* 21).

For some critics, Elizabeth Woody's highly personalized and place-specific rendering of The Dalles Dam and Lake Celilo appear to be overly dramatic, but local signposts at Celilo Park testify to the ongoing cultural power of the inundated site. Celilo Park is a campground on the banks of Lake Celilo, a place owned and managed by the Army Corps of Engineers and Oregon State Parks. The community of Celilo Village is just south of the park -- only a few hundred yards across the Union Pacific railway and Interstate 84. There are several historical markers (of absence) scattered through the park, including a "small plaque imbedded in stone" installed in 1961 to commemorate "the centuries gone by when this was the great gathering place for the American natives" (Bullard 75).

Figure 33. Plaque Commemorating the Celilo Falls Fishery, Unveiled by Relatives of Chief Tommy Thompson, 1961. Oregon Historical Society Research Library. No. 001592.

Near this marker, another interpretive signpost installed by the State of Oregon, educates visitors on the history of the ancient fishery submerged beneath the waters of Lake Celilo. Such markers inform visitors about the falls, the Treaty of 1855, and the lives of Indians who continue to live at Celilo Village across the railway and Interstate. The sign also reminds readers that although The Dalles Dam "inundated the fishing grounds," indigenous peoples "continue to exercise treaty rights in the middle Columbia River area" and that "the loss of Wyam [Celilo] Falls did not mean the loss of the Indian way of life."[102] In one sense, the state constructed sign tells the truth. Many indigenous peoples do, in fact, continue to exercise fishing rights using traditional methods of dipnetting on the mainline river and its tributaries. However, in 2009, when I visited

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[102] According to Elizabeth Woody, *Wyam* is translated as "Echo of Falling Water" or "Sound of Water Upon the Rocks." The *Wyampum* band, or people of echo of falling water, "lived at *Wyam* for over twelve thousand years" making the site "among the longest continuously inhabited communities in North America" ("Recalling Celilo" 9-10).

Lake Celilo, an anonymous author had undermined state sponsored history by writing over a key word on the interpretive sign. In defacing the text, the nameless writer insists that contrary to state and federal history:

> "The loss of Wyam Falls did ~~not~~ mean the loss of the Indian way of life."

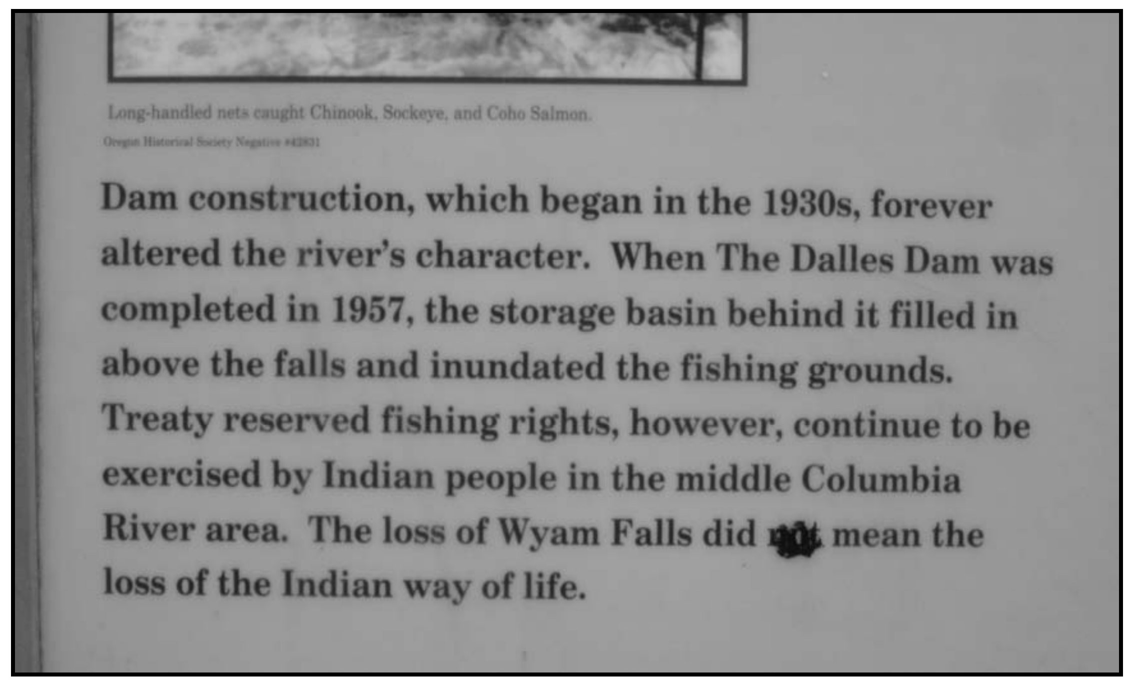

Figure 34. "Ancient Indian Fishing Grounds." Interpretive Signpost, Celilo Park, 2009.

Similarly, markers of absence are also evident on the northern bank of Lake Celilo, where a petroglyph called *Tsagigala'lal* ("She-Who-Watches") surveys the inundated falls and the lives of people still living at Celilo Village. There are thousands of petroglyphs within the Columbia River Basin, but She-Who-Watches is particularly unusual. As critic Jarold Ramsey explains, it is among the most "elaborate and impressive" rock designs in the Pacific Northwest, and one that accounts for "an existence and meaning" of its own creation (267). Visual and textual variations and re-creations of the She-Who-Watches story and image are not difficult to find. Since the

inundation of Celilo Falls, representations of the petroglyph and its history have circulated throughout the Columbia River Basin, appearing in the work of local historians, visual artists, and Native and non-Native Pacific Northwest writers.[103]

Scholars and storytellers agree that the creation story of She-Who-Watches is attributed to Coyote and that accounts of her existence were most likely sustained by Wishram and Wasco tribes, groups that resided below the petroglyph near the Long Narrows and headwaters of Celilo Falls, but were relocated to Warm Springs Reservation following the treaty of 1855. In *Coyote was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country* (1977), Jarold Ramsey tells the story of She-Who-Watches in the following lines:

> A woman has a house where the village of *Nixlu'idix* was later built [present day Wishram or Spedis]. She was a chief of all who lived in this region. That was long ago, before Coyote came up the river and changed things, and people were not yet real people.
>
> After a time Coyote in his travels came to this place and asked the inhabitants if they were living well or ill. They sent him to their chief, who lived up in the rocks, where she could look down on the village and know all that was going on.
>
> Coyote climbed up to her home and asked: "What kind of living do you give these people? Do you treat them well, or are you one of those evil women?" – "I am teaching them how to live well and to build good houses," she said. "Soon the world is going to change," he told her, "and women will no longer be chiefs. You will be stopped from being a chief."
>
> Then he changed her into a rock, with the command, "You shall stay here and watch over the people who live at this place, which shall be called *Nixlu'dix*."
>
> All the people know that Tsagigla'lal sees all things, for whenever they are looking up at her those large eyes are watching them. (53)

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[103]For other variations of the She-Who-Watches story see: Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian* 1911. Vol. 8 (New York: Johnson Corp., 1980), 145-146; Beth and Ray Hill, *Indian Petroglyphs of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1975), 259; Michael Baughman and Charlotte Hadella, *Warm Springs Millennium* (Austin, TX: U of Texas P, 2000), 22-23; Robin Cody, *Voyage of a Summer Sun* (New York, NY: Knopf, 1995), 252-253; and Elizabeth Woody, *Hand into Stone* (Bowling Green, NY: Contact, 1988).

Ramsey's English-language version of the story, in fact, dates back to the early-twentieth century, when Edward S. Curtis compiled and collected images for his twenty-volume compendium *The North American Indian.* Curtis was so impressed by the all-seeing rock that he used the image for the frontispiece of the eighth volume in the series. He also offered a detailed account of the story, as well as footnote sketching the petroglyph's social and religious importance to indigenous peoples of the Mid-Columbia River.[104]

Since the inundation of Celilo Falls, the image and story of She-Who-Watches has gained immense popularity and circulation throughout the Columbia River Basin. In some ways, the iconic status and malleability of the petroglyph's image and story affirms Curtis' assertion that She-Who-Watches carries deep social and historical significance to the indigenous bands living at Celilo Falls. However, the wide spread circulation and multiple modes of re-creating the petroglyph's story and image also undermines Curtis' belief that the storied rock, like its indigenous creators, would soon vanish into "realms of romance" and disappear into a time beyond human reach (Curtis 146). In the early-twentieth century, Curtis was committed to preserving images of indigenous "antiquity" in response to national anxieties that Native Americans and their rituals would vanish forever; yet as his own observations indicate, indigenous peoples engaged with She-Who-Watches as a social and public work of art. The image was offered personal stories and

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[104]Curtis writes: "[This petroglyph] must be of considerable antiquity, as all informants insist that long ago the oldest of the old knew of it only as something done by Coyote. In the last few generations, at least, it has been customary to invoke its aid in securing supernatural assistance. Offering baskets, mats, weapons, beads, and feathers were placed before it, the suppliant asking perhaps for health, for long life, of for wealth. Women gave it presents and begged that they might have children, or that children soon to be born might have health and be of the sex desired. Maidens slyly made offerings to it and asked that the young men of their desire might love them. Or, a man, wishing to kill some evil medicine-man or other person who had injured him, would place a present there and pray: 'Make my medicine good and let me kill him and nobody know it.' The mind wanders far afield into the realms of romance of the silent, unrecorded ages when an effort is made to grasp life's drama enacted before this never-ending, all seeing Woman of the Rock" (146).

gifts such as “baskets, mats, weapons, beads, and feathers” in exchange for tangible commodities such as health, long life, wealth, or fertility (Curtis 146).

Figure 35. She-Who-Watches Petroglyph, Oregon Historical Society Research Library. No. 92315.

The image of She-Who-Watches continues to flow through local consumer cultures within the Columbia River Basin, appearing on jewelry, yard art, and posters, as well as in installations of public art. Elizabeth Woody’s aunt, Lillian Pitt, a member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs and descendent of the Wyampum band, creates various images of the rock and has produced commissioned installations at Central Oregon Community College, Portland State University, TriMet Bus Stops, and the Oregon Convention Center. Pitt’s variations of She-Who-Watches are constructed from

a wide array of media including ceramics, print, glass, bronze and jewelry, while her niece, Elizabeth Woody, claims that "the petroglyphs on rock in the Columbia River Gorge are part of [her] literary heritage" and writes poetry and prose about the image (*Luminaries* xi). Blending personal and tribal history with local topography, Woody depicts her connection to She-Who-Watches by crafting and distributing poetic lines in the voice of the animate rock, so effectively, that Joy Harjo suspects the "female figure represented by a petroglyph watching over the Columbia River," sometimes becomes an extension of Woody who writes "with vision as tenacious as stone" (95-96).

In a poem titled "She-Who-Watches, The Names are Prayer" (1988), Woody surveys Lake Celilo and the nearby indigenous community through the eyes of the petroglyph that watches and remembers the historical injustices inflicted upon the Columbia River and its peoples. The poem its dedicated to David Sohappy, a Yakama / Wanapum Indian leader who was imprisoned for selling salmon out of season to federal officials during an undercover sting operation in 1982. During the 1980s, salmon runs were "pushed to the brink of extinction" and although "Columbia River dams and giant offshore fisheries" were the primary cause for the decline, indigenous fishers became the federal government's target and scapegoat (Dupris 274). As part of an eighteen month sting operation known as "Salmonscam," Sohappy, an outspoken activist for indigenous fishing rights on the Columbia River, emerged as the "chief villain" and "convenient target" of federal agents bent on redirecting local hostilities over declining salmon runs away from hydroelectric dams and commercial gillnetting operations and toward the so-called "poaching" Indians of the Mid-Columbia River (Dupris 272, 274).

Sohappy lived and fished at Cook's Landing, a federally recognized "in-lieu" fishing site at the confluence of the White Salmon and Columbia rivers that was provided by the federal government as a substitute for indigenous fisheries flooded behind Bonneville Dam. He worked as a subsistence fisherman, selling excess salmon to tourists and residents in the region, as was his right according the 1855 treaty. Nevertheless,

federal officials claimed Sohappy was engaged in "commerce" rather than "ritual" and sentenced him to five years in federal prison (the maximum term) for selling 317 "illegal" fish to undercover agents (Dupris 272; *Seven Hands* 66). Federal lawyers suspected that Sohappy sold some eighty-thousand dollars worth of salmon per year, but had difficulty proving he had grown wealthy from his practice, since he and his family lived in a dirt-floored shack and owned no property. While serving twenty-two months at Sandstone Federal Prison in Minnesota, two thousand miles away from home, Sohappy's health deteriorated. He lost thirty pounds and "suffered a series of strokes during his incarceration" (*Luminaries* xv). His imprisonment gained local and national media attention and he was transferred to Geiger Correctional Center in Spokane, Washington, prior to his release in 1988. He died in a nursing home three years later, still serving seven years of federal probation.

Through David Sohappy's name, Elizabeth Woody speaks in the voice of She-Who-Watches to narrate unknown truths and lost histories about people whose names she causes to "clang in memorial" from the voice of the petroglyph that still watches over the river and Celilo Village (*Seven Hands* 76). Her vision begins with a survey of "Celilo, / dispossessed, the village of neglect / and bad structure" that rests beside "faint rocks enrippled / in the placid lake of the backwaters" (*Seven Hands* 76). At the base of the rocky bluff on the northern shore of Lake Celilo, Woody notes the "tight bands" of the Union Pacific railway, markers of linear progress that are contrasted against the fluid "whirls of the Columbia." Searching across the waterway, the voice of the watcher etched in lines of rock (and now poetry), searches for "dead children" and those like David Sohappy -- sentenced to economic as well as cultural and personal death, while "hanging in jails and off reservation suicide towns" (*Seven Hands* 76-77).

Images of death expand as the railway rumbles and a train passes. The watcher depicts a vision of holocaust and human butchery as railcars of commerce carry humans like cattle, while clanking down a linear pathway of progress. She writes:

> I watch for the rushing head of chaos
> and flat hands grope from the cattle cars,
> clamor in the swift, fresh air.
> A sky is clicking through the regular slats. (*Seven Hands* 77)

The train passes and "whips up the dusty battles of Indian Wars," such as the Yakima War (1855-1858), which has left nameless people of the past and present unsettled, "nude and raw" (*Seven Hands* 77). As the train of holocaust follows a straight-edge path into the distance, Woody reminds readers that the drowning of Celilo Falls and economic injustices inflicted upon Mid-Columbia River Indians were federally grown from "the seeds of ambition to make an Eden where Eden was not needed" ("Recalling" 14).

During the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt promised that hydroelectric dams at Bonneville (1937) and Grand Coulee (1942) would irrigate the Pacific Northwest and cultivate local commerce and trading through the benefits of multi-use dams. With Bonneville nearly completed and Grand Coulee providing jobs for thousands of migrant laborers, Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address (1937), asked U.S. citizens to continue down the path of hydroelectric progress, pressing onward in search of that "happy valley" and "Promised Land" that awaited them (Zevin 90). At the time, this utopian vision was to be built by federal engineers and migrant laborers from the "great wealth of natural resources" in the American West (Zevin 90). In the closing lines of Woody's contribution to this historical record, the repercussions of the federally managed Promised Land are exposed when she presents the inundation of Celilo Falls as the fall and expulsion from Eden. Here, Woody speaks a truth that is at once, personal and regional, mythic and historical, when she explains that after the water intake gates of The Dalles Dam closed, "Celilo Falls sank unwillingly in the new trading . . . [and] everyone dissolved in the fall" (*Seven Hands* 77).

William Witherup and the Green Run:
Atomic Aftershocks at Hanford Nuclear Reservation

One hundred miles upriver from The Dalles Dam is the site of Hanford Nuclear Reservation (est. 1943), the once-secret engineering plant that manufactured plutonium

for “Trinity” and “Fat Man,” atomic bombs tested and deployed during World War II. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Hanford site increased its output and was fueled by Bonneville and Grand Coulee dams, as well as McNary Dam (1954), Chief Joseph Dam (1955) and The Dalles Dam (1957). During the Cold War, the nuclear reserve was expanded exponentially to include nine nuclear reactors and five plutonium plants, which together produced materials for over 60,000 nuclear weapons held in the United States’ military arsenal. As Cold War anxieties diminished, however, the reactors and processing plants were decommissioned by the United States Department of Defense. The majority of the reactors closed between 1964 and 1971, with the final closure taking place in 1987.

In 2000, the ghostly infrastructure of Hanford Engineer Works was renamed Hanford Reach National Monument, and designated as a historic nature preserve to be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. More recently, in 2008, the first production scale nuclear reactor (Reactor-B) to be constructed in the world was named a National Historic Monument. These recent legislative decisions are indicative of ways the federal government has attempted to revise the historical geography of the Columbia River by re-creating Hanford Nuclear Works into a natural reserve that contains wildlife ranging from mule deer and elk to blue herons and pelicans, as well as the last remaining stretch of free-flowing water on the mainline Columbia River. Beneath these surfaces of ecological health, however, over 23 million gallons of high-level radioactive waste resides below the earth, making the 570 square mile reserve the most toxic and contaminated nuclear energy production site in the United States (Dietrich 368-369).[105]

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[105] The development of U.S. nuclear arsenals, along with the biological and ecological health hazards linked to radioactive contamination, has produced an entire canon of literature. For a sampling of this literature see John Bradley, ed., *Atomic Ghost: Poets Respond to the Nuclear Age* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 1995); and John Bradley, ed., *Learning to Glow: A Nuclear Reader* (Tucson, AZ: U of Arizona P, 2000).

