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Missed Opportunity: The Strategic and Rhetorical Miscalculations of Deep Ecology

Taylor C. Hastings

University of Montana, Missoula

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MISSED OPPORTUNITY: THE STRATEGIC AND RHETORICAL MISCALCULATIONS OF DEEP
ECOLOGY

By

TAYLOR CLARK HASTINGS

Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, 2016

Thesis

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Approved by:

Scott Whittenburg, Dean of The Graduate School
Graduate School

Dr. David Gilcrest, Chair
Department of English

Dr. Louise Economides
Department of English

Dr. Natalie Dawson
W.A. Franke College of Forestry and Conservation

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Missed Opportunity: The Strategic and Rhetorical Miscalculations of Deep Ecology

Chairperson: Dr. David Gilcrest

The first chapter of the project analyzes Deep Ecological philosophy, presented by Arne Naess, and its inability to coalesce as a social movement because of Naess' strategic belief that an open philosophical template, as well as a rhetorical strategy of being instructive, instead of rhetorically moving Deep Ecologists towards engaging concrete plans towards change to mitigate destructive human environmental practices, as the most effective strategy. The second chapter analyzes the Dark Mountain Project and the ways it has grown out of Deep Ecology, and the ways the Dark Mountain Project is misguided in its interpretation of the works of Robinson Jeffers as a figure to move humanity towards mitigating unsustainable human/more-than-human relationships. The third chapter proposes John Steinbeck as a more pragmatic intellectual godfather through his work. Steinbeck was scientifically literate, he embraced an adequate Deep Ecological environmental ethic, and he was willing to explicitly address the ways capitalism was a root cause of alienating human/more-than-human relationships, and he was the most effective at moving his audience to address the irresponsible relationships with other humans, as well as more-than-human nature, that is created by capitalism.

Taylor Hastings

Thesis Chapter 1

Spring 2018

Missed Opportunity: The Strategic and Rhetorical Miscalculations of Deep Ecology

The deep ecology movement will thrive despite whatever professional philosophers like myself publish about their conception of it. (Naess, "Basics" 105)

Deep ecology is suspicious. It lacks passion, an absence that is acutely disturbing given our current state of affairs. (Turner 24)

Deep Ecological theory has generated many productive discussions over the past thirty-four years and has been a prominent force in ecocritical discourse for much of that time. Deep Ecology proposed intrinsic value for all life and the belief that practical and psychological changes would need to be undertaken by humans to achieve a more sustainable, responsible, rational, and moral world. Deep Ecology initially resonated with, and still appeals to, many environmental thinkers who see a world dying at the hands of humans. Though Deep Ecology's mission was simple to broadly comprehend, and agree with, it ultimately failed as a practical movement because, in retrospect, there has been little or no change to the trajectory of global environmental degradation. With such a prominent and well-embraced beginning, why has Deep Ecology become all but obsolete in contemporary environmental movements? Deep Ecology remains philosophically intact, but it ultimately failed as a movement because its creator, Arne Naess, strategically utilized open and ambiguous language when formulating his theory, in an attempt to be more inclusive to wider audiences, instead of proposing specific, concrete solutions to the problems he diagnosed, and refused to directly engage criticism of Deep Ecology with concrete solutions because he feared alienating potential followers of Deep Ecology; without a strategic plan, or effective exemplary leadership from Naess, or Naess' authorization of another

leader of Deep Ecology, other engaged philosophers, and other environmentally conscious activists, were unable to pursue and codify a strategic Deep Ecological movement that could work to establish a biospherically egalitarian world.

Arne Naess should be respected for creating Deep Ecology because it greatly increased awareness of human-caused degradation of the more-than-human world. Naess would also be proud that the philosophy of Deep Ecology has endured for many years because he worked hard to maintain philosophical viability through his Apron diagram and many published defenses. Naess was a philosopher and found philosophy to be a comfortable and familiar place to engage a solution to the environmental crisis, and in creating Deep Ecology, Naess took issue with purely science-based ecological frameworks because “Ecology is a limited science which makes use of scientific methods” (154-5). Instead of a purely scientific engagement, Naess proposed combining science and philosophy to create ecophilosophical engagement because “Philosophy is the most general forum of debate on fundamentals, descriptive as well as prescriptive” (155). Naess created the philosophical foundation of Deep Ecology, and he was effective in establishing a forum of debate. But, Naess’ goal for Deep Ecology was also to move past philosophy into an environmental social movement, and he was unwilling to make rhetorically strategic decisions to help catalyze the movement. By not engaging specific steps to remediate the environmental issues of the day, or appointing another leader to establish a more concrete ecophilosophical platform for the movement, the productive conversations of Deep Ecology were mirrored in the world with exponential human population growth, and dramatic increases in industrialization, which led to a substantial increase of environmental degradation.

Vague Articulation of Deep Ecology

Naess initially began his Deep Ecological philosophical inquiry in 1973 by diagnosing two competing visions of ecological thought in “The Shallow and the Deep, Long Range Ecology Movements: A Summary.” Naess outlined the shallow ecology movement as a fight “against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries” (151). Naess believed shallow ecology had driven the early ecological movement, and it was unhealthy, and unsustainable, because it did not address core human value systems. The shallow movement was reactive to human-caused environmental degradation instead of proactive in finding preemptive and comprehensive solutions. A deeper engagement with ecological thought was needed, and Naess presented his case for “*The Deep Ecology movement*” (151) in eight tenets later refined and codified with George Sessions. Naess and Sessions formally presented the updated theory of “The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects” in 1984 because the “time [was] ripe for professional ecologists to break their silence and express their deepest concerns more freely” (67). Naess reintroduced Deep Ecology to concerned scientists and philosophers partially because Sessions acted as a helpful liaison to an American audience for the Norwegian philosopher but also because Naess had made strategic changes to the language of his theory to be more inclusive to a wider audience.

In the original 1973 introduction to Deep Ecology, the tenets were given explicit titles, such as: 1) biospherical egalitarianism, 2) anti-class posture, 3) local autonomy, and 4) decentralization. In the later Naess and Sessions tenets of Deep Ecology, the titles were removed intentionally to make the explicit, and controversial, goals of the tenets more palatable through open language. The eight tenets are as follows:

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life *requires* a smaller human population.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between bigness and greatness.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. (68)

The problem diagnosed by Deep Ecology's tenets is an anthropocentric ethic, which privileges human issues, and serves to primarily degrade the more-than-human world. The first of the eight

tenets intended to cause a dramatic shift in human engagement with the more-than-human because it replaced anthropocentrism with ecocentrism by removing the human from environmental centrality. Such a dramatic human reorientation was controversial because removing human significance undermines all human systems the privilege human success over any other member of the more-than-human world. Naess understood that an biospherically egalitarian orientation would be difficult for many humans to wholeheartedly agree with because it would mean real changes to the ways humans lived, so he used more ambiguous language to avoid an explicit plea for biospherical egalitarianism.

To move Naess' rhetoric from framing his first point under the explicit title of biospherical egalitarianism in his 1973 paper, to his paper in 1984 proposing intrinsic value, was a more palatable shift for a wider audience. Naess was still trying to coax ecocentric sensibility from his audience with the eight tenets, but he slowly built his ecocentric argument throughout his paper. Right after introducing the eight tenets, Naess described the logic of each tenet in more detail. For tenet one, Naess explained how his "formulation refers to the biosphere, or more professionally, to the ecosphere as a whole (this is also referred to as 'ecocentrism')" (68). Even though Naess drafted the eight tenets as more agreeable, he never changed the fundamental goals, or even softened the language of the fine print. The shift from systems of human domination or stewardship, to a system recognizing the complicated nature of the world, and reorienting from an anthropocentric viewpoint in favor of an ecocentric viewpoint, was still proposed, and was still revolutionary. But, Naess' decision to use more open language, and his less than forceful prescription, left little for a social Deep Ecology movement to rally around.