William Witherup (1935-2009) grew up in Richland, Washington, living just fifteen miles downriver from Hanford Engineer Works. In collections such as *Men at Work* (1989) and *Down Wind, Down River* (2000), Witherup documents the life and death of his father, Mervyn Clyde Witherup, a "typical" laborer who was recruited from Kansas City, Missouri, in 1944 to build nuclear reactors and separate plutonium for the DuPont Corporation (Witherup, "Fall Out" 26). Until the detonation of "Little Boy" and "Fat Man" in 1945, Witherup, like other workers at Hanford, had no idea that he was manufacturing materials for nuclear weapons. Employees only knew that their jobs were important to the wartime effort. After retirement in the mid 1970s, Merv continued living in his government built "A-Type" home. A few years later, however, he developed prostate cancer, a disease which later metastasized into bone cancer and took his life in 1988. Since that time, until his own death in 2009, William Witherup has used the poetic line to expose and enact the toxic poisoning and radioactive fall-out that continues to reverberate from this federal monument of destructive history.

In 1986, two years before Merv Witherup's death, under pressure from the Freedom of Information Act (1966), the Environmental Protection Agency (1970), and the locally formed Hanford Education Action League (1984), the U.S. Department of Defense reluctantly declassified secret information concerning the management of toxic chemicals and radioactive materials at Hanford Engineer Works. The nineteen thousand page document chronicled decades of toxic spills and radioactive discharges into the Columbia River and atmosphere. Some events were accidental, while others were premeditated and even ordered by the U.S. Department of Defense. For decades, the plant had used the Columbia River to filter toxic metals in cooling reactors, and declassified records indicated that by 1947 the river was already "showing radioactive concentrations averaging 100,000 times the normal amount as far as twenty miles downriver" (Dietrich 369). Worse yet, the public learned that in 1949 the Department of Defense planned and acted out "the largest single known incident of atmospheric

contamination in the history of the Hanford Site" by deliberately releasing toxic chemicals that poisoned the watershed, vegetation, animals, and inhabitants of the Columbia River Basin (Gerber 90).

The federal plan, now referred to as the "Green Run" operation, was scheduled three months after the Soviet Union secretly detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949. Military officials detected radioactive particles that had traveled from Russia into Alaska and the Pacific Northwest, which led Hanford engineers to believe that the Soviets were manufacturing weapons from "short-cooled fuel" (Gerber 90). The Department of Defense ordered engineers at Hanford to explore methods of increasing plutonium production by studying the ecological effects of releasing "green uranium" waste into the atmosphere, raw radioactive particles from uranium fuel that had been cooled and dissolved in reactors for only sixteen days, rather than the requisite time (Gerber 90). As historian Michele Stenehjem Greger explains in *One the Homefront: The Cold War Legacy of the Hanford Nuclear Site* (1992), engineers at Hanford "already knew, from their experiences, that such dissolving would produce extremely high amounts of radioactivity in the off-gases" (91).

In an effort to minimize deleterious effects, the Department of Defense consulted a team of federal meteorologist to predict a day when "high wind" would disperse and minimize the fall-out of toxic particles; however, things did not go as planned. Radioactive particles were scheduled for atmospheric release on December 2, 1949, a day when "light winds and cloud cover" were forecasted. Deputy Chief of Hanford Engineering Works, Carl C. Gamertsfelder, advised against the release due to inadvisable weather patterns, but the Department of Defense continued the operation as planned, releasing between 7,000 and 12,000 curies of radioactive iodine particles into the atmosphere (I-131), a substantially larger amount than what was originally proposed. After the particles were airborne, winds turned stagnant and rain moved into the Pacific

Northwest --followed by snow -- sparking a radioactive fall-out of immense proportions (Greger 91).[106]

The Department of Defense immediately tested air and vegetation contamination levels within a one hundred mile radius of Hanford Engineer Works, but withheld the results from employees and the general public. According to Michele Stenehjem Gerber, “the results of the Green Run, in terms of air and vegetation contamination levels in the Columbia River Basin and throughout large stretches of the Pacific Northwest, were extreme” (91). Two weeks after the Green Run experiment, waterfowl tested seventy-miles from Hanford were already carrying contamination levels fourteen times higher than weeks before the toxic release. Moreover, atmospheric testing south of the plant at Kennewick, Washington, indicated radioactive measurements 1,000 times higher than the tolerable limit, while Carl C. Gamertsfelder suspects that at downriver towns such as The Dalles, Oregon, the radioactive plume “probably got as many people as it could” (Gerber 92; White, *Organic* 86).

In 1946, three years before the Green Run operation, the Atomic Energy Commission was already studying the effects of Iodine I-31 and discovered that when the chemical “concentrates in the human thyroid, it can emit enough energy to begin destroying surrounding tissue” (White, *Organic* 88). In years following the Green Run, exposure levels were tested and researchers identified 3,000 people who “received a 840-rad dose to their thyroids,” a measurement that is 70 times the average of exposure from natural causes. Even more problematic, radiation levels were also evident in children, “who are more vulnerable to such radiation than adults,” yet after five years of testing both humans and animals, the Atomic Energy Commission concluded that concentration

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[106] According to Richard White, “a curie is a measure of the amount of radioactive material present based on the number of atoms on an element that decay per second. One curie is 37 billion atoms undergoing decay each second” (*Organic* 86, see also Gerber 298).

levels surrounding the Hanford Site were well within tolerable limits (White, *Organic* 87).[107]

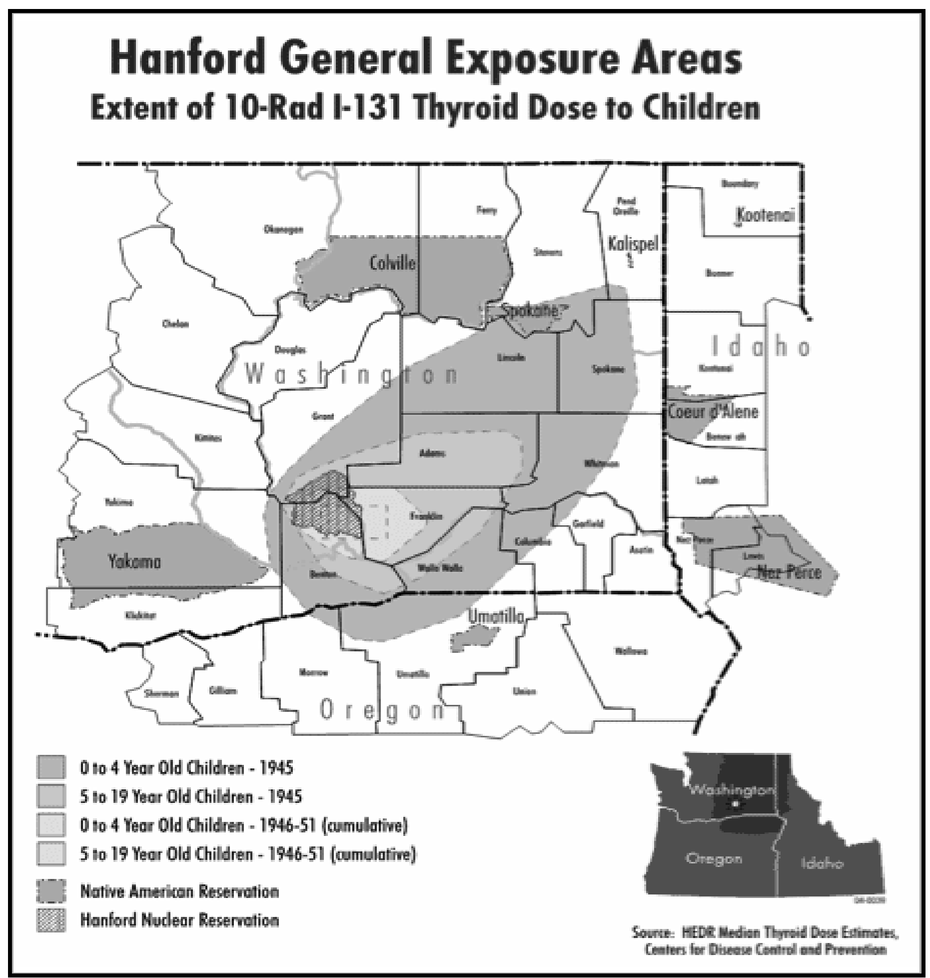

Figure 36. Map of General Radiation Exposure Areas, 1945; 1946-1951. Washington State Department of Health.

During the 1980s and 1990s, with knowledge of the Green Run declassified and made public, many people who worked at Hanford Nuclear Reserve and lived downriver

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[107] According to Richard White, "A rad is a measurement of energy deposited by radiation in the body" (*Organic* 87, see also Gerber 301).

and downwind from the radioactive discharge zone, questioned the ecological health of the Columbia River, the illnesses emerging in their bodies, and the integrity of the federal government. Many suspected that the Department of Defense had released toxic waste as a "radiological warfare experiment" on its own people "designed to test harm to foodstuffs and living creatures," a theory that is not yet proven because "the specific reasons for the Green Run are still classified by the U.S. Department of Defense" (Gerber 90-91). With secret documents declassified, however, the federal government was at least pressured to clean-up the nuclear waste. In 1989, the U.S. Department of Defense, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the State of Washington Department of Ecology signed a tri-party agreement that delineated the roles and responsibilities for each organization's participation in the clean-up process.

Following the declassification of Department of Defense records, federal and state agencies mobilized to repair the ecological health of the Columbia River; however, monetary and health-related assistance for laborers and those living downriver from Hanford Nuclear Reserve has not come so quickly. During the 1980s and 1990s, employees and downwinders continued to tell stories of cancer and undiagnosed illnesses, but, according to Richard White, the burden of proof has remained on the victims who suffer from the federal reclamation of the Columbia River:

> There is little doubt these releases [at Hanford] killed people. But we can never know with certainty who was killed; whose cancer was natural and whose was not. These deaths were planned because the releases were planned, although the planners did not intend to kill individual victims. (*Organic* 88)

Indeed, according to a General Accounting Report from 1994, the Department of Energy was spending an average of forty million dollars a year contesting claims of U.S. federal workers across the nation who were blaming illnesses on exposure to radiation or toxic chemicals from nuclear plants (Bernton A1). After more than two decades of refusing to acknowledge occupational complaints, the U.S. Congress finally determined that it was prudent to compensate employees who incurred an illness or disease from a federally

managed nuclear production plant during World War II and the Cold War era. The Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (2000) now offers 150,000 dollars of medical compensation to federal employees whose illnesses or cancers can be traced to within a fifty-percent probability of being linked to radiation or toxic chemical exposure. At last count more than 1,200 surviving laborers from Hanford Engineer Works were seeking compensation, a small amount considering that 137,000 men and women circulated through Hanford Engineer Works during World War II alone (see Dunn 797-798, Bernton A1, Sanger 68).

After Merv Witherup was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1983, his son William worked to expose and enact the historical record of Hanford Nuclear Reserve by crafting and distributing personalized and occupationally informed poems about the radioactive poisons that circulated throughout the Columbia River Basin after the Green Run operation. In a poem titled "Down Wind, Down River" (1996), Witherup uses the line and cadence of "The Star Spangled Banner" to disclose the declassified secrets of the Green Run. Replete with references to "isotopes of beauty" made with "murderous intellect," the poem is dedicated to Frederick Wayne Nelson, a friend to the poet and fellow downwinder, "who was in the bio-path of Green Run, 1949" (*Down Wind* 140). From the opening lines, Witherup's poem re-enacts the deception of the federal government, by leading readers to believe they are stepping into a patriotic tribute to a military monument; however, the poem then mutates into a political indictment of the federal government and the deliberate poisoning of its own people:

> Oh say can you breathe
> By the dawn's early wind
> What so proudly we made
> At Hanford Engineering Works:
> Iodine-131, plutonium, ruthenium. (*Down River* 140).

Witherup continues by recalling one summer morning "at the dawn's early light," when he finished his morning paper route in Richland, Washington, and stopped to search for arrowheads along the "hot Columbia." His bicycle, left lying on the rocky bank, was

"sparkling with flakes / Of mica not mica" (140). Breathing in the dusty residue of the earth, Witherup retroactively interprets himself as a casualty of the "scientific elite," a victim of those, who, intoxicated by their own "murderous intellect," proudly "hailed" their visions of nationalism and went to work "gassing their own / Workers, soldiers and children" in a domestic replay of the Holocaust in Europe that they had promised to end (141).

In *The Organic Machine* (1995), Richard White describes how the Department of Defense believed their intellectual prowess could use the cooling waters of the Columbia River to produce plutonium without significant human and ecological consequences. However, the Green Run operation illustrates that federal engineers -- despite intelligence and precautions -- were, in fact, unable to rise above or beyond the ecological framework of the watershed they worked within. As White explains:

> Seen in one way, Hanford represented a transcendence of nature. It produced elements unknown to nature. It promised energy free from the limits of wind, water, and the stored solar energy of oil and coal. Seen in another way, Hanford only complicated natural systems. It could not escape the movement of wind and water of the life cycles of plants and animals. It could not escape human bodies. (88)

As "Down Wind, Down River" continues, Witherup traces toxicity through the waterway, wildlife, and vegetation sources in his lines, providing readers with a literary map that charts the conflation of biological life in the Columbia River Basin, as well as the uses and abuses of the watershed at Hanford Engineer Works. He documents the circulation of toxicity from water to animals when he speaks of "salmon smolt stunned / as they hit the outflow plumes," a phrase that puns the *plume* of toxic fall-out against the outflow *flumes* engineered to guide salmon around the deathly turbines of hydroelectric dams that were used to power the federal reserve (141).

Returning to the cadence of the "Star Spangled Banner," Witherup compares the "rocket's red glare" and "bombs bursting in air" to the radioactive explosion and fall-out of "plutonium in the hog swill" and "Ruthenium in the jackrabbit's eye" (*Down River*

140). As the ashes of patriotism fall onto nearby crops of “sage and thistle” and “sweet, newly cut alfalfa,” radiation enters soil and food sources that are distributed and consumed by local residents. When interpreted historically and geographically, these are not subjective gestures, but references to the bodies of animals that were tested by the federal government for radiation following the Green Run operation (*Down River* 140). Witherup concludes his caustic litany against the Department of Defense by contorting the final lines of the national anthem, “O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave,” with the equally rhythmic phrase, “Down river, down wind; / I-131, plutonium, ruthenium,” offering readers a personalized and localized glimpse into the repercussions of national security and the blinding dangers of unregulated patriotism (*Down River* 141).

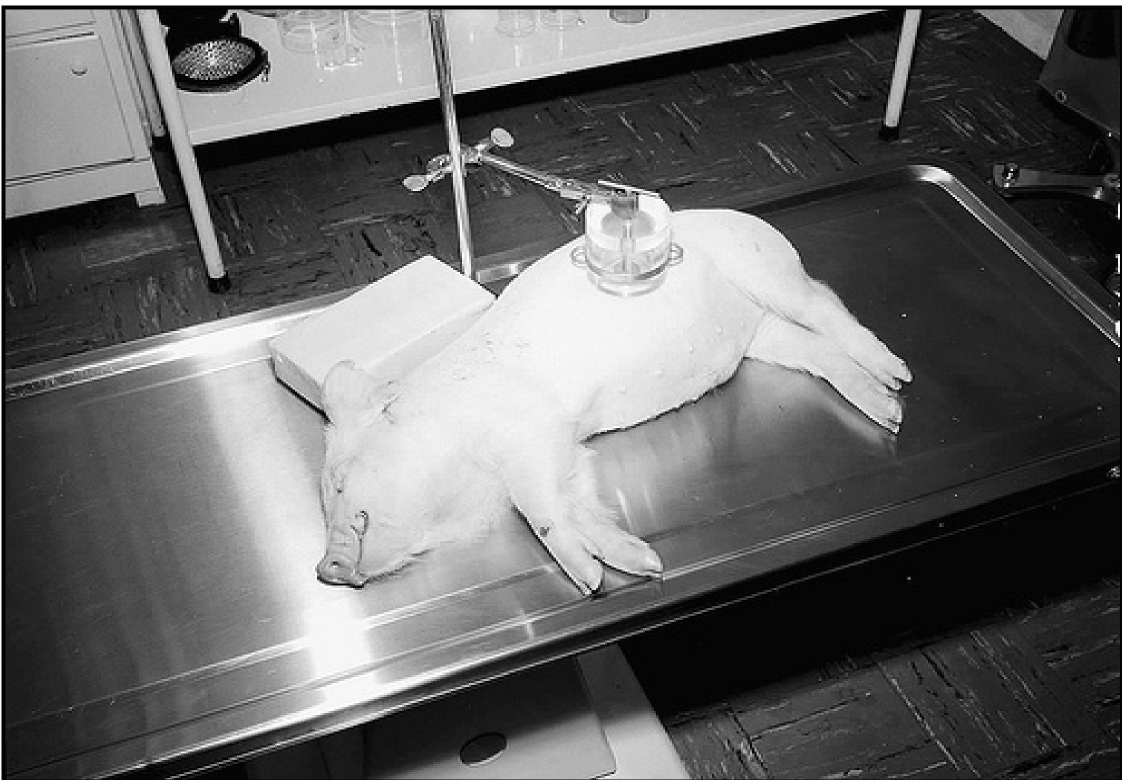

Figure 37. Exposure Apparatus on a Pig at Hanford, 1958. Hanford Declassified Retrieval System. No. 16345-NEG-D.