Throughout his career, Naess wrote many defenses of, and meditations on, the original outline of Deep Ecology. Naess even felt compelled to address the vague nature of his language:

“Where is the essence or core? Is there a definite general philosophy of deep ecology, or at least a kind of philosophy? Or is it essentially a movement with exasperatingly vague outlines?”

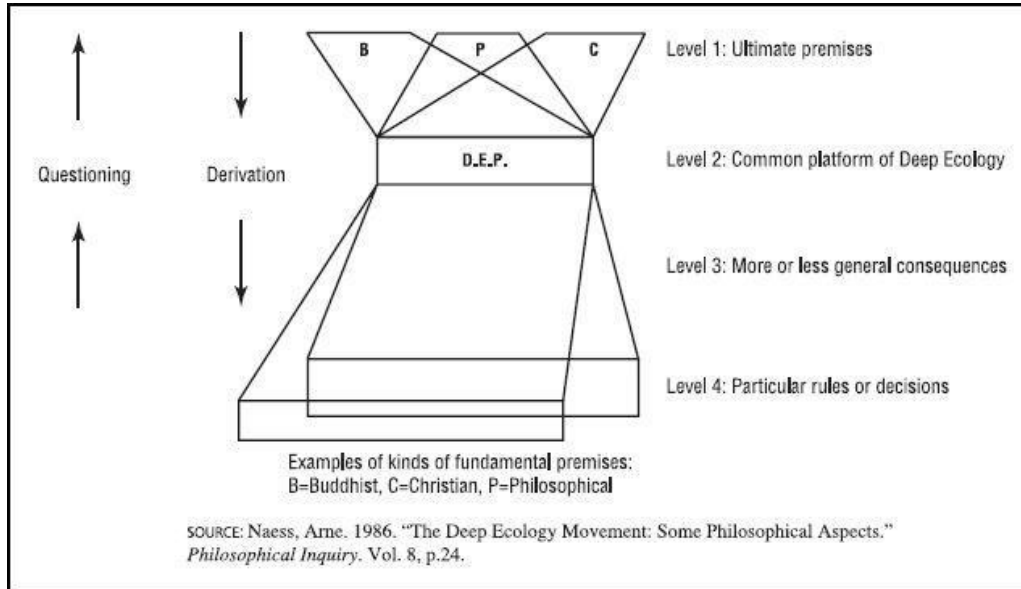
(“Basics” 105). Naess embraced the vague language because he believed it encouraged and fostered involvement from a broad spectrum of thinkers in utilizing Deep Ecology: “Supporters of deep ecology may have difficulties in understanding each other’s ultimate view, but not sets of penultimate views as formulated as a kind of platform they have largely in common” (“Basics” 106). Naess’ defense of a vague philosophy shows he intended to be more inclusive of different voices and perspectives because he believed the movement would need a large audience to have a sizeable social impact.

Naess was aware of potential criticisms to Deep Ecology, and he worked to avoid and subdue any legitimate criticism where possible because he believed Deep Ecology could transcend basic, or superficial, disagreements. So, Naess’ strategy of using intentionally vague language was also designed to give space for argumentation and disagreement with the different tenets. Naess believed some may reject Deep Ecology on one tenet and therefore discount Deep Ecology as a whole: “This might result because they are followers of a shallow (or reform) environmental movement or rather they may simply dislike one or more of the eight points for semantical or other reasons” (68). Simple semantic disagreements were no issue for Naess, as long as there was a general agreement: “[Those who disagree] may well accept a different set of points which, to me, has roughly the same meaning, in which case I shall call them supporters of the deep ecology movement, but add that they *think* they disagree” (68). Naess’ vague language strategically functioned to protect the potential Deep Ecologist from being alienated *prematurely* by the overall philosophy because Naess believed his philosophy could overcome seemingly superficial disagreements.

Deep Ecological theory was captivating to many prominent theorists and thinkers of the time who engaged with Deep Ecology and put forth their own visions of a Deep Ecological future. And as a pure philosophy, Deep Ecology would be strengthened by different perspectives and healthy disagreement. However, without Naess either establishing his own *strategic* vision for the movement, or authorizing another Deep Ecologist's strategic vision for a future social movement, the diversity of voices and ideas, and the ability of those voices to rationalize vastly different meanings from the tenets, resulted in a divided and ineffective movement.

Defense of Deep Ecology

Naess' lack of a defined strategic plan caused the movement to suffer when addressing important critiques of Deep Ecology. Many critics were not opposed to the aims of Deep Ecology but wanted to address the real anthropocentric obstacles, such as the hierarchical social systems (e.g. capitalism, patriarchy) that subjugate humans and the more-than-human world, that stood in the way of achieving biospherical egalitarianism. Naess needed to create a more defined blueprint and engage critical voices to help revise and build a unified vision of Deep Ecology congruent with other disciplines. Instead, Naess only addressed criticism in broad, and vague, theoretical terms, or would utilize his own philosophical framework to render criticism *technically* incompatible with his theory, and therefore irrelevant to Naess. Naess' philosophical framework is best shown through his own Apron diagram:



("The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects" 77)

The Apron diagram contains "four levels: (1) verbalized fundamental philosophical and religious views, (2) the deep ecology platform, (3) the more or less general consequences derived from the platform—guidelines for lifestyles and for policies of every kind, and (4) prescriptions related to concrete situations" ("Basics" 106). Naess created the Apron diagram to help Deep Ecologists move their questioning from the superficial issues (3 & 4), to engage in argumentation that accesses ultimate, fundamental value systems (1), through the eight points of Deep Ecology (2): "One main point in deep ecology is the *deep* argumentation, that is, argumentation from ultimate (philosophical, religious) premises, but there is room for very different sets of such premises" ("Basics" 108). The Apron diagram accompanied Naess' inclusive philosophy, and went even further in establishing a framework to legitimize differences in opinion as philosophically compatible.

Naess had many goals with the Apron diagram. Naess' first goal was to make the philosophical aspects more concrete, and maintain an inclusive message to people who have different, and seemingly incompatible, beliefs: "Deep ecology as a conviction, with its

subsequently derived practical recommendations, can follow from a number of more comprehensive world views” (79). The second goal for Naess was to help give structure to a deeper line of questioning because “The decisive difference between a shallow and deep ecology, in practice, concerns the willingness to question, and an appreciation of the importance of questioning ... It asks “why” insistently and consistently, taking nothing for granted!” (75). Naess wanted Deep Ecology to get to the fundamental value systems that shaped human relations to the more-than-human, and the philosophical framework enabled his own ability to question, but he also helped other Deep Ecologists push their own lines of inquiry deeper.

In “The Deep Ecological Movement,” Naess demonstrated how the Apron diagram is designed to bring ostensibly disparate ultimate premises to work together and result in a more cohesive social movement. Naess’ demonstration explains why Naess didn’t believe he needed to dictate the terms of a Deep Ecological social movement. Naess used his own personal ecological philosophy “Ecosophy T” for the demonstration, where his ultimate premise was “Self-realization” (80), instead of another religious or philosophical ultimate premise. Naess applied his notion of self-realization (level 1) to the Apron diagram through each of the eight tenets of Deep Ecology (level 2) to derive meaning from each tenet, and he argued that “a philosophy as a world view inevitably has implications for practical situations ... Like other ecosophies, Ecosophy T therefore moves on ... to the concrete questions of lifestyles” (81). Deep Ecologists did not need to agree on ultimate premises, and they would find their own personal solutions to issues that would arise from engaging level two, so Naess didn’t want to push or enforce any official doctrine. Naess’ Apron diagram functions logically and is informative, but his system did little to unite and push a movement towards change.