The consequences of unrestrained patriotism and nationalism are further enacted in a poem titled "Once by Hanford Reach" (1985), which re-writes the scenic beauty of Hanford Reach National Monument (2000) according to the bombing of Nagasaki, Japan, an event which took place fifty-five years before the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife revised the site and reclaimed it as its first national monument. Using the vegetation of Hanford Reach for the crux of his argument, Witherup plucks an "exploded milkweed pod" from the site to figuratively and literally connect the "blinding and delicate" implosion of the seed pod to the impact delivered by "Fat Man," the atomic bomb detonated on Nagasaki, Japan. Witherup writes:

> I cupped an exploded milkweed pod—
> The air so still
> Seeds would not shake out;
> The light in the husk
> Both blinding and delicate –
> Like that moment at Ground Zero
> When eye pods implode
> Dark seeds of death-light. (*Down Wind* 97)

Here, the local vegetation of Hanford Reach absorbs and releases the explosive power of plutonium manufactured at the atomic energy plant. Witherup deploys and re-enacts this violence with two dashes -- the first placed at the end of a line signifying an "exploded milkweed pod," and the second -- marking the "blinding and delicate" implosion of Fat Man upon Nagasaki. The plutonium, manufactured by DuPont workers such as Merv Witherup, is described as an ironic "light" of promise and death, a power encased in a "husk" of vegetative-metal, waiting to rupture into "dark seeds of death-light" that will blind, burn and kill its victims.

In a book titled, *We of Nagasaki: The Story of Survivors in an Atomic Wasteland* (1964), Nagai Taskashi, a physician and survivor of World War II, provides documentary records and stories about the aftermath of the bombing of Nagasaki. In the account, Taskashi speaks of victims' eyes being disintegrated, such as those of a nameless woman who was photographed and included in the work with "eyelids . . . drawn up, showing

black holes where the eyes had been burned out" (42). Witherup enacts this blinding reality at the end of his poem, when -- immediately following the second dash of impact--he describes "eye pods" that "implode" in poetic aftershocks. This image references not only the milkweed pod, but more important, the *eyes* of victims that suffer "blinding" from a "death-light" built from ecological resources at Hanford Reach National Monument (*Down Wind* 97).

In 1986, after learning of the Green Run operation, William Witherup spent the last twenty-five years of his life tracing local and national histories embedded in the ecology of Hanford Nuclear Reserve. His poetry is replete with virulent memories of growing up in the shadow of the atomic energy plant; however, when the federal government chose to recognize Reactor-B as a National Historic Monument to be managed by the U.S. National Park Service (2008), the poet was left nearly speechless. Days after the announcement, with energy and anger against the federal government mounting, Witherup wrote "B-Reactor: Hanford: A National Monument," (2008) one of last and most fervent poems that he wrote.[108]

Like "Once by Hanford Reach," this historically and geographically inflected poem opens by fusing local geography to the bombing of Nagasaki. The poem begins with an image of "wind gusting down the Columbia," enacted by lines that move in a series of unpunctuated swaths that co-mingle with "moaning voices / Of Nagasaki dead." Then, grounding the lines in local ecology, Witherup catalogues the so-called celebrated and abundant wildlife at the national reserve, pointing to animals that now carry scars of radioactive fall-out and chemical spills. Like a naturalist collecting archival samples of

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[108] "B-Reactor: Hanford: A National Monument" was written August 28, 2008, only nine days after the reactor was designated a national monument. Witherup's poem was published online and made available through the Washington Nuclear Museum and Education Center. <http://toxipedia.org/display/wanmec/B-REACTOR-+HANFORD +A+NATIONAL +MONUMENT>

the land and its wildlife, Witherup provides readers with snapshots of “a mutant dragon fly” that “sips a chemical cocktail / from a dank cooling pond,” a “blind Magpie,” and the indigenous, fast-talking trickster “Coyote,” who now stripped of procreative speech, traipses mutely across the land with “a tumor on his tongue.” Like the dumbfounded and scared mythic Coyote, Witherup finds it impossible to voice his disdain for a government that celebrates and then memorializes biological and ecological violence against its own citizens and ecology. He tests a sequence of words and images to house his anger, but ultimately lets language fall into silence by walking away from the military relic in “search for a new word / to name [his] loathing disgust / for what now will amuse gaping tourists.”[109]

Since his father’s diagnosis of prostate cancer in 1983, William Witherup was convinced that radioactive and chemical exposure at Hanford Engineer Works had caused his father’s illness and death in 1988. However, while still speaking and writing on behalf of the ecological and human communities poisoned by the nuclear reserve, Witherup was diagnosed with leukemia, which he insists was caused “by living downwind of the Hanford Nuclear site” (Montano B1). He died in 2009. Frank Wayne Nelson, a fellow downwinder and long-time friend to the poet, now speaks on behalf of his friend, who, years earlier, dedicated “Down Wind, Down River” to him. Witherup’s life has ended, but his poetry lives to tell personal, local, and international histories of workers, downwinders, and international victims of violence who were all poisoned by radioactive fall-out and the toxic reverberations of Hanford Nuclear Reserve.

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[109]Starting in 2009, the Department of Defense began offering sixty public tours of the Hanford Nuclear Reserve and Reactor-B each year. The tours last five hours and are free to the public.

Rewriting the Past, Transforming the Present:
Gloria Bird and the Reclamation of Kettle Falls

Moving upriver from Hanford Nuclear Reservation leads to Grand Coulee Dam (1942), which at 550 feet high, remains the largest hydroelectric dam in the United States and an historical monument of the Bureau of Reclamation and the New Deal. Through World War II and the Cold War, the dam generated electricity for Hanford Engineer Works, federally subsidized aluminum plants, and still managed to irrigate some 670,000 acres of semi-arid land for the Columbia Basin Project (est. 1948). At Grand Coulee Dam, roughly two-three percent of the Columbia River's annual flow is now diverted and pumped south, where it nourishes fields and wheat farms for the New Deal vision. These economic and environmental benefits have come with high price tags, however, particularly for tribes and bands of the Colville and Spokane Indians. The construction of Grand Coulee Dam severed more than half of the Columbia's salmon spawning-beds and inundated Kettle Falls (1941), a primary salmon fishery to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and Spokane Tribe of Indians.[110] Salmon migrations diminished further with the completion of Chief Joseph Dam (1955), an Army Corps of Engineers project that was built without fish ladders fifty miles below Grand Coulee. The dam, named in honor of Nez Perce leader Chief Joseph, who spent his final years in exile on Colville Reservation, borders the reservation and has nearly eliminated salmon migrations to tribal lands.

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[110] The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation was established in 1872 and is located in North Central Washington. Reservation enrollment consists of the following twelve bands and tribes: the Colville, the Nespelem, the San Poil, the Lake, the Palus, the Wenatchi (Wenatchee), the Chelan, the Entiat, the Methow, the southern Okanogan, the Moses Columbia and the Nez Perce of Chief Joseph's Band. For more information of the significance of the Kettle Falls fishery to the Colville Reservation see: David H. Chance, *People of the Falls* (Kettle Falls, WA: Kettle Falls Historical Center, 1986); Lawney Reyes, *White Grizzly Bear's Legacy: Learning to Be Indian* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington, P, 2002); and Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1986), 35-36, 42-45.

The inundation of Kettle Falls and construction of Chief Joseph Dam has shaped the work of Gloria Bird (1951- present), a member of the Spokane Tribe of Indians whose prose and poetry reclaims lost histories of Salish Indians and their cultural and geographical relationship to salmon and the inundated falls.[111] Born in the Yakima Valley in 1951, Bird was raised on the Colville and Spokane Indian Reservations and views her relationship with the Columbia River Basin "not so much with a single reservation as with a larger territory" ("Writing" 31). As an advocate for local reclamation efforts at tribal schools, Bird continues to live and teach on the Spokane Indian Reservation near Wellpinit, Washington, where she also serves as an associate editor for the *Wicazo Sa Review: A Journal of Native American Studies*. Her numerous essays and collections of poetry, *Full Moon on the Reservation* (1993) and *River of Memory* (1997), bear witness to the survival of indigenous peoples and the possibility of realigning the narrative threads of federal colonization through a style of literary activism that gains "political leverage" by using the "enemy's language" to rewrite personal and tribal histories ("Writing" 30; Bird and Harjo 22).

In an essay titled "Writing as 'Witness,'" Bird explains the two-fold mission of her "political" work through the categories of both "personal story" and "testimony."

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[111]The Spokane Tribal Reservation was established in 1881 and is located in East Central Washington. The enrolled members of the reservation consist of bands from the Upper, Middle and Lower Spokane Indians. The Spokane Indians fished the Spokane River and gathered at Spokane Falls, now the waterfront of downtown, Spokane, Washington. When the reservation was established in 1881, the three bands were fractured and some tribal members now live on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation, the Flathead Indian Reservation, and the nearby Colville Indian Reservation. In 1911, the Little Falls Dam ended salmon migrations on the upper Spokane River; in 1942, with the completion of Grand Coulee Dam, spawning migrations on the entire Spokane River were lost to the downriver dam. For more information on the Spokane tribes and their relationship to the Spokane River see the following: Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 1986), 217-220; Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun* (Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma P, 2006); and John Fahey, "Power Plays: The Enigma of Little Falls." *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 82.4 (October 1991): 122-131.

Writing as a Native American woman who was never meant to survive the U.S. Government's campaigns against the Spokane and Colville tribes, Bird sees her "personal story as bearing witness to colonization," while her creative work functions as "a testimony aimed at undoing those processes that attempt to keep [indigenous peoples] in the grips of the colonizer's mental bondage" ("Writing" 29). She describes colonization as a "multilayered" and complex palimpsest of history that carries narrative and geographical records of "physical colonization," which includes "the loss of lands, lives, and livelihood," as well as the ongoing colonization of the mind, which is sustained by the oppressors' continued attempts to revise and manipulate tribal languages, religious beliefs and rituals ("Writing" 29-30). For Bird, the motives for the federal colonization of the Columbia River Basin are clear, but "the hardest work is tracing back" and recovering cultural and spiritual meaning through the entangled lines of a past that has been collected, narrated, and distributed by government agencies, mission boarding schools, and Euro-American writers ("Writing" 30). In the process of colonization, so-called authoritative histories of indigenous peoples have been gathered and written by white editors and historians who have distributed tribal histories of the Spokane and Colville tribes on reservations and at boarding schools. Taken as historical records of their own existence as peoples, Bird suspects that the colonized tribes now have "no history of [their] own, at least none that has been recognized" ("Writing" 30).

For Bird, the process of reclaiming history and her own identity as a Columbia River Indian woman depends upon what Bird and Joy Harjo call the "Reinvention of the Enemy's Language." By this they mean the creative use of the colonizer's own speech to rewrite and remap the lines of socio-economic, ecological, and spiritual bondage. Bird insists that when indigenous poets and essayists become "attentive to the nuances of the English language and its ability to 'capture' readers and listeners," the act of using "the colonizer's tongue and turning those images around to mirror an image of the colonized to the colonizers," will transform memoiristic and fictional work into expressions of

political and cultural healing that can open possibilities for socio-economic justice and ecological renewal (Bird and Harjo 22).

As a founding member of the Northwest Native American Writers Association, a collaborative organization created to support opportunities for Native American writers to publish and distribute their work with minimal editorial interference, Bird insists that Native American women of the Columbia River Basin need the space to write and publish without being "edited and legitimized" by an "overwhelmingly male majority who are perceived as the authorities" on matters of scholarship and publishing (Bird and Harjo 22).[112] According to Bird, the need to reclaim the lives of indigenous women of the Columbia River Basin was first made clear in *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography* (1888-1936), the account of Christine Quintasket, a Colville Indian and author of *Cogewea* (1927) who is widely recognized as "the first Native American woman to publish a novel" (J. Miller xi, xxiii). According to Jay Miller, a recent editor of Mourning Dove's autobiography, Quintasket's popularity among white audiences of the 1920s and 1930s was astounding, mostly because "her formal education was scant" and "her command of standard English was faulty" (J. Miller xi). Although Mourning Dove is now recognized as significant historical voice of the Pacific Northwest, Miller notes that her work depended upon "collaboration with white editors," men such as Lucullus V. McWhorter and Heister Dean Guie, two editor-businessmen from Yakima, Washington, who edited and marketed *Cogewea* (1927) and *Coyote Stories* (1933) for white readers.

By the mid-1930s, Mourning Dove had decided to stop writing indigenous folklore for white audiences and had started to work on her autobiography; however, she died in 1936, shortly before Grand Coulee Dam flooded Kettle Falls (1941) -- a site of

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[112]The Northwest Native American Writers Association was established by Gloria Bird, Elizabeth Woody, Vince Wannassay, Ed Edmo and Dian Million (est. 1990).

central importance in her memoir. Drafts of her incomplete manuscripts circulated through the hands of numerous white editors, until her collected papers were gathered at the University of Washington Archives in 1985. At that time, Jay Miller, the independent scholar and former Assistant Director of the Center for the History of the American Indian at the Newberry Library, organized the materials in order to edit what he believed would be an authentic version of her autobiography.

Miller's commitment to "rewriting" Mourning Dove's story with "standard English conventions of syntax, spelling, and grammar" has proven problematic for Gloria Bird, who offers a counter-reclamation of the autobiography in an essay titled, "Kettle Falls on the Columbia, Circa. 1937" (1998), a work that attempts to re-narrate Miller's heavily edited version of Mourning Dove's account of the fishery. The story is told through the voice of a nameless elderly woman speaking in the 1950s, after the construction of both Grand Coulee Dam (1942) and Chief Joseph Dam (1955). The majority of the narrative is invested in the life-patterns and rituals of the Kettle Falls fishery, situated one year after the death of Mourning Dove (1936), and only four years before the inundation of the falls and fishery.[113] Working within this strategically set window of time and place, Bird's essay attempts to re-write this important chapter of Native American history that has been collected, written, and distributed by white voices of authority.

Miller's *Mourning Dove* and Gloria Bird's, "Kettle Falls on the Columbia, Circa. 1937" draw from similar geographical and historical sources, but they are two very

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[113] Mourning Dove's account of the Kettle Falls Fishery is titled, "The Fishery at Kettle Falls," chapter eight of *Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography,* ed. Jay Miller (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1990), 99-113. Due to the historical and geographical significance of the Kettle Falls fishery, this portion of the autobiography has become a primary source of information for Native American writers such as Gloria Bird as well as Lawney Reyes, who draws heavily from Mourning Dove's account of Kettle Falls in *White Grizzly Bear's Legacy: Learning to Be Indian* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington, P, 2002) and *B Street: The Notorious Playground of Coulee Dam* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 2008).

different documents. Miller's reconstruction of Christine Quintasket's autobiography provides readers with a story of an ancient fishery that makes "a significant contribution to our knowledge of this area," but it is does not excavate deeper human histories and ecological relationships between people and place that are now submerged in the inundated site (J. Miller 212). According to Elizabeth Woody, the tendency to represent Native American "people with simple facts and figures in a standard scholarly montage" is a practical means of assessing the past; however, she asserts, "living history cannot be fragmented into facts and chronologies without losing the sense of the organic whole" ("Confederated" 196). Working to correct this pattern, Bird's essay attempts to "rewrite" and reconstruct Jay Miller's narrative threads by weaving elements of ritual, relationship, and local topography back into a story that was lost in colonization and editorial translation ("Writing" 48).

Comparatively speaking, Gloria Bird has taken Jay Miller's rather generic version of the Kettle Falls Fishery published in *Mourning Dove* and reinvigorated analytic and linear prose -- preoccupied with "standard" English and grammar -- with ritual, relationship, and cultural meaning. This is evident from the opening lines, where Miller's narrated voice of Mourning Dove describes Kettle Falls as a "prime fishing location . . . on the upper Columbia River," a place where Salish Indians came to spear king salmon in the "homeland of [the] Colville people." Speaking through Miller, Mourning Dove does not describe the landscape with any sense of relational or spiritual connectivity, but leaves the task to someone with "an artistic mind" who might be able to "draw a beautiful gift of nature" (J. Miller 99). Bird takes up this task in the opening lines of her own contribution to the palimpsest of history. Working through a voice of a nameless and "invisible" narrator, Bird describes the Columbia River at Kettle Falls as "a green crystalline ribbon flowing through the heart of the lands of the Inland Salish peoples" ("Writing" 30, "Kettle Falls" 48). Here, strictly informative language used to describe the falls is replaced with a personalized depiction of a site where "tables of water scallops

in the fast running waters" and the "backs of salmon dapple the glistening surface" ("Kettle Falls" 48). The Colville bands' cultural and spiritual relationship to this place is established further when the narrator informs readers that indigenous peoples at Kettle Falls are interconnected and "related by blood, by intertribal marriage and by the act of salmon fishing" ("Kettle Falls" 48).

Through the process of colonization, Mourning Dove, like many of Gloria Bird's ancestors, converted to Catholicism and soon found their indigenous rituals, gender roles, and cultural beliefs re-written by mission boarding schools.[114] Mourning Dove, who attended Goodwin Mission School near Kettle Falls from 1895-1899, describes rituals and gender roles practiced at Kettle Falls, but the meaning behind their significance to the fishery are lost in assimilation and editorial translation. She explains how men at the falls constructed fishing gear "in both old and new ways" and fished according to regulations set forth by "a man called the salmon divider," a leader who distributed the fish among the people evenly and unselfishly (J. Miller 100-101). Readers are not informed why such traditions existed. They only learn that old men fished with "weirs" and spears with "sharpened deer horn or bone tied into a wooden frame," while the younger generations used an "iron spear made by a blacksmith" (J. Miller 100). By contrast, women were not allowed to touch fishing equipment, or even allowed near the river during salmon fishing. Adhering to specific gender roles, Mourning Dove explains how women upheld strict rituals concerning the preparation of salmon:

> Women could never throw any salmon entrails in or near the river, when the odor might carry to the fish. The blood and entrails were usually buried safely away from dogs or from the footsteps of women who might be in their monthly periods of contamination. Women were not allowed to bathe or wash while men were

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[114]Gloria Bird writes about personal and ongoing tribal tensions that persist due to the colonizing impact of Colville Indians converting to Catholicism in "Breaking the Silence, Writing as 'Witness,'" in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing,* ed. Simon Ortiz (Tucson: U of Arizona P), 26-49.