The third goal for Naess was to utilize the Apron diagram to address criticisms of Deep Ecology. Naess was sure of the strength of his theory, and he believed “It is of considerable importance that the Deep Ecology movement has so far faced no serious philosophically-based criticism. Sooner or later that will occur, but of course it has to be legitimate criticism, not a caricature, of the movement” (“Deepness” 211). Naess was happy to set a high bar and discourage any superficial criticism of Deep Ecology. But, Naess was also protective, and so caught up with the legitimacy of Deep Ecology as a sound philosophy that he rarely brought up direct criticisms when they were lodged against his theory. When Naess did address criticism, he would utilize the logical framework of the Apron diagram to disprove or discount it as a logical flaw of the individual critiquing Deep Ecology; therefore, in Naess’ mind, the criticism wouldn’t need further exploration or remediation, as he showed in his rebuttal to ecofeminist critiques.

Carolyn Merchant summarized a few different criticisms of Deep Ecology in her book *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Living World*. The most compelling criticism she engaged was from the Ariel Kay Salleh of the ecofeminist community. Salleh was concerned how Naess “and other deep ecologists fail to see the historical and philosophical connections between the domination of nature by ‘man’ and the domination of women by men” (104). Salleh’s concern was valid because Naess had presented this new radical theoretical framework, yet there was no mention of radically reorienting man’s relationship to women. Naess’s intentionally vague construction of Deep Ecology gave a lot room for personal interpretation, and that meant Deep Ecology could be construed for altruistic purposes, but also could be interpreted to legitimize continued subordination of women, which ecofeminists were wary of. Naess did call for policies to be changed in economic, technological, and ideological structures, but “The ‘anti-class’ posture offered by Naess is superficial, ignoring the connection between nature as commodity

and woman as commodity in patriarchal society” (104). Naess didn’t explicitly call for the breakdown of any social, patriarchal, or capitalistic systems—and without clear language on the terms of a new orientation within such systems—ecofeminists wouldn’t accept Deep Ecology. Merchant asked: “Could deep ecology be cured of its antifeminist bias through greater sensitivity to its own language and analysis? The answer is no” (104-5). The people of the ecofeminist movement understood how both patriarchal and capitalistic societies dominate, and objectify, women. Therefore, ecofeminist acceptance of Deep Ecology was fundamentally weak and would not improve unless Naess himself were willing to properly address a concrete strategy, not just show greater sensitivity to language and analysis, to dismantle foundational systems that subordinate women.

Naess understood the criticisms of Deep Ecology but didn’t want to move outside of the framework of his philosophy. Instead of taking ecofeminist criticism and trying to create a more nuanced Deep Ecological plan, Naess further alienated his potential allies by only addressing ecofeminist critiques through the Apron diagram’s philosophical logic: “For example, if by ecofeminism you mean that the ecological crisis is essentially due to the domination of sorts of masculine-value priorities, this can be articulated on level 3. The strategy of overcoming the crisis, [is] the level 4 decision” (“Basics” 118). So, for ecofeminism, there may be disagreements with the consequences, guidelines and prescriptions from levels 3 and 4 of Deep Ecology, but the deeper, more fundamental engagement with Deep Ecology can remain intact and inclusive. Naess believed “The shallow or reform movement tends to argue only on level 3 and level 4” (“Basics” 119), and most people who agree with the tenets of Deep Ecology should not dismiss it for issues on more superficial results of current societal orientations. Naess only addressed counter-arguments within *his* own logical framework, and *his* logic is sound. However, Naess’

choice to transcend logical anthropocentric issues with Deep Ecological theory frustrated potential allies of the movement by only focusing on the ways criticisms are superficial to Deep Ecology's ultimate purpose.

Deep Ecological Revisions

Naess didn't set a strategic vision for the Deep Ecology movement; instead, he tried to reinforce large scale buy-in by defending and trying to explain away *perceived* issues with the theory because he believed "Closely similar or even identical conclusions may be drawn from divergent or even incompatible premises" ("Basics" 106). Naess initially had confidence in people overcoming different viewpoints because different value systems could be reconciled as long as people could *mostly* agree to *some* version of the eight tenets of level two of his Apron diagram. But within a few years, Naess wasn't as confident in the strength of his theory bringing distant voices together and recognized how the ambiguous nature of Deep Ecology could "be felt by some to be bewildering and makes deep ecology too vague to deserve analytical scrutiny" ("Basics" 106). So, Naess acknowledged the strategic weakness of employing vague language in his 1984 version of his tenets, and he began publishing works to adjudicate meaning of some of his more vague and troubled concepts.

Naess began to bring clarity to Deep Ecology, and his mode was to address his rhetoric. Naess wanted to address how "In recent years considerable efforts have been made to distinguish two concepts; one is expressed by the term 'intrinsic value' and the other by the term 'inherent value' or 'inherent worth.' What I intend to express by the use of the term 'intrinsic value' in the Eight Points is perhaps better conveyed by the term 'inherent value'" (216). The change is small, but Naess addressing his rhetoric signified his recognition of the limitations of vague language,

since he had previously dismissed parsing semantics as necessary. Naess did take *some* positive steps to address and correct *some* ambiguous language that created disagreement; but in many of the instances where Naess chose to address issues with the movement, he ultimately served to further complicate issues with more vague language.

Parsing the intended meaning of inherent versus intrinsic value was an attempt by Naess to clarify a position, but the resulting change for Deep Ecology was barely noticeable. One of Naess' more important attempts to intervene with his rhetoric was in revisiting his controversial use of "the term 'vital needs,' ... [because] what you *need* in your life is a small fraction of what you are led to desire in the rich countries whereas, in regions of desperate poverty, the vital needs of the majority of people are not satisfied whether or not they reduce the richness and diversity of life forms" (217). Naess was smart to try and address the trouble with potential definitions of "vital needs," but even his revision of "vital needs" is noncommittal and vague. Naess consciously utilized "vital needs" in an attempt to appeal to people with different value systems, but "vital needs" can be manipulated to rationalize many counter-productive actions to ideal Deep Ecological practices. For people in the developed world, a perceived "vital need" could be keeping multiple cars for a small family because each parent has a busy schedule and works on opposite sides of town. What about privileging bicycles, or walking, and embracing a slower pace once you have shed a consumer and capitalist lifestyle? The notion of vitality, at least for the developed world, should have been codified by Naess so other Deep Ecologists would have a unified notion of how to go forward as a movement, or at least have an opportunity to argue against a reasonable "vital needs" goal in an effort to create a better definition.

Naess also subsequently tried to re-engage and revise the eight points with a more comprehensive list in "Deep Ecology and Lifestyle" to alleviate criticism and establish a more

solid foundation for engaging Deep Ecology. But Naess never lost his ambivalence over creating a more concrete blueprint for Deep Ecologists because he thought it “would be practically impossible to formulate precise criteria for a consistent Deep Ecology lifestyle. Every formulation would have to be vague and highly dependent upon terminological idiosyncrasies” (259). It was a good move for Naess to recognize the difficulty of creating universal guidelines for Deep Ecological engagement, but he could have at least given a more concrete outline to the developed world, which perhaps could have been adapted to other countries/cultures in some measure.