> fishing. They were to stay away from the water above the falls and only take camp water or do their washing below them. (104-105)

Again, this account of the fishery is informative and factual, but the meanings and spiritual practices tied to such rituals have been excised through colonization and editorial translation, a process that Salish poet and novelist Sherman Alexie, like Gloria Bird, has argued are essentially one in the same.[115]

Figure 38. Colville Indians Fishing at Kettle Falls, c. 1930. University of Washington Special Collections Library. No. L93-75.31.

Working from Miller's version of Mourning Dove's account of Kettle Falls, Gloria Bird's re-narrated reclamation of the fishery scores an alternative layer over the

[115] Sherman Alexie grew up the Spokane Reservation and describes Mourning Dove's work as the product of white editors who were pretending to be Indians. Under the license of editorial scholarship, Alexie asserts that many white editors and translators continue to endorse and practice forms of scholarship where "poetic license and manifest destiny are often the same thing" (Peterson 29).

palimpsest of history by grounding tribal rituals alongside ancestral teachings from Coyote, the first salmon divider who held the power to give and take back the power of Kettle Falls according to indigenous' peoples willingness to uphold ancestral rituals and spiritual-cultural practices passed down through generations. As historian William L. Lang explains, "once described in native oral stories as places where Coyote brought salmon for human use, Celilo and Kettle Falls were places of immense cultural power for native people, where intertribal places connected people within a lived space, where their fishing and other activities fit into a larger explanation of life and the meaning behind the physical locations" ("From Where . . ." 84). In stories told throughout the Columbia River Basin, Coyote forbids and destroys both natural and man-made traps and dams throughout the watershed, for they disrupt the equitable migration of salmon to upriver tribes. One story, for example, tells how two women attempted to hoard salmon by constructing a dam on the Columbia below Celilo Falls. Coyote destroyed the dam, released the salmon, and punished the women by turning them into swallows who still return each spring to announce when salmon will migrate up the Columbia.[116]

The narrator of Gloria Bird's version of the Kettle Falls fishery describes nearly identical images and rituals documented in Miller's *Mourning Dove*, but references to cultural artifacts and fishing practices are realigned and reinvigorated with ritualism and meaning and re-grounded to Coyote's history with the watershed and Salish peoples. Bird's narrator, for example, acknowledges Kettle Falls and its salmon fishery as a free-flowing gift from Coyote that was created after he "released salmon from the first trap" at the mouth of the Columbia ("Kettle Falls" 48). She upholds cultural practices passed

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[116]For accounts of Coyote freeing Columbia River salmon from natural traps and man-made dams see Edward S. Curtis, *The North American Indian*. Vol. 8. 1911. (New York, NY: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1980), 107-109; Jarold Ramsey, *Coyote was Going There: Indian Literature of the Oregon Country* (Seattle, WA: U of Washington P, 1977); and Terry Thompson and Steven M. Egesdal, eds., *Salish Myths and Legends: One People's Stories* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 2008).

down through generations of elders, as indicated by the respect she shows to her husband, who prepares traditional fishing gear and "spears of sharpened deer horn," even as younger men "skip from boulder to boulder along the shore, hoping to spear the salmon with their whiteman-made iron spears" ("Kettle Falls" 48). Throughout the narrative, Bird's narrator is suspicious of new methods of fishing and adopting teachings that will ultimately "devalue the self-sufficient methods that our people's survival depends on" ("Kettle Falls" 48-49). She warns the youth to uphold tribal fishing practices and rituals for food preparation, but fears for the tribe's future when she sees children disrespecting salmon and ancient rituals by "throwing scraps of fish guts at each other" and then hears rumor that a young woman touched a traditional salmon fishing spear ("Kettle Falls" 49). Lack of respect for ancestral rituals and spiritual practices makes Bird's narrator fear that "the world is changing" and that disturbing changes are bound to arrive "in the near future" ("Kettle Falls" 50-51). Her premonitions are confirmed four years later, when backwaters from Grand Coulee Dam inundate the fishery and end all salmon migrations to the upper Columbia River.

In Bird's rendering of the Kettle Falls fishery, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indians were responsible for upholding specific rituals and practices passed down by Coyote and tribal elders through multiple generations. From her narrator's perspective, the loss of the fishery is caused by the construction of Grand Coulee Dam, but also triggered by Indian people's unwillingness to retain and uphold ancestral rituals. At first glance, the narrator's indictment against her own tribe appears to cut against an assumed utopian-historical relationship between the falls and indigenous peoples. However, as Bird explains, among the many false historical representations of Indians circulating through visual and narrative texts, perhaps none is as problematic as the appropriation of Indians "as the first environmentalists," part of a cultural disease she calls "the Green Indian Syndrome" ("Writing" 48). Describing the role that indigenous peoples as well as the federal government played in the loss of Kettle Falls, Bird's essay

tells a personal and indigenous version of history that undercuts generations of colonizing stereotypes that have isolated and elevated Native Americans as ecological others.

After the inundation of Kettle Falls, Gloria Bird's narrator recalls how Colville Indians were forced to take up wheat farming as a way of life. The narrator's husband, a traditional spear fisherman, died because he was unable to make the transition from fishing to farming. In the late 1950s, now living alone on the reservation, the aged woman tells how salmon no longer run upriver and how irrigation provided by Grand Coulee Dam for the Columbia Basin Project (1948) has turned the reservation into fields of wheat, making native roots and berries difficult to find.[117] In recent years, salmon migration has diminished even further through the construction of Chief Joseph Dam (1955). Constructed fifty miles downstream from Grand Coulee and adjacent to the Colville Reservation, Chief Joseph Dam blocks salmon migration to the southern border of the reservation, which causes Bird's narrator to fear that hydroelectric dams will soon end the tribe's "way of life for good" ("Kettle Falls" 55). Still disturbed by her tribe's unwillingness to remember and practice ancestral teachings passed down through generations, Bird's narrator bears witness to a sense of collective loss and anxiety that is completely absent in Mourning Dove's edited autobiography.

The elderly narrator of "Kettle Falls on the Columbia, Circa. 1937" insists that if indigenous peoples would recommit themselves to tribal teachings and rituals, then Coyote would destroy the hydroelectric dams and re-create the falls. Her appeal is consistent with historical findings from Jay Miller, who indicates that in years following the construction of Grand Coulee Dam (1942) and Chief Joseph Dam (1955), Colville Indians (such as Bird's fictional narrator) have continued to remind themselves of

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[117] In "Breaking the Silence: Writing as 'Witness," Gloria Bird discusses the historical and personal realities of this problem, noting that all the land around her family's "old homesite is now covered with wheat" and that places where roots and berries were once gathered are "now covered over by miles of wheat" (34, 32).

Coyote's disdain for river "traps" and his historical record of destroying dams and freeing salmon throughout the Columbia River. Jay Miller writes:

> The vitality of traditional beliefs about mythic time and events is such that Colvilles still frequently remind each other that someday Coyote will return from the East and break up the sixteen dams along the Columbia, restoring their ancient traditions, waterways, and foods. At present the salmon can only reach upriver only as far as Chief Joseph Dam. Their belief rests on the account of how Coyote initially broke up the first fish trap impounding salmon near the mouth of the Columbia, releasing the primordial salmon in the days when the world was young. (227)

The narrator of Bird's essay reminds readers of a deep faith, not in Mourning Dove's colonizing version of Catholicism, but in Coyote's promise to "tear apart the dams that block the passage of the salmon" ("Kettle Falls" 55). She reminds herself that when tribal peoples reclaim their way of life from their colonizers, "Coyote will come back and rescue us again as he did in the old days," however, at this juncture in history, Bird's narrator will follow her husband to the grave before she sees the concrete walls of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams get dismantled by any mythic-political force ("Kettle Falls" 55).

While Bird's narrator waits for Coyote to destroy hydroelectric dams and restore the salmon fisheries of indigenous peoples, Bird herself, who is far less patient, has set to work spinning personalized and historically inflected verse that enacts personal frustrations of living within a watershed where fertility and indigenous flourishing have been exchanged for the economic benefits of Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams. Salmon of the Columbia River Basin are instinctively tied to place. At the point of maturity, they follow a reproductive rhythm and return from the Pacific Ocean to their places of birth in order to spawn. After the eggs are fertilized, both male and female die and their decomposing bodies circulate downstream to give life to other creatures within the watershed. As bioregional advocate Freeman House observes, salmon "*always* find their way back to the stream or lake where they were born" (66-67). Yet, as professor of environmental studies Kai N. Lee explains, when ecological health of the Columbia River

is measured against the construction of hydroelectric dams, "the inferior position of fish and wildlife is evident in the decline of the annual fish runs [on the Columbia River] from roughly 10 to 16 million in the pre-industrial era to 2.5 million by the late 1970s" (98).

In a poem titled "Images of Salmon and You" (1994), Bird personalizes the consequential realities of losing salmon migrations to Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams by grafting her identity onto a female salmon that waits for a reproductive partner in waters blocked by concrete and steel. Measuring these historical and geographical realities against currents of personal desire, Bird writes:

> Your absence has left me only fragments of a summer's run
> on a night like this, fanning in August heat a seaweeded song.
> Sweat glistens on my skin, wears me translucent, sharp as scales.
>
> The sun wallowing its giant roe beats my eyes back red and dry.
> Have you seen it above the highway ruling you like planets?
> Behind you, evening is Columbian, slips dark arms
>
> around the knot of distance that means nothing
> to salmon or slim desiring. (*Full Moon* 12)

Bird personifies herself as female salmon "fanning" her way up a Columbia River that now divides salmon and lovers, those who are left with only "fragments" of memory to call upon in times of instinctual "heat." Waiting upriver with a body worn "sharp as scales," her lover is an unpartnered and lost salmon, who, driven by cyclical rhythms of reproduction, has entered the "dark arms" of the Columbia, only to find a "heartbroken" watershed that is regulated by "currents of mutation." Here, Bird's imagery is explicitly bioregional, built upon the interlocking and cyclical patters of reproduction that are woven like a "knot" throughout the universe. In its August heat of reproduction, the sun is portrayed as a giant "wallowing" salmon, a "giant roe" of eggs that drives the earth's rhythmic ecology and its reproductive patterns (*Full Moon* 12).

David James Duncan, an essayist and novelist from the Columbia River Basin, explains the cycles and patterns of salmon reproduction in ways that compliment the interlocking relationship between salmon, humans and the watershed as depicted in

Gloria Bird's poem. In *My Story as Told by Water* (2001), Duncan describes the reproductive patterns of salmon and the Columbia River by imagining the sexuality of the Pacific Ocean as it moves with the rhythmic movements of the sun:

> Imagine this being [the Pacific Ocean] is your mother – because, in a very real sense, she is. Imagine the Sun is your biological father – because, in an equally real, life giving way, he is. . . . Imagine your ocean mother's wombs are countless, that her fecundity is infinitely varied, and there her endless slow lovemaking with the Sun brings about countless gestations and births and an infinity of beings: great blue whales and great white sharks; endless living castles of coral; vast phalanxes of fishes; incalculable flocks of birds; gigantic typhoons; weather patterns the size of continents – because it does. (185)

Duncan, like Gloria Bird, describes the Columbia River Basin as one of the earth's many maternal wombs. This is not metaphorical, but literal. The watershed's reproductive currents push and pull with the Pacific Ocean, supporting the rhythms of numerous life forms, including various species of salmon that move in and out of its watersheds. Like the Ocean and Sun, salmon follow this primordial pattern and rhythm, which calls them to generate ecological life through females that carry "eggs exactly the color of setting suns" and males with "milt" made from "broken bits of mountain and melting snows" (*My Story* 190).

In contrast to the cyclically driven reproductive patterns that mobilize and sustain salmon and the Columbia River, David James Duncan and Gloria Bird interpret the rhythms of hydroelectric dams as egregious obstacles to the Columbia River's reproductive energies. Duncan claims that the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers turned a once fertile birth canal of the Columbia River into a "sterile shipping channel" of economic reproduction, while deeper reclamation efforts at Grand Coulee Dam worked to perform a "hysterectomy" on the main-line river (*My Story* 187). Meanwhile, in an attempt to lure her spawning partner through federal sterility and back into reproductive waters, Gloria Bird calls her salmon partner through a concrete "highway" of water that separates salmon as well as people:

> . . . Sweet man of rivers,
> the blood of fisherman and women will drive you back again,
>
> appointed places set in motion like seasons. We are like salmon
> swimming against the mutation of current to find
> our heartbroken way home again, weight of red eggs and need.
> (*Full Moon* 12)

Here, Bird keeps the male and female linguistically connected through beads of "sweat" on her salmon-body that are known only by the "sweet man of rivers." The acoustic relationship between words and their reproductive connotations posits a future when lovers and salmon will spawn in waters unharnessed from restriction and colonization; until then, the narrator carries the tiny sun-roe in her body, the "weight of red eggs and need" (*Full Moon* 12). By grafting the tenuous future of salmon onto the health and survival of the Colville and Spokane tribes, Bird's work calls for indigenous peoples to reclaim tribal histories and to reassert themselves in the political sphere. By reclaiming and undoing colonizing histories and imagining possible routes for ecological healing and socio-economic restoration, Bird's work is rewriting the lines of colonization within the multi-layered palimpsest of the history of the Columbia River Basin.

The bioregional reclamation of key sites in the history of the federal reclamation of the Columbia River emerges in the site-specific work of Elizabeth Woody, William Witherup and Gloria Bird. The lyrical turns of their poetic lines can be used to articulate submerged places and national histories, while also enacting ways the poetic line can be used to document intersections of local and federal histories at Celilo Falls, Hanford Nuclear Reservation and Kettle Falls. The relationship between the rhythms and lines of their poetry and the watershed suggests that verse may play a part in reorienting how the watershed will be used and inhabited in the future. These literary signs of bioregional realignment can be found in installations of public art and place-based poetry that were completed and installed in the watershed during the 1990s. Building upon the rhythmic relationship between water and poetry, as well as the literalization of bioregional activism through site specific poetry as public art, two recent installations of poetry and public art

along the Methow and Spokane rivers are being used by local groups to reclaim tributaries of the Columbia River. This development within the bioregional movement, illustrates ways seemingly disparate groups of federal laborers, local environmental activists, Native and non-Native poets and writers, are working together in their differences to penetrate and reclaim the Columbia River Basin's complex historical geographies and to inscribe how the watershed might be mentally and physically understood, inhabited, and remembered by future generations.

CHAPTER V:
WRITING THE PLACE OF THE WATERWAY:
REVISING HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY
WITH POETRY AND PUBLIC ART

In *Lifeplace: Bioregional Thought and Practice* (2003), Robert L. Thayer, Jr., suggests that as local communities work to recover the ecological health of specific regions, locally informed literary and visual art projects can play an integral role in the distribution and maintenance of bioregional principles for the re-creation and re-inhabitation of place. As part of the re-imagining and recovery of exploited ecosystems and economies, Thayer suggests that "a distinctly regional art, aesthetics, literature, poetics, and music can evolve from and support bioregional culture" (94). As a bioregional "lifeplace" shaped by rhythms and currents of the Columbia River Basin, it should be no surprise that visual representations of fish and rivers are found pulsing throughout the infrastructure of the Pacific Northwest, particularly in urban centers such as Portland, Oregon, where urban planner Carl Abbott observes, "salmon and their rivers are ubiquitous in public art" and are variously "whimsical, realistic, or lyrical" and found in places as diverse as "the sides of restaurants and parking garages" (134). While visual images of salmon and rivers are a defining aspect of the Pacific Northwest, Abbott suspects that the mass production and installation of river and salmon inflected public art is mostly an ironic and "low cost way to remind swarming commuters of a different kind of migration" beyond their daily commutes to urban city centers (134).

Carl Abbott's observation and critique of the abundance and faddish presence of river-based public art throughout the Pacific Northwest articulates some of the long standing biases against this emerging visual genre. Since the establishment of the Art in Public Places Program (1967) through the National Endowment for the Arts (1965), public artists have rallied to situate "sculpture and installations sited at public places," often times with criticism and without community support. As Suzanne Lacy, public artist and editor of *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (1995) explains, many early installations of public art were monolithic sculptures, overtly political objects that

were situated in public spaces with little regard for viewers or the places their works were supposedly made to inhabit (19). However, like the bioregional movement, which evolved during the same time period, early manifestations of public art have developed so that many artists now collaborate with communities to create public works made from "nontraditional media to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives" (Lacy 19). Lacy describes this transformation as the emergence of a "new genre" of public art that uses multi-faceted visual, narrative, and performance media to produce more interactive and relational engagements with people and places (9). In this evolving paradigm, artist Suzi Gablik explains that "old specifications of artist and audience, creative and uncreative, professional and unprofessional -- distinctions between who is and who is not an artist -- begin to blur (86). Nevertheless, as art historian Patricia C. Phillips observes, even with significant advances and community awareness, "there remain feelings that public art is mutant -- a difficult stepchild in the family of art, unworthy of the attention of devoted critics of culture and society" (66).

Despite the critique of installations of public art, the ideological principles of public artists and bioregionalists are often highly compatible when it comes to questions of ecological reclamation, which has led to a proliferation of watershed related public art installations throughout the Columbia River Basin.[118] Evolving alongside the bioregional movement, theoretical discussions of public art have moved from installations of abstract sculpture toward questions of relational and ecological renewal

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[118] For more information on theoretical and applied discussions of public art see: Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle, WA: Bay Press, 1995); Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Wills, eds., *The Practice of Public Art* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008); and Lucy R. Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (New York, NY: New Press, 1998).

through increasingly experimental and embodied applications of visual arts. As Suzanne Lacy explains:

> The relational model [of public art], whether expressed psychologically or politically, draws upon a spiritual tradition in art. Many new genre public artists express their connection, through memory, to traditions of ethnicity, gender, or family. They talk about their habitation of the earth as a relationship with it and all beings that live there. These essentially ethical and religious assertions are founded on a sense of service and the need to overcome the dualism of a separate self. (36)

Gablik pursues relational and ecological restoration through the implementation of "connective aesthetics," a union of theory and practice that, like bioregionalism, claims "human nature is deeply embedded in the world." Her work consciously attempts to make art a channel for "connectedness and healing by opening up being to its full dimensionality -- not just the disembodied eye" (86).

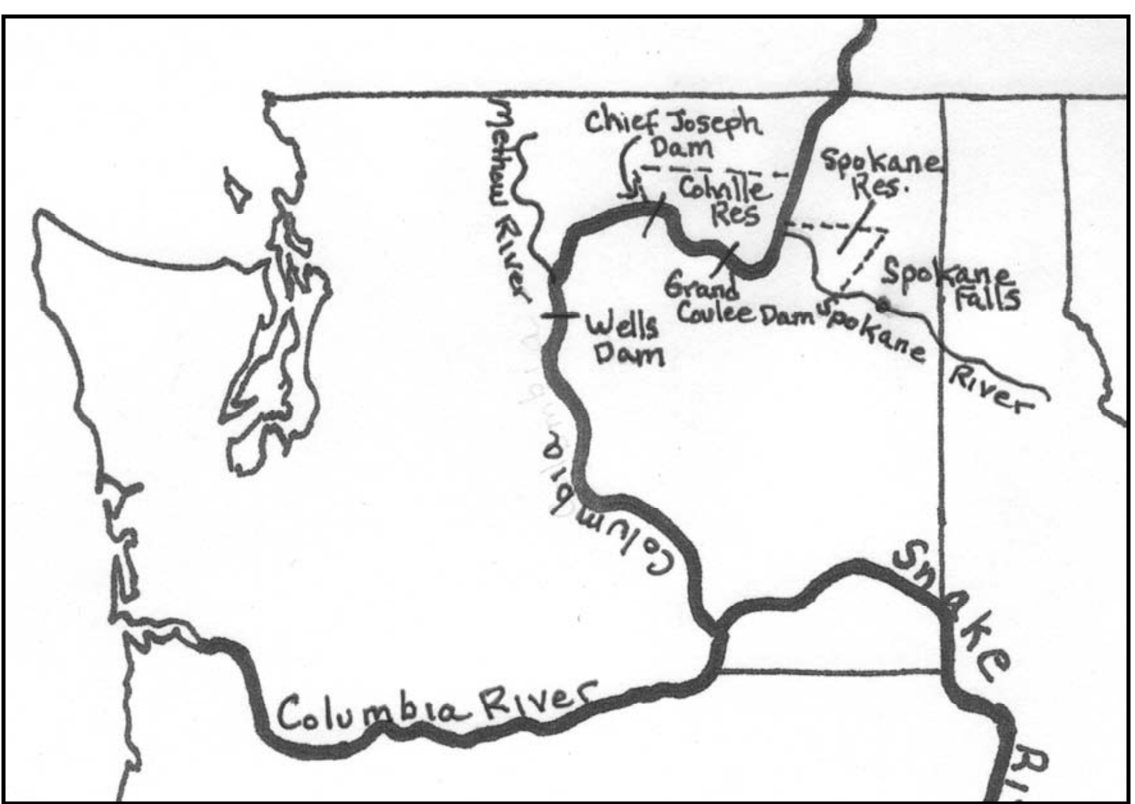

Figure 39. Map Locating the Methow and Spokane Rivers; Sites of *The Methow River Poems* and "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump.

For many viewers, public art installations may remain a culturally misunderstood means of reclaiming the ecological health of the Columbia River Basin; however, recent local engagement with relationally-minded installations on the watershed have recently proven that the combined presence of poetry and visual art can be one of the most effective means of encouraging the restoration of damaged watersheds with literary arts. As Suzanne Lacy explains, nontraditional and relational installations of public art are most successful when artists work to create "a participant, even a collaborator" out of inhabitants and locations by factoring in "real people and real places" into "the actual construction of the work" (37). With this in mind, this final chapter builds upon previous discussions concerning the relationship between water and poetry to trace how two collaborative, nontraditional, and relational works of public art, William Stafford's *The Methow River Poems* (1994) and Sherman Alexie's "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" (1994), have been created by non-Native and Native American writers in collaboration with state and federal employees. Since their installations, these works have been used by community groups and environmental activists to revise the ecological health of the Spokane and Methow rivers, major tributaries of the Columbia River that carry deep historical and geographical significance in the watershed's ever-changing ecology and culture.

William Stafford and the U.S. Forest Service:
Rewriting Place with *The Methow River Poems*

Before William Stafford's *The Methow River Poems* were posthumously published as the final section of *Even in Quiet Places* (1996), they appeared as published interpretive signs along the Methow River and Northern Cascades Highway in Washington (see Figures 5.1, 5.2).[119] In 1993, two U.S. Forest Service rangers, Sheela

[119] With the exception of "Ask Me" (1974), the Methow River poems were all written in 1993. They were later published as a posthumous chapbook titled *The Methow River Poems* (Lewiston, ID: Confluence Press, 1995). This edition includes the seven poems that were etched into signs along the highway, as well as a map to help readers locate the sign-poems. In 1996,

McLean and Curtis Edwards, wrote to Stafford and asked him to collaborate on a project that would combine natural history writing and educational artwork with site-specific poetry. Stafford's life ended before the poems were installed as public art, but the project was carried out through the collaborative efforts of McLean and Edwards, some generous financial donations, and local community groups such as The Methow Institute Foundation and The Friends of William Stafford. After standing along this tributary of the Columbia River for more than a decade, *The Methow River Poems* are working to transform the physical watershed by awakening readers to the interdependent relationship that humans share with the watersheds they inhabit.

The story behind *The Methow River Poems* begins in 1993, when Sheela McLean and Curtis Edwards were stationed along the Northern Cascades Highway in Winthrop, Washington, a town named after Theodore Winthrop, author of *The Canoe and the Saddle* (c. 1853). As rangers, the federal employees designed and installed natural history signs along the Methow River, a vibrant stretch of water that originates in the 8,000 foot peaks of the Northern Cascades, before it weaves through the Methow Valley and joins the Columbia River at the town of Pateros. As the rangers explain, the interpretive signs were most often read "by the more leisurely of the hundreds of thousands of vacationers who travel the North Cascades Highway each season" (McLean and Edwards, 20 April 1993).[120] After years of writing text for such signs, the rangers had grown weary of prose and were determined to offer visitors something more than consumable "facts" about the river. They wanted to communicate in a tone that was less

---

Kim Stafford and Jim Hepworth edited a collection of Stafford's work titled *Even in Quiet Places* (Lewiston, ID: Confluence Press, 1996). The last section titled "The Methow River Poems," includes all of the poems that Stafford submitted for the sign project.

[120] Correspondence concerning the Methow River poetry-sign project is located at the William Stafford Archive, Portland, Oregon. Documents concerning the project span from April 1993 to August 1994. From this point on, all correspondence from the archive will be cited by author and date.

encyclopedic and more relational. A thought came to mind. It might be possible to help readers "feel" or "remember" something about human relationships to the river by merging poetry with natural history writing. They wrote William Stafford a letter and explained their situation in the following way: "We are tired of our own mediocre natural history writing. We need someone who can relate feelings as well as facts with only a few words. Poetry, actually, is what we need" (McLean and Edwards, 20 April 1993).

The rangers then invited William Stafford to write site specific poetry for seven porcelain enamel signs that would be joined with artwork and natural history writing and then mounted at predetermined locations along a 50-mile stretch of the Methow River. They explained their mission in the following way: "We would like to encourage people in a deeper understanding of the natural world. Public art on well-visited public land seems a good way" (McLean and Edwards, April 20, 1993). As a long-time advocate for public engagement through the arts, both independently and as Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (1970-1971) and Oregon Poet Laureate (1975-1993), Stafford, who had written about the Columbia River Basin since the publication of *West of Your City* (1960) and *Traveling Through the Dark* (1962), was in complete agreement with the rangers' vision for a poetry sign project. From the very beginning, however, Stafford and the rangers realized that they were pushing visual art and poetry outside of traditionally constructed boundaries. They searched for words to describe the sign project, but ultimately found that they lacked a model or point of comparative reference. McLean referred to the signs as "a roadside poetry series," something that was entirely "new ground" for the U.S. Forest Service, while Stafford imagined the project as "a highway anthology" or "wilderness opera," a multi-modal reading experience that could get people "addicted to" a new kind of poetry in public places (McLean, 10 May 1993; Stafford, 12 May 1993; *Last Reading, August 13, 1993*).

The creation and sustainability of public art installations requires deliberate collaboration and community support. In *The Lure of the Local* (1997), art critic and

activist Lucy R. Lippard offers a helpful taxonomy for the creation and viability of site based public art projects. She claims the most effective installations are characterized by an adherence to a "place ethic" that is sensitive to both public reception and the ecological nuances of the place the artwork will be installed (286). While there are certainly exceptions to rules, Lippard's experience and research indicates that socially transformative installations adhere to a basic set of criterion. They are:

> SPECIFIC enough to engage people on the level of their own lived experiences, to say something about the place as it is or was or could be.
>
> COLLABORATIVE at least to the extent of seeking information, advice and feedback from the community in which the work will be placed.
>
> GENEROUS and OPEN-ENDED enough to be accessible to a wide variety of people from different classes and cultures, and to different interpretations and tastes.
>
> APPEALING enough either visually or emotionally to catch the eye and be memorable.
>
> SIMPLE and FAMILIAR enough, at least on the surface, not to confuse or repel potential viewer-participants.
>
> LAYERD, COMPLEX AND UNFAMILIAR enough to hold people's attention once they've been attracted, to make them wonder, and to offer even deeper experiences and references to those who hang in.
>
> EVOCATIVE enough to make people recall related moments, places, and emotions in their own lives.
>
> PROVACATIVE and CRITICAL enough to make people think about issues beyond the scope of the work, to call into question superficial assumptions about the place, it history, and its use. (286-287)

The success and durability of *The Methow River Poems* has depended on many of these factors. At every stage of production, McLean and Edwards were committed to securing local funding and public support by networking with residents and organizations such as the Methow Foundation Institute, a non-profit that develops trails and land management policies throughout the valley. Stafford read his work at several towns in the Methow

Valley and the rangers collected feedback from the community, asking local participants to vote on poems to be used at particular locations. Together, Stafford, the rangers, and local members of the Methow Valley community worked to find poems that were accessible to public readers, but also complex enough to invite visitors to consider the interplay between words, watersheds, and human bodies.

These relational exchanges are particularly evident in "Time for Serenity, Anyone?," the first interpretive poetry sign located at Pateros, Washington, a small town that marks where the Methow River merges with the Columbia just above Wells Dam (1967). At this place where the water runs smooth and wide, Stafford invites visitors to reflect upon the permeable relationships between language, bodies, and the place where they are standing. He begins with a straight-forward line that tells readers: "I like to live in the sound of water, / in the feel of mountain air." From the very beginning, the repetition of the preposition "in" collapses the body into the river's surroundings, as sound and breath are enveloped into air and water -- elements that sustain the entire poem -- as well as biological existence.

As the current of the poem continues to move with the river, Stafford reminds visitors that this slow moving stretch of water behind Wells Dam is "still alive," using the word *still* to document apparent stasis, as well as ecological resilience. Stafford writes:

> . . . A sharp
> reminder hits me: this world is still alive;
> it stretches out there shivering toward its own
> creation, and I'm part of it. Even my breathing
> enters into this elaborate give-and-take,
> this bowing to sun and moon, day or night,
> winter, summer, storm, still – this tranquil
> chaos that seems to be going somewhere.
> This wilderness with a great peacefulness in it.
> This motionless turmoil, this everything dance. (*Even* 95)

By describing the water as "shivering" over a more predictable "shimmering," Stafford steers readers away from imagining an inanimate and static reflection. Instead, this stretch of water is fluid and alive. It participates in a human response to a cold and damp

Northwest morning as it "stretches" out like a "shivering" traveler reading the poem along the banks of the river. When a visitor stops to read the poem out loud, even "breathing / enters into this elaborate give-and-take," as the essence of the body is released into language -- given back to the earth's wind-breath -- and then renewed by line break and inhalation. Imagining the eventual release of this slow moving and regulated stretch of water, Stafford embeds a vision for the river's unrestrained future, when he speaks of "bowing to sun and moon." On the textual surface, the poet seems to merely allude to a contrite "bowing" response to the river, when, in actuality, the lines enact the work of free-flowing and bending *oxbows* in a river, a vision that Stafford enacts with a series of comma induced switchbacks that trace a river's movements even as he tells of "sun and moon, day or night, / winter, summer, storm, still" (*Even* 95).

The Methow River Poems were created and installed by the U.S. Forest Service to invite tourists to consider the relationships at work between language, bodies, and places; however, after more than a decade of standing along the river, the signs have fallen into a state of disrepair and are in need of attention. The main challenge is the environment itself. The "tranquil / chaos" that Stafford reveled in has ironically threatened the sustainability of the sign project. Some of the signs have been knocked down by debris from snowplows, while others are removed to protect them from harsh winters. In 2009, only five of the original seven signs remained standing, making *The Methow River Poems* an incomplete volume that is now missing a few pages. The sustainability of sign poems is contingent upon public interest, which at first glance might seem to pose the largest threat to the poetry signs. According to critic Judith Kitchen, the poems written for the sign project are not "distinguished" and have "a conversational tone" that seems "less formal and more relaxed than most of [Stafford's] other poems" (95). While Kitchen's comments are not overtly negative, they implicitly suggest that the sign project was a lackluster public diversion in the wake of an otherwise remarkable literary and public career. However, a more localized investigation into the project indicates that *The*

Methow River Poems are not suffering from lack of public interest, but that they are caught up in the ongoing re-creation and transformation of the Methow Valley.

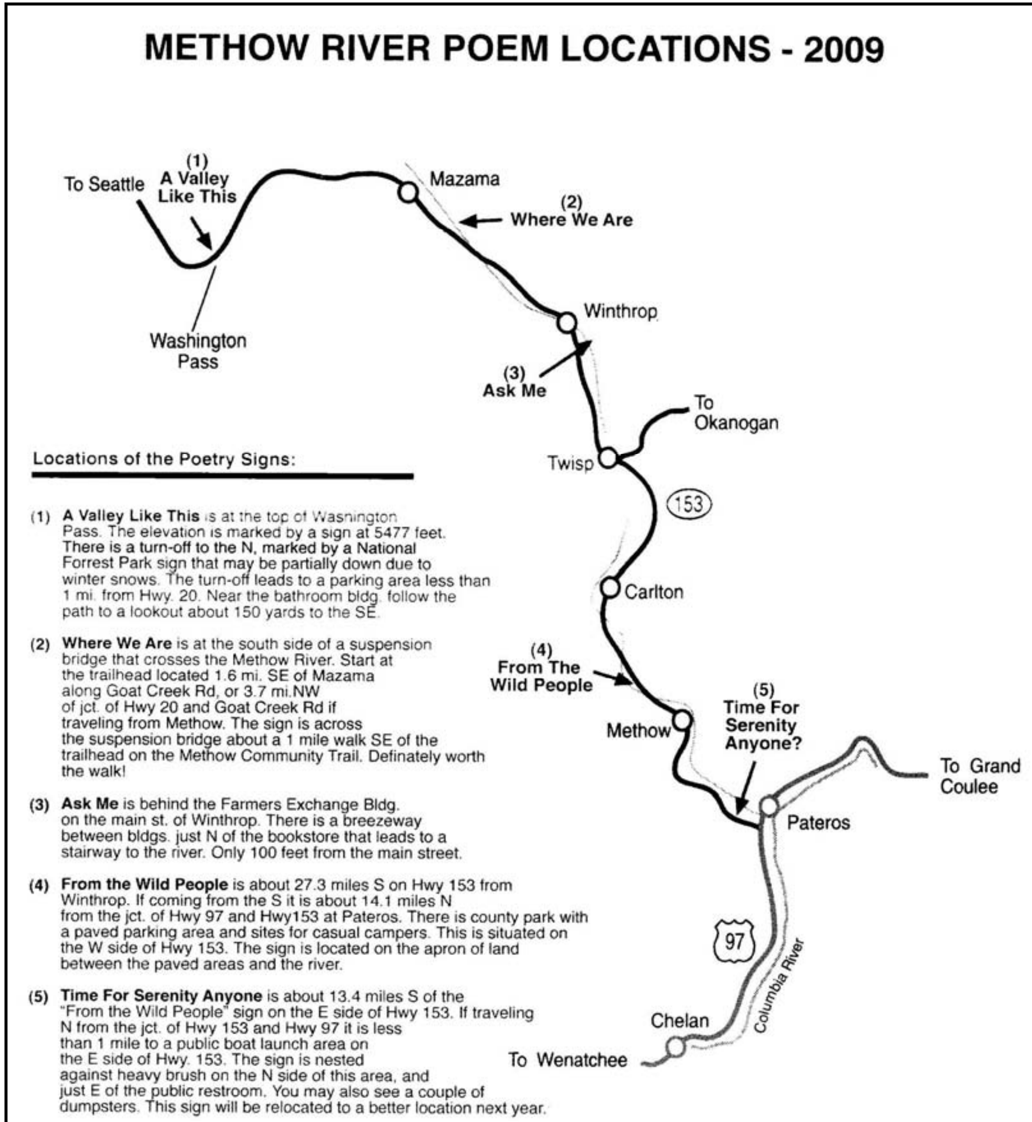

Figure 40. Location of the Methow River Poetry Signs, 2009. Dennis Schmidling, *Friends of William Stafford* 14.1 (Fall 2009), 10.

When Sulima Malzin wrote a short article about the poetry signs for the Friends of William Stafford newsletter in 2006, most members of the non-profit knew very little

about the poems. After the article was published, however, the story "generated a good bit of interest and some enthusiasm for restoring those plaques that had been removed due to damage caused mostly by the harsh winters" ("Rekindling" 8). According to Suzanne Lacy, one of the defining features of socially transformative installations of public art "exists in space between the words public and art" where "an unknown relationship between artist and audience . . . may *itself* become the artwork" (20). For many members of the Friends of William Stafford, the renewed commitment to restoring the poetry signs is cultivated by a sense of participatory camaraderie with the late Stafford, an activist poet who was eager to see the project installed before his untimely death in 1993.

Weeks before his death, at his last public reading, Stafford imagined unveiling the public installation of *The Methow River Poems* at a grand picnic, where people from all walks of life would gather for a celebration of populist poetry in the Okanogan National Forest. Forest Service officials would brush shoulders with tourists and the Methow Valley Chamber of Commerce. The state highway department would talk with hikers and timber grazers. But it did not stop there. As a former Oregon Poet Laureate and Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress, Stafford imagined invitations going out to political notables such as Al Gore and the President -- anyone with a pulse of environmental compassion would be invited to the installation (see Stafford, 3 August 1993). He spoke of the gathering like this:

> Next summer the signs will be ready. We'll have the grand opening of one hundred miles along the Methow River. Seven picnics in a row. And I imagine tourists on that beautiful highway. And they're looking at the scenery and they stop and they read . . . and they get addicted to this new kind of sign. (*Last Reading*)

Stafford's comments are jovial and loose, but there is an underlying seriousness to his vision. In his mind, poetry offered a "sort of salvation" that could rescue and reconnect someone from a fractured and isolated existence (*The Way It Is* 222). With poetry coming off the page and dwelling in public places, Stafford felt that any wanderer might

stumble across a poem and move toward "possibilities of reconciliation" (Stafford, *Writing* 109).

Dennis and Helen Schmidling, members of the Board of Trustees for the Friends of William Stafford, are part of a team commissioned to raise funds that will refurbish and expand the reach of *The Methow River Poems*. The non-profit recently initiated the Methow River Poetry Restoration Project (2009), and are proposing to not only repair the damaged signs, but to install the remaining poems that Stafford was commissioned to write for the Methow Valley.[121] According to Dennis Schmidling, "completing *The Methow River Poems* in the landscape is a work in progress that will require the inspiration of the arts, the passion of the Methow communities, and the vision of its leaders. Only then will this legacy of William Stafford's poetry become manifest in a spirit that is true to his work" (Malzin, "Rekindling" 8). After making several trips to Winthrop, Washington, and meeting with representatives from the U.S. Forest Service, the Methow Conservancy, and residents of the valley, the restoration committee is confident that there is plenty of local commitment to restoring and expanding the poetry sign project (Malzin, "Rekindling" 8).

Plans to expand the reach of the Methow River sign project are currently being considered by the Friends of William Stafford and Methow Conservancy. The conservancy has existed for thirteen years and continues to collaborate with hundreds of private landowners to secure and manage more than seventy conservation easements in

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[121] In 1993, William Stafford submitted more than twenty poems to be considered for public installation, but at the time only seven were able to be funded. The last section of *Even in Quiet Places* (1996), "The Methow River Poems," includes all of the poems that Stafford submitted for the sign project. Of the poems submitted, only ten were presented to members of the Methow Valley for a public vote: "Silver Star," "Time for Serenity, Anyone?," "Where we Are," "A Valley Like This," "For the Wild People," "Climbing along the River," "Nobody Cares," "Being a Person," "Is This Feeling About the West Real?," and "Ask Me." Due to budget constraints, only seven signs were able to be funded, which leaves behind at least a dozen additional poems for future sign projects (McLean, 10 August 1993).

the Methow Valley. With a membership base of more than 800 local households and businesses, the organization plays a crucial role in proposing and administering public policy that impacts the health of the watershed and the Methow Valley's local economy. With their most ambitious project, "Imagine the Methow: A Campaign for Conservation," the organization is currently attempting to raise private and public funds in excess of twenty million dollars. These funds will purchase land easements throughout the valley in order to protect native vegetation, soils, pine forests, local farms, and the scenic value of the valley for the next one hundred years ("Imagine," website). In the past, the non-profit has collaborated with visual artists to promote their campaigns. The Friends of William Stafford and Methow Conservancy are currently exploring how the installation of additional poetry signs might promote local land and watershed stewardship through the combined presence of poetry and visual art.

The Methow River Poems were originally installed as an experimental means of awakening feelings and affections for the Methow Valley within road traveling tourists who were not always aware or even interested in the ecological health of the watershed. As the Friends of William Stafford continue to collaborate with the Methow Conservancy and other local residents of the area, there is good reason to believe that the physical presence and message of the signs will become entangled with state and federal watershed policies, transforming how the valley and river will be managed, developed, and inhabited for future generations. In order to gain insight into ways the combined presences of poetry and visual arts can re-create place and revise public policy, we need only to follow the Columbia River upstream, past Chief Joseph Dam and Grand Coulee Dam, to the confluence of the Columbia and Spokane rivers, where an installation of poetry as public art in downtown Spokane, Washington, has revised the downtown waterfront, as well as watershed policies that will shape the health of Spokane Falls for the next fifty years.

Concrete Walls and Ghosts of Salmon:
Sherman Alexie and the Reclamation of Spokane Falls

The Spokane River is the largest tributary of the Lake Roosevelt stretch of the Columbia River Basin. It emerges from Lake Coeur d'Alene in the Idaho panhandle and makes a rapid one hundred mile descent through communities such as Post Falls, Idaho and Spokane, Washington. While winding through the city of Spokane, the river drops through a once heavily industrialized, but now aesthetically appealing stretch of water, known as Spokane Falls. The Spokane River's visual appeal and turbulent waters have made it a long-contested site of Native American and Euro-American occupation that has left behind multiple layers of economic and environmental history. Among the narratives at work in this palimpsest are the histories of the tribes and bands of the Spokane, Coeur d'Alene, and Colville Indians; the construction of the river's seven hydroelectric dams; the bioregional reclamation of the river through Expo '74, the first environmentally themed World's Fair (1974); and finally, reclamation initiatives by the Spokane Public Library, which used public funds to commission a public art installation of Sherman Alexie's poem, "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" at Spokane Falls (1994), a work that local activists have used to revise watershed management policies on the Spokane River.

In *Topophilia* (1974), Yi-Fu Tuan's seminal study of human perceptions and relationships to place, Tuan asserts that "appreciation of landscape is more personal and longer lasting when it is mixed with the memory of human incidents" (95). This statement is certainly true when it comes to Sherman Alexie's prose and poetry about Spokane Falls. In order to understand the historical depth within the physical installation of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump," it is necessary to recover earlier histories of Spokane Falls that trace how hydroelectric dams, industrialization, and most ironically, an environmentally themed world's fair committed to localized watershed reclamation, have displaced and systematically exploited tribes of the Spokane, Colville, and Coeur d'Alene Indians, bands that fished the waterway until salmon runs were drastically

reduced by Little Falls Dam (1911) and then terminated with the completion of Grand Coulee Dam (1942).

Before Spokane became an urban center of the Pacific Northwest, this region, originally called Spokane Falls by its Euro-American settlers, was imagined as a site of industrial power and economic opportunity. When the so-called "Father of Spokane," James Glover, an investor from the Willamette Valley, made an exploratory trip through the region in 1873, he was immediately drawn to the falls and their untouched "virgin beauty." In fact, Glover was so "enchanted" and "awestruck" with the river that he became "determined that [he] would possess it" (Glover 9). Upon leaving a few days later, he held a deed to waterfront property and was already imaging how the power of the falls could be used to develop an economic empire. Undergirded by financial support from the Northern Pacific Railroad (1886) and the natural power of the river, Spokane Falls grew steadily until 1889, when a fire leveled the entire town. Not to be deterred, Glover and local business owners used the disaster to reconstruct and promote Spokane as the Inland Empire of the West, a region with a waterway strong enough to support endeavors in agriculture, mining, and timber -- all of which drew from the Spokane River for their establishment and existence.[122]

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[122] For more information on the remaking and marketing of Spokane Falls see: Katherine G. Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1997).

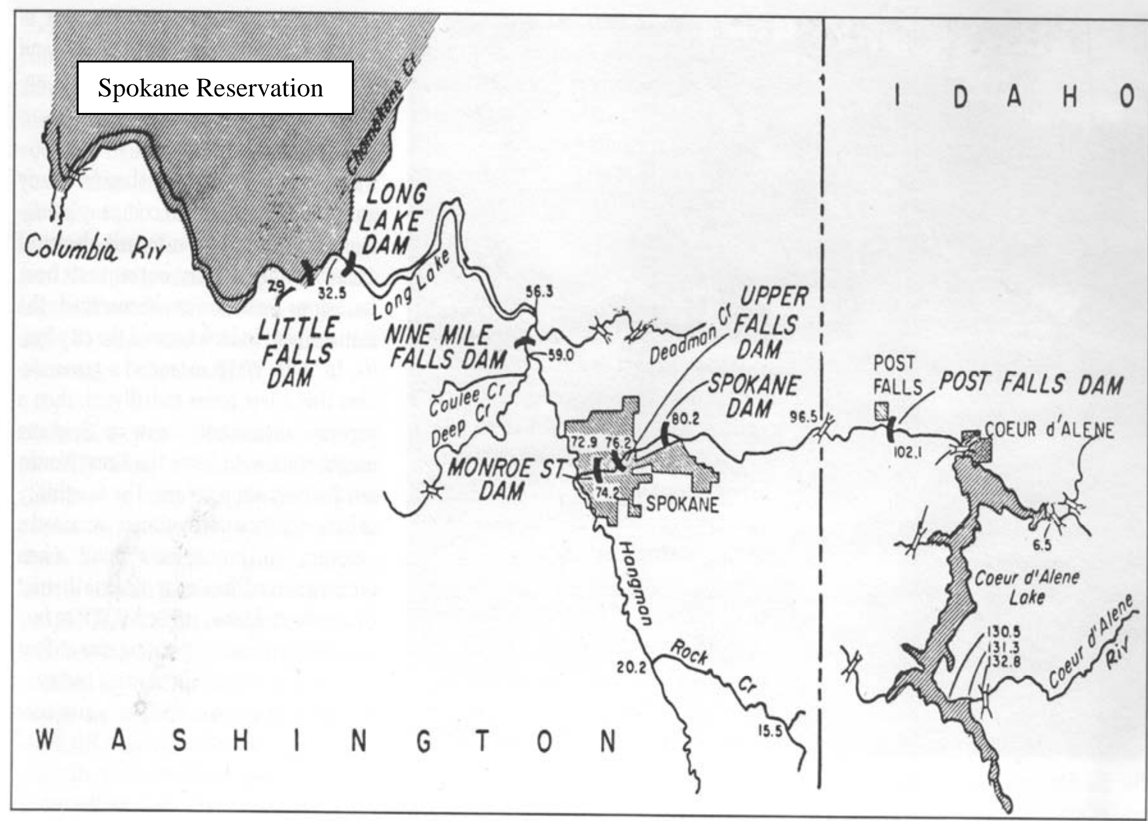

Figure 41. Seven Dams on the Spokane River. John Fahey, "Power Plays: The Enigma of Little Falls, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 82.4 (1991).

In order to meet pressing demands for electricity, the Washington Water and Power Company (est. 1889) was established to construct seven dams on the Spokane River between 1890 and 1922, none of which were designed with fish ladders or passageways for salmon, the most important food source for Spokane, Colville and Coeur d'Alene Indians. The completion of Little Falls Dam (1911) ended salmon migration on the upper Spokane River and at Spokane Falls. However, for the next twenty-eight years salmon still spawned on the remaining twenty-nine miles of river below the dam, including a stretch of water that borders the Spokane Reservation. Sherman Alexie describes this period in a poem titled "Migration, 1902," when he speaks of a time when "the salmon swim / so thick in the river / that Grandmother walks across the water / on

the bridge of their spines" (*One Stick* 55).[123] Historical records indicate that Alexie's poem is far from hyperbolic. In years preceding the construction of Little Falls Dam, anthropologists estimate that Spokane Indians harvested roughly 500 pounds of salmon per person each year, which accounted for approximately five eights of each individual's consumption of food (Fahey 122).

Salmon migration ended on the Spokane River and upper Columbia when the Bureau of Reclamation closed the water intake gates of Grand Coulee Dam (1941), a force that Alexie wages war against in "The Powwow at the End of the World" (1996). This historically and geographically inflected poem attempts to re-create the Columbia River Basin through repetition and rhetorical force of unrestrained lines.[124] It addresses an audience of anonymous, but presumably white progressive leaders, those who have called Alexie to "forgive" and forget the economic and ecological injustices distributed to Spokane Indians, the Spokane River, and the larger Columbia River Basin. The poet informs his petitioners that he "shall" forgive all injustices, but only when a very specific set of conditions are met. He states:

> I am told by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
> after an Indian woman puts her shoulder to the Grand Coulee Dam
> and topples it. (*Summer* 98)

The visual and rhythmic force of these lines awakens two opposing images at once. By letting the first line hang on the word "shall," readers are led to believe that Alexie will

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[123] Sherman Alexie has described his grandmother as his "only link to the past." In a recent interview he commented on a story she told that clearly links to the poem. He states, my grandmother would "tell me these stories. Not traditional stories in the sense of coyote, eagle feathers, or talking birds; she would give me the history of my family. . . and she would talk about when she was a little girl, the salmon in the Spokane River swam so think that you could walk across the river from shore to shore on their backs" (Peterson 55).

[124] In an interview, Sherman Alexie states that people often ask him about salmon and Grand Coulee Dam through questions such as: "'Why didn't they build a fish ladder?' I say, 'You haven't seen the Grand Coulee Dam, have you?'" (Peterson 22). Interestingly, in this poem, Alexie imagines poetry and storytelling as one method of removing one of the largest concrete monuments in the world.

embrace forgiveness; however, all hope is revoked in the second line, when the poet awakens a mythical-indigenous woman to rise up and dismantle Grand Coulee Dam.

With Grand Coulee Dam rhetorically toppled by a free-flowing sequence of syntactically unrestrained lines, two-hundred and fifty miles of the previously harnessed Columbia River (Lake Roosevelt) are sent racing through Alexie's verse, triggering a flood of de-creation that dismantles all signs of federal occupation in the watershed. Drawing upon repetition and rhetorical force, the water and verse gain enough momentum to "burst each successive dam / downriver from the Grand Coulee." When the floodwaters reach the Pacific Ocean, a new possibility of restoration enters the "mouth" of a single salmon and triggers its long-awaited exodus from the Pacific Ocean, up the Columbia River, and back to Spokane Falls. At this point, the rhythm of Alexie's poetry shifts and begins to enact the salmon's migration upriver and up-verse. Ascending the free-flowing Columbia River, the fish turns and fights through a watery graveyard of "flooded cities, broken dams" and the "abandoned reactors / of Hanford." Finally, at the confluence of the Columbia and Spokane rivers, the salmon spins "upstream again" on a pair of commas that signify the fish's turn from the mainline Columbia and up the Spokane River toward the falls (*Summer* 98).

Historically speaking, "The Powwow at the End of the World" invokes a myth-epic of indigenous reclamation that begins with the destruction of Grand Coulee Dam and ends with an exodus of indigenous peoples arriving to reclaim a Promised Land from Euro-American occupants. The very idea of crushed hydroelectric dams and inundated cities evokes images of Egyptian irrigators on the Nile River, leaders who were inundated by their own technologies when the Israelites were led by a sacred pillar of fire into the Promised Land. Alexie re-creates and manipulates this imagery when a fire-carrying salmon arrives at the falls and ignites a burning bush that ushers exiled Salish Indians into a revised epic of restoration. In this new era of indigenous reclamation, electricity will be replaced by fire and lighting, and local rituals of prayer, laughter and dancing will

usurp visions of national progress enacted by the Bureau of Reclamation and Army Corps of Engineers. Once the first salmon returns to the Spokane Indians, and Euro-Americans are consumed by the floodwaters of their own making, Alexie will then forgive the injustices inflicted upon indigenous peoples, the salmon, and the Spokane River. As he states:

> . . . I am told
> by many of you that I must forgive and so I shall
> after we Indians have gathered around the fire with that salmon
> who has three stories it must tell before sunrise: one story will
> teach us how to pray; another story will make us laugh for hours;
> the third story will give us reason to dance. I am told by many
> of you that I must forgive and so I shall when I am dancing
> with my tribe during the powwow at the end of the world.
> (*Summer* 98)

"The Powwow at the End of the World," perhaps Alexie's most well-known and anthologized poem of de-creation and re-creation, gains force through repetition, unrestrained syntax, and the image of a ghost-salmon who returns to call his people home. As a work of historical imagination, the poem envisions how storytelling and poetry can breech dams and revise the flow of Columbia and Spokane rivers. Interestingly, signs of such transformation are taking place through public uses of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump," a poem that has gained political force, not as an anthologized text, but as an installment of public art at Spokane Falls.

Understanding the local and cultural impact of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" and Sherman Alexie's contribution to the ongoing reclamation of Spokane Falls requires an historical understanding of Expo '74, the first environmentally themed world's fair that Sherman Alexie attended as a child. After the completion of Grand Coulee Dam and the industrialization of downtown Spokane that followed with it, the city suffered from a period of "urban blight," so much so, that by 1960 the falls and downtown waterfront were no longer accessible or visible due to concrete infrastructure surrounding the falls (Youngs, "Acting" 211). By the late 1960s, a group of local business leaders established Spokane Unlimited and planned to reclaim and transform the

waterfront by hosting Expo '74, the first environmentally themed world's fair. The world's fair was typically hosted by an internationally prominent city, but Spokane (a city of only 180,000 people) capitalized on burgeoning commitments to environmentalism and marketed the fair as an act of urban renewal. In preparation for the event, industrial buildings and railways that defined Spokane Falls since the late- nineteenth century were scraped from the palimpsest of historical geography and replaced with a 100 acre park of fresh sod, trees, and footpaths that interlinked a network of pavilions, footbridges, and gondolas -- features that were designed by the Expo Corporation to educate and transport ecologically-minded visitors throughout the newly reclaimed Spokane River.

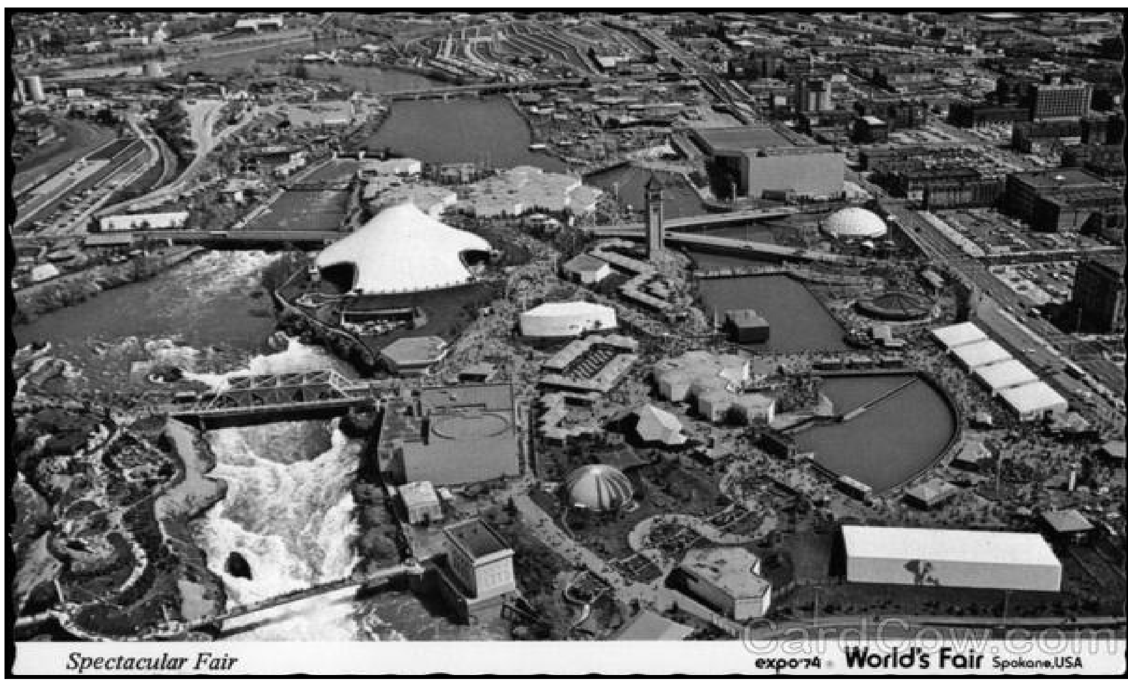

Figure 42. Postcard of Expo '74. Spokane, Washington, 1974.

The localized reclamation of Spokane Falls did not come without regional and national controversy. According to historian J. William T. Youngs, author of *The Falls and the Fair* (1996), the World's Fair was arguably "Spokane's finest moment," largely

because “liberating [Spokane Falls] from the confines of urban blight was the principal goal and accomplishment of the fair. And that was a huge accomplishment, essentially turning back the clock on a century of environmental degradation in Spokane” (221). Historian John M. Findlay, approaches the event with far more skepticism, noting that decades before the fair, Spokane had built and sustained itself by “extractive industries of the Inland Empire -- mining, logging, farming, and hydropower -- and this kind of economy does not immediately lend itself to the kind of environmental questioning that took place at Expo '74” (Findlay, “Expo”). While both historians make valid claims, an alternative approach to reading the transformation of Spokane Falls can be reached by revisiting the event through the prose and poetry of Sherman Alexie, a nearby resident of the Spokane Indian Reservation who attended the fair when he was eight.

When Expo ’74 opened to an audience of over eighty-five thousand people, those in attendance committed themselves to upholding Native American virtues of environmental stewardship under the theme: “Celebrating Tomorrow’s Fresh New Environment.” An Indian Canoe Honor Guard of the Spokane Indian tribe led a parade of distinguished guests to the riverfront and tourists watched as “one thousand nine hundred and seventy-four rainbow trout were planted in the river by the Washington State Department of Ecology as a symbol of environmental restoration” (Bowers 14-15). This commitment to renewal was followed by a reading of the “Credo of Expo,” an oath that superficially grafted white visitors into environmental solidarity with indigenous peoples. The creed began with a confession of environmental sins committed by nations represented at the fair. It then moved toward absolution, as participants recommitted themselves to the “restoration of the reverence of Nature” in the spirit of the “American Indian” who “roamed in respectful concert with his environment” (Bowers 14-15).

On opening day, the aesthetic surfaces of the Spokane River gleamed with social justice and ecological health, but contradictions were suppressed and swirling beneath the nearby waters of Spokane Falls. Contrary to public belief, the iconic Spokane River was

not a natural monument of urban restoration, but a stretch of water tightly regulated by a sequence of concrete dams and penstocks managed by the Washington Water and Power Company. In preparation for the environmentally themed event, the oldest of these artifacts, Monroe Street Dam (1890), was moved and reconstructed forty feet downstream for what engineers and organizers called "aesthetic and practical" reasons (Youngs, *The Fair* 278). In the spirit of watershed renewal, the Environmental Protection Agency (est. 1970) had already advised the removal of four dams on the Spokane River in preparation for Expo '74. When the EPA later learned about the reconstruction of Monroe Street Dam by event planners, the federal organization ordered Washington Water and Power Company to stop construction; however, the request was ignored, the dam was completed and "nobody did anything about it" (Youngs, *The Fair* 278). The revised version of the dam increased aesthetic appeal, but it also came with unforeseen problems, particularly for the 1,974 trout released as a commitment to urban renewal. According to Paul Creighton, the Expo Corporation's administrator of operations and maintenance, the release of the "trout were an exception to an otherwise successful day," as once released they were pulled downstream and sucked into the turbines of the renovated dam (Youngs, *The Fair* 388).

Visitors who attended Expo '74 were not encouraged to look below the aesthetic surfaces of Spokane Falls, but were instead channeled through the fair's attractions by linear walkways and a specially constructed gondola ride. The gondola transported tourists across the river and provided an up close look at the hydroelectrically enhanced version of lower falls, which now produced "a more spectacular cascade than the natural riverbed" could have ever offered (Youngs, *The Fair* 278). As a child living on the Spokane Reservation, Sherman Alexie attended Expo '74 and rode the gondola over the re-created version of Spokane Falls. In his history of the fair, J. William T. Youngs notes that Alexie enjoyed the attraction, despite the fact -- as the poem "Father and Farther" indicates -- he clung to his father's side while passing over the roar of the falls (*The Fair*

454). Youngs reads Alexie's poem as a childhood memory about fearing heights, however, a closer and more historicized reading indicates that Alexie's repetitive reference to fearing "gravity" has nothing to do with fear of heights, but the *grave* socio-economic circumstances he faced while growing up as a Spokane Indian displaced from Spokane Falls. In poems titled "Father and Farther" and "Spokane 1976," Alexie describes viewing the world's fair from the height of the gondola. He does not celebrate the attraction, but inflects the awe-inspiring experience against hard realities of alcoholism, suicide, and economic loss -- earth bound and personalized truths that Alexie uses to sardonically expose Expo '74 as "the kind of celebration this country would never see again" (*One Stick* 73).

Even as a child, Sherman Alexie understood ways organizers of Expo '74 manufactured the appearance of social harmony between the city of Spokane and neighboring Salish Indians. In 1973, the fair's organizers sent out a belated invitation to Spokane, Colville, and Coeur d'Alene tribal leaders in order to discuss how indigenous peoples might participate in the fair's programming. After much deliberation, event planners allotted Salish Indians one acre of space (within the 100 acre fair complex) to establish an educational pavilion on Indian customs and heritage titled "Native American's Earth." Alexie's mother was among several tribal dancers who performed at the Native American pavilion, which featured tipis, longhouses and a schedule of indigenous performances (Alexie, *Summer* 40-41). Alex Sherwood, a tribal leader of the Spokane tribe, was critical of the entire event and reminded white developers that "the fair was being held on lands once occupied by the Spokane tribe . . . but the Indians were hardly involved in the planning." He also claimed that despite visual appearances of ecological renewal, the organizers "had not improved the environment" for the Spokane River "used to abound with fish from the sea . . . but now since Grand Coulee Dam was built, there is no more fish" (qtd. in Youngs, *The Fair* 256).

The Expo Corporation's reluctance to include neighboring Salish Indians in event programming was ironic considering that Chief Seattle held a position of prominence at the World's Fair and the United States Pavilion located on an island upriver from Spokane Falls. As visitors entered the ecologically themed structure, they encountered a creed attributed to Chief Seattle: "The Earth Does Not Belong to Man, Man Belongs to the Earth" (Youngs, *The Fair* 443). They were then channeled through exhibits and visual installations that told how "the federal government as well as state and local government have taken an active role in protecting the environment with major pieces of legislation in the environmental field dating back 100 years" (Bowers 102). On the way out of the building, visitors passed "through a kiosk which housed a life-like, talking mannequin of Chief Seattle." The simulated Indian leader reiterated the need for everyone, both Indians and whites, to take responsibility for the earth by offering visitors a final benediction: "Go now, and do the work that must be done" (Bowers 102-103).

Sherman Alexie visited the United States Pavilion as a child and writes about the event in *Tonto and the Lone Ranger Fistfight in Heaven* (1993), a collection of interrelated short stories that he calls "a thinly disguised memoir" (xix). At one point in the collection, Alexie presents a vignette of two brothers, Victor and James, who make a trip from Spokane Reservation into the city to visit "the World's Fair in Spokane" (*Tonto* 129). Victor, the narrator of the story, is impressed by international exhibits hosted by Mexico and Japan, but the pavilion sponsored by the United States proves to be utterly foreign and disparate from his own experiences as a Spokane Indian. After listening to stories about the federal government's role in environmental protection, Victor sees the mannequin of Chief Seattle and hears the message programmed into it by white organizers of the Expo Corporation: "We have to take care of the earth because it is our mother." The arms of the statue wave back and forth and Victor, who fails to even recognize the tribal leader, points it out to James as some "statue of an Indian who's supposed to be some chief or another" (*Tonto* 129).

Victor and James' presence at the Chief Seattle statue draws a crowd of white tourists, who after reciting the "Credo of Expo," have come to embrace local Indians as a source of modern ecological wisdom. Many tourists who visited the United States Pavilion watched a federally commissioned twenty-minute film titled: *Man Belongs to Earth* (1974). The film is narrated by an old Native American man, dressed in buckskin, who repeatedly calls viewers to uphold the teachings of the Great Spirit and Mother Earth. Near the end of the film, the indigenous sage walks through a cavernous forest and recites a poem:

> Everything that lives on Mother Earth is precious.
> Even the grass that grows, we shouldn't destroy.
> The trees, we shouldn't destroy. They've got a life.
> They've got a life from the Great Spirit.
> That's what I want my children to see.
> The way that Mother Earth was given to us.
> That's the way it should be. (Kroitor and Ferguson, film)

In Alexie's version of the United States Pavilion, James, the younger brother -- clearly wise beyond his years -- revises the federally commissioned film by telling the crowd of white gatherers that the earth is, in fact, not our mother, but actually "our grandmother and that technology has become our mother." And right now, he claims, they both "hate each other" (*Tonto* 129). As evidence, the boy directs the crowd to the Spokane River "only a few yards away" and tells everyone that those falls are "all we ever need to believe in" (*Tonto* 129). From a historical standpoint, these lines cut two directions simultaneously, at once critiquing destructive reclamation technologies that state and federal governments have used to manipulate Spokane Falls for more than a century, while nevertheless directing travelers and tourists toward a meaningful faith in possibilities for ecological renewal.

Twenty years after attending Expo '74 as a child, Sherman Alexie was given the opportunity to contribute to the multi-layered historical geography of Spokane Falls. The invitation arrived in 1990, after citizens of Spokane, Washington, approved a 28.8 million dollar bond measure for the construction of a new library facility in downtown Spokane.

In an attempt to integrate local history and the aesthetic appeal of the falls into the structure of the new building, the Library Board of Trustees allocated one percent of funds for public art projects that would integrate language, landscape, and local history into the architectural design of the downtown library. During the construction process, the trustees voted to purchase and develop Overlook Park, a one-time 600 square foot parking lot across the street from the library. They reclaimed and prepared the site for the public installation of Sherman Alexie's poem "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" (1994), a poem written by a young (and then relatively unknown) writer who grew up on the Spokane Indian Reservation.

The poem, later published in *The Summer of Black Widows* (1996), contributes to the re-writing of local history by re-interpreting a Salish Indian story about the creation of Spokane Falls. The indigenous story tells of a meeting with Coyote, the mythic-trickster, who was known to offer or restrict the migration of salmon to upriver Indians depending upon tribes' willingness to accommodate his voracious appetite for beautiful women. According to Salish renderings of the creation of Spokane Falls, a dispute over a young woman led to the creation of the falls. Coyote was traveling up the Spokane River, to the place where Spokane Falls now exist, when he decided to take a Salish woman as a wife. The trickster requested a young woman from tribal leaders, but was denied, mocked and called an old lecher. Enraged and lonely, Coyote punished those gathered at the salmon fishery by smashing his paw across the river, re-making it into a massive set of falls so that salmon could no longer pass upriver.[125]

Sherman Alexie speaks directly into this creation story at the opening of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump." Setting the scene for upheaval and mythic

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[125]For versions of Coyote and the creation of Spokane Falls see: Terry Thompson and Steven M. Egesdal, eds., *Salish Myths and Legends: One People's Stories* (Lincoln: NE: U of Nebraska P, 2008), 191-192; and Katharine Berry Judson, *Myths and Legends of the Pacific Northwest* (Lincoln, NE: U of Nebraska P, 1997).

transformation, readers are told that "Coyote was alone and angry because he could not find love. / Coyote was alone and angry because he demanded a wife / from the Spokane, the Coeur d'Alene, the Palouse, all of those tribes / camped on the edge of the Spokane River" (*Summer* 28). Then, after being rejected and mocked by tribal leaders and those gathered to fish, Alexie tells how the unrequited lover crushed the river -- splitting open the bottom so that salmon could not travel beyond the falls. The tone of the poem shifts, however, when Alexie re-writes this creation story by layering more recent histories of Spokane Falls onto the palimpsest of the past. Alexie tells Coyote that the loss of salmon at Spokane Falls has nothing to do with mythical powers, but the industries of white men who have poured a "graveyard" of "concrete" over the water. After calling Coyote a "liar" and someone not to be trusted, Alexie points out the work of white engineers and laborers who have installed a network of dams, penstocks, and turbines -- creating a place of extinction where only the "ghosts of salmon jump" and the "ghosts of women" come to mourn. As evidence, the young poet challenges the old trickster (as well as readers at the public installation) to look over the falls and try to "see beyond all of the concrete / the white man has built here" (*Summer* 19).

In Alexie's collection, *The Summer of Black Widows* (1996), "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" reads as a sequence of couplets, but at the public installation, verse flows as a single line of current, a string of spiraling words scored into granite and concrete. To read the poem, the reader must step into this current of concrete and ascend a textual version of the Spokane River. Migrating toward the poem's center as metaphorical salmon, readers are spun and turned by a series of textual currents. When they reach the center and read the last phrase of the poem, they are left "alone and angry" inside a constricted spiral of concrete.

Figure 43. Public Art Installation of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump." Overlook Park, Spokane, Washington.

After ten years of its installation, the presence of "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" has begun to revise the flow water on the Spokane River. A major controversy of the dams operated by the Washington Water and Power Company (now Avista Corporation) has been the diversion of water by Upper Falls Dam (1922). During summer months, the company was diverting all of the river's water through a series of storage penstocks for hydroelectric production, leaving Lower Spokane Falls completely dry. Interestingly, when this aesthetic blight threatened to negatively impact the closing ceremony of Expo '74, the Expo Corporation purchased temporary water rights for $1,500, guaranteeing an abundant flow of water so the falls would be "beautiful that day" (Youngs, *The Fair* 500-501,505). Since that time, however, the seasonal problem has

continued for decades, as indicated by Alexie who informs Coyote that in recent years the falls have "fallen further" and now "sit dry and quiet as a graveyard" (*Summer* 19).

In 2009, the Upper Falls Dam operational license was up for a fifty-year renewal. Through the efforts of the Spokane based Center for Environmental Law and Policy, the Sierra Club, and Berman Environmental Law Clinic at University of Washington, a court settlement was reached with Avista Corporation that will guarantee a steady flow of water throughout the year so that Lower Spokane Falls will no longer go dry during the summer. As part of a local campaign to make this once-in-a-life-time change to public water policy on the Spokane River, local activists wrote letters to the Washington State Department of Ecology, posted letters and alerts on websites, and spoke on behalf of the falls at public hearings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. In many cases, they cited Sherman Alexie's lamentation about concrete barriers, dry falls, and ghosts of salmon as consequential evidence for the ecological injustices practiced by the Avista Corporation. John Osborne, webmaster and board member for the Center for Environmental Law and Policy, explains that throughout the campaign the poem was often cited as a cultural and historical witness to environmental injustices on the Spokane River. Overall, he estimates that excerpts from "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" went out to at least two thousand local activists during their campaign to restore year-round water flow at Spokane Falls.[126]

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[126] I was informed of these statistics through telephone and email correspondence with John Osborne (March 2010) and am thankful for his willingness to share this information. For more on public responses to the restoration of water at Spokane Falls and its relationship to bioregional practice see: Tom Valtin, "Landmark Agreement Restores Flows in Spokane Falls," *Grassroots Scrapbook* (23 July 2009); Becky Kramer, "Spokane Falls will Flow Full Time," *Spokesman-Review* (6 May 2009): A1.

Historic Spokane Falls during high flow. On May 1, 2009 -- almost 25 years to the day when Spokane welcomed the world to Expo '74 at Spokane Falls -- Sierra Club, CELP, and Avista reached a settlement that restores water to Spokane Falls all year long. In this historic settlement, Sierra Club and CELP were represented by the University of Washington Berman Environmental Law Clinic. After nearly a century, the waterfalls will flow with water 24 hours a day, 7 days a week -- and never go dry.

These Falls, which have fallen further,
which sit dry and quiet as a graveyard now -
These Falls are that place where ghosts of salmon jump,
where ghosts of women mourn their children
who will never find their way back home. …

~ Sherman Alexie,
excerpt from "The Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump

Figure 44. Excerpt of Sierra Club and Center for Environmental Law and Policy Advertisement.

While using poetry and public art to rewrite and re-create the Columbia River Basin may not seem like normative practice, local uses of *The Methow River Poems* and "That Place Where Ghosts of Salmon Jump" illustrate how local and national histories, as well as Euro-American and Native American identity formation, are all caught up in an ongoing process of re-inscription and reclamation that gets played out in the Columbia River Basin. Gary Snyder talks about this dynamic process in *The Practice of the Wild*

(1990), when he describes land and waterways as archival texts that carry erasures and foreshadowing of human interactions with place. He explains:

> A place will have been half riverbed, it will have been scratched and plowed by ice. And then it will be cultivated, paved, sprayed, dammed, graded, built up. But each is only for a while, and that will be just another set of lines on the palimpsest. The whole earth is a great tablet holding the multiple overlaid new and ancient traces of the swirl of forces. (29)

From this longer, bioregional perspective of time and place, the work of an historically and geographically informed literary criticism can excavate "the swirl of forces" that have transformed specific places. Even more important, however, literary criticism informed by historical geographies of reclamation can catalyze local interests groups committed to realigning state and federal forces that have damaged watersheds.

CONCLUSION

Some environmental historians today have questioned the dubious possibility of managing the circulatory patterns of the Columbia River Basin, noting ways that hydroelectric production, human health, and the ecological stability of the Columbia River are incompatible. Richard White describes the federally reclaimed Columbia as "an organic machine which human beings manage without fully understanding what they have created. The organic machine has, in turn, spawned a virtual river whose life influences the actual Columbia" (*Organic* 108). White's claim about the "virtual" river is, like the poetries of this place, not hyperbolic or metaphorical, but penetrating and literal. Like the salmon that spawn and die within the Columbia system each year, the human desire for seemingly limitless sources of consumable energy has "spawned" a technocratic system that continues to deliver literal, even deadly, socio-economic and ecological repercussions to its inhabitants.

Donald Worster offers a similar perspective of western watersheds in *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (1985), when he claims that federal domination of the Columbia River Basin is indicative of a dangerous pattern of capitalist ideology that has created a "place where living things, including humans" are no longer "welcome" (5). According to Worster, who imagines a grim socio-economic future, western watersheds are now enmeshed within "a techno-economic order imposed for the purpose of mastering a difficult environment. People have been organized, and induced to run, as the water in the canal does, in a straight line toward maximum yield, maximum profit" (6). In Worster's assessment, the Columbia River Basin is by no means a healthy bioregion, but the manifestation of "a modern *hydraulic society*, which is to say, a social order based on the intensive, large scale manipulation of water and its products" (7). From perspectives of leading environmental historians, the Columbia River Basin has become a well-managed, albeit dangerous, ecological servant of federal desire. While such observations are essentially true and accurate, patterns of economic

and ecological injustice are shifting towards healing and renewal through localized attempts to realign and revise federal policies according to principles of bioregional theory and practice.

Literature written in and about the Columbia River Basin has been caught up in a give-and-take process of federal and bioregional reclamation for more than one-hundred-and-fifty years. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, works such as Theodore Winthrop's *The Canoe and the Saddle* (c. 1853) catalyzed local and federal desires to re-create and irrigate the Yakima Valley into a socio-economic Promised Land. In years that followed, the valley became the prototype for the Columbia Basin Project, a federal irrigation plan made possible by the construction of Grand Coulee Dam (1942). During the Great Depression, historical novels such as Nard Jones' *Still to the West* (1946) and Margaret Thompson's *Space for Living: A Novel of Grand Coulee and the Columbia Basin* (1944), undergirded and validated an inherited impulse to re-create the semi-arid Columbia River Basin into a socio-economic and aesthetic Promised Land, even as their work masked the economic and occupational turmoil incurred by laborers who migrated to the Pacific Northwest in order to claim prosperity at places like Grand Coulee Dam and Hanford Engineer Works.

During the 1950s and 1960s, early prose and poetry written by Gary Snyder, Ken Kesey and Raymond Carver -- all descendents of Great Depression laborers who built the Pacific Northwest's infrastructure -- used prose and poetry to contest the federal management of the river by identifying with Mid-Columbia Native Americans whose lives were impacted and revised by the inundation of Celilo Falls (1957). More recently, Native and non-Native writers have joined to expose and revise the consequences of federal reclamation, pointing out the economic, cross-cultural and generational injustices woven into the reclamation of places like Celilo Falls, Hanford Nuclear Reservation, Kettle Falls and Spokane Falls. Poets, in particular, have used the malleability of the poetic line to map and enact the movements and flow of the radically transformed

Columbia River, and in some cases, used the combined witness of visual art and poetry to re-construct places and re-route the flow of rivers. Tracing this historical and geographical arc through the Columbia River Basin indicates that literary and visual arts are caught up in a transformative and entangled relationship of reclamation that not only documents but re-creates place.

Generations of literary and visual artists that supported the federal reclamation of the Columbia River Basin during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century have been thoroughly supplanted by voices of generational descendents who are working to re-create and renew the health of the watershed through applied principles of bioregional thought. In some cases, rewritings of regional history appear and disappear a brief moments in time and space -- whether it be David James Duncan's rewriting of Woody Guthrie's "Roll on Columbia, Roll on" that calls the federal government to account for turning the river into a "big poison pond" -- or a recently produced musical *The Ghosts of Celilo* (2007), a collaborative Native and Euro-American production, that was performed throughout the Pacific Northwest with immense success (*My Story* 110).[127]

Other acts of local reclamation are designed to utilize principles of bioregional theory and practice in order to reshape public understanding of the Columbia River Basin. This is the case with the Confluence Project (est. 2000), a recently commissioned public art project that will revise the history and geography of seven sites through the Columbia River Basin. Overseen by public artist Maya Lin, the project was envisioned by a collaborative team of Northwest Native American tribes and civic groups from Oregon and Washington, with the intent to "evoke the history of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, highlight the tremendous changes it brought to the Pacific Northwest, and encourage action to create a future that preserves and protects the area's natural and

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[127] For more information *The Ghosts of Celilo* see: <http://www.ghostsofcelilo.com/>

cultural resources. When complete, the project will have transformed seven places along the historic Columbia River Basin with significant landscape restoration and environmental enhancements." [128]

Truth be told, the Bureau of Reclamation, Army Corps of Engineers and Bonneville Power Administration will continue to regulate the economic and ecological currents of the Columbia River Basin; however, ongoing attempts to realign the intellectual and physical space of the watershed by local artists, writers, and activists will work alongside federal institutions to revise, re-imagine, and transform how the Columbia River Basin will be inhabited for future generations. Organizations such as the Center for Columbia River History (est. 1990), a non-profit consortium established by Washington State Historical Society, Portland State University and Washington State University, will work to recover local histories and promote public education through interdisciplinary and collaborative research for museums, schools, historical societies and local interest groups. At the same time, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho State historical societies will continue with their own educational programs, even as tribal research centers located on the thirty-five Indian reservations located throughout the these three states will tell their own versions of local and national history, while also working to regain local control of the watershed and its threatened salmon.

With Native American and non-Native attention turning to questions of salmon restoration and the renewal of the Columbia River's ecological health, it should be no surprise that dams are starting to be removed in the Pacific Northwest. While there are no indications that hydroelectric dams on the mainline Columbia and Snakes rivers will

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[128] The seven sites selected for the Confluence Project are: Cape Disappointment State Park, Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, Fort Vancouver National Site, Sandy River delta, Celilo Park, Sacajawea State Park, and Chief Timothy Park. Information on each site and descriptions and progress of individual installations is available on the Confluence Project website: <http://www.confluenceproject.org/>

be dismantled in coming years, smaller dams throughout the region are being decommissioned and scheduled for removal. In 2007, Portland General Electric, a regional power company, consulted with more than twenty local activist and environmental organizations about the removal of Marmot Dam (1913) on the Sandy River, a major tributary of the Columbia River. The obstruction was removed in hope that salmon migrations would increase upriver. On a grander scale, the Elwaha Dam (1913) and Glines Canyon Dam (1927) are scheduled to be removed in 2012, as the first major attempt to restore salmon migration and trout habitat in the northwestern corner of Washington State. With the dams removed, salmon will hopefully re-enter the Elwaha watershed for the first time since the dams were constructed a century earlier.

The removal of these dams has provided political leverage for non-profit environmentalist organizations such as Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition (1991) and Idaho Rivers United (1990), groups committed to the removal of hydroelectric dams on the lower Snake River, the largest stretch of water in the Columbia River Basin. Since the systematic completion of Ice Harbor Dam (1962), Lower Monumental Dam (1969), Little Goose Dam (1970), and Lower Granite Dam (1972), salmon populations on the lower Snake River have declined by ninety percent; one species, the Coho, was declared extinct in 1986. Using the Endangered Species Act (1973), Clean Water Act (1977) and the recent decommissioning of other dams as political leverage, local activists are committed to restoring the threatened status of salmon by removing the dams on the lower Snake River within the next decade.[129] It should be no surprise that local non-profits are appealing to more than federal law; they are also using literature and visual arts to undergird their efforts at localized watershed reclamation.

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[129] For more on the removal of lower Snake River dams see: Elizabeth Grossman, *Watershed: The Undamming of America* (New York, NY: Counterpoint, 2002), 167-197; Keith Peterson, *River of Life, Channel of Death: Fish and Dams on the Lower Snake* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State UP, 2001); and James A. Lichatowich, *Salmon Without Rivers: A History of the Pacific Salmon Crisis* (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2001).

David James Duncan's "Lost River" (2007) is a meditative parable printed and distributed by the Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition in an effort to catalyze local commitments toward the removal of dams on the Lower Snake River. By way of closure, Duncan's cryptic re-telling of Columbia River Basin history reviews the palimpsest of the watershed's entanglement with federal and localized reclamation efforts, while also demonstrating how literature and visual arts will continue to realign and reconstruct the cultural narratives and physical spaces within the river system.

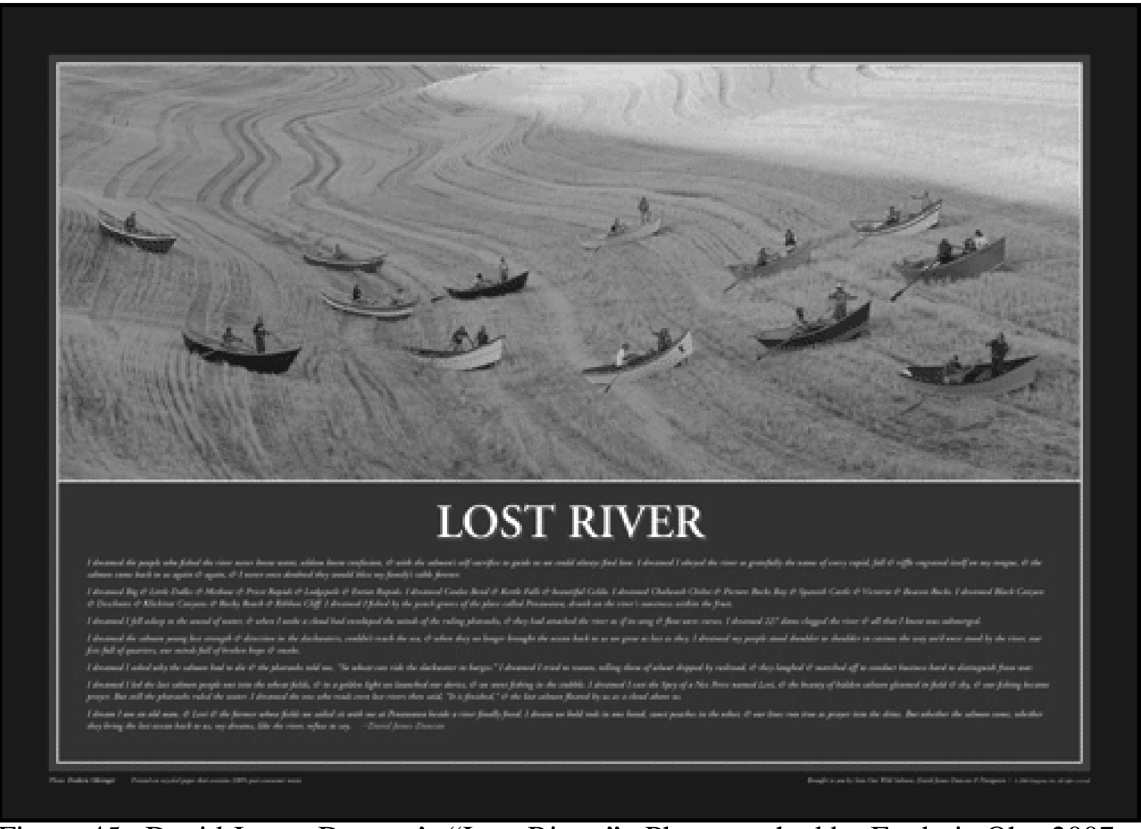

Figure 45. David James Duncan's "Lost River." Photographed by Frederic Ohr, 2007.

"Lost River" is told by an unnamed narrator, an old dreamer who has seen many economic and ecological changes in his long life. In the back of his mind, the dreamer can still recall when the Columbia River was a place of human and environmental

flourishing; the days when "the name of every rapid, fall & riffle engraved itself on [his] tongue, & salmon came back to us again & again" (24). These images are interrupted, however, when memories of "ruling pharaohs attacked the river" and lined it with dams. In years that followed, the free-flowing waterway was transformed into a field of wheat, a linear channel made for barges that carried produce, commerce, and implements of war up and down the river. The salmon, no longer able to migrate beyond concrete walls and fields re-made for commerce, grew weak and sick (25). Moving closer to the present, the dreamer remembers a time when local community groups gathered to question and undermine the work of the federal pharaohs. Despite the fact that engineers still "ruled the water," cross-cultural bands of local citizens gathered together to join the salmon in a river transformed into a channel of concrete and wheat (25).

Pushing their boats away from shore, these local dissenters rowed on fields of wheat stubble and dropped lines of faith until their "fishing became a prayer" to the lost river and its vanishing salmon. Then, with a community of disparate, but somehow common believers gathered to remember the salmon -- the last sign of life on the river -- the dreamer recalled the exact moment that the life-pulse of the Columbia River was extinguished. That day, standing in his boat made of hope and prayer, the dreamer uttered the words "it is finished" and "the last salmon floated by as a cloud," bringing life on the watershed to a sterilizing end (25). Leaving readers on the knife-edge of history, the old dreamer foresees a day when the lost river will be resurrected. On that morning, the storyteller will search for signs of life in the free-flowing water, "but whether the salmon come, whether they bring the lost ocean back to us," his dreams, like this literary history, "refuse to say" (25).

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