In Naess’ expanded twenty-five-point list in “Deep Ecology and Lifestyle,” his attempt to create a more concrete blueprint for Deep Ecological engagement is rife with vague examples, but one of his most troubling points is “8. Concern about the situation of the Third and Fourth Worlds and the attempt to avoid a material standard of living too much different from and higher than the needy (global solidarity of lifestyle)” (260). What does “global solidarity of lifestyle” mean? How would that be implemented in the developed world? To ask for global solidarity of lifestyle is easy, but it doesn’t necessarily push people to action. Naess doesn’t tell potential Deep Ecologists to stop buying imported goods, or to sell their houses and send superfluous goods to those in the developing world who would benefit. Naess doesn’t tell Deep Ecologists that they only need one or two changes of clothes, and the rest is wasteful. Or, to stop buying goods outside of food, until local farming becomes sustainable, in an effort to dismantle capitalism. Naess had many opportunities to give Deep Ecologists a tangible plan for moving towards a more biospherical egalitarian world but didn’t want to alienate any potential Deep Ecologists.

Not all of Naess' points lack any concrete blueprint for engagement, but the elements that do propose more concrete ideas are unreasonable and useless because they are from such a distinct world of privilege: "11. To appreciate and choose, whenever possible, meaningful work rather than just making a living" (260). How many people are able to make a choice to do meaningful work over just making a living? Number eleven gives a privileged notion of the human condition in developed societies, but Naess goes further: "15. Efforts to satisfy vital needs rather than desires. Resisting the urge to 'go shopping' as a diversion or therapy. Reducing the sheer number of possessions, favoring the old, much-worn, but essentially well-kept things" (260). Naess seems to be writing in a utopian world already transformed by Deep Ecology, not trying to convince people they need to enact dramatic shifts in orientation and consciousness. Naess wants people to value their grandfather's chair they inherited over a more stylish IKEA option. Naess' final point is very loose in its potential interpretations: "25. Vegetarianism, total or partial" (261). Naess wanted people to not eat meat, or, well, at least, eat less meat. So, stop eating meat, unless you still want to, but maybe a little less? In later iterations of Naess' list of Deep Ecology's lifestyle guideline, he finally changes number twenty-five to just "Vegetarianism," which is necessary for a true Deep Ecological vision, but his lack of willingness to show concise leadership, through examples, was too damaging to Deep Ecology's ability to flourish as a movement.

Naess even knew his lack of tangible planning had a profound effect on the reception of Deep Ecology, and he wanted to push back: "Critics have deplored the lack of an authoritative Deep Ecology blueprint ... Visions are needed, but scarcely blueprints" (220). Naess provided the vision and the framework, but was unwilling to give any practical blueprint for fear of fracturing Deep Ecology. But, Naess' apprehensiveness to apply Deep Ecology to real-life

situations was his most disruptive and ineffective tendency. Naess didn't often try to engage ways of implementing theory because he believed his involvement would weaken broad engagement and acceptance. For Naess, it was one thing to propose that the world would be healthier if there was a smaller population but a much more alienating conversation to actually try and outline such a drastic proposition.

Other Deep Ecological thinkers, like Gary Snyder, grappled with tangible approaches to population issues. One example is when Snyder wrote in his essay, "Four Changes," that humanity needed to "Demand immediate participation by all countries in programs to legalize abortion, encourage vasectomy and sterilization ... try to correct traditional cultural attitudes that tend to force women into child-bearing" (142), and he didn't stop there. Snyder's solution was dramatic, and it came into conflict with some of Deep Ecology's fundamental values, such as cultural respect, because he wanted to impose new cultural norms for humanity. However, Snyder pushed against the status quo of rampant population growth because a sustainable human population is critically important to a Deep Ecological biospherical egalitarian future. Snyder made a difficult and controversial argument, but his solution is at least an actual proposed solution, and one that could be argued, and refined.

Naess, when actually wading into practical applications of Deep Ecology, was plagued by an unwillingness to make hard choices. Naess' subsequent, more concrete approach to population reduction is summed up as "It is recognized that excessive pressures on planetary life stem from the human population explosion. The pressure stemming from the industrial societies is a major factor, and population reduction must have the highest priority in those societies" ("The Deep Ecological Movement" 73). Naess' own proposal for reduction in population is spelled out in very broad and noncommittal terms. First, Naess talks about a need for people in

rich countries to address population growth because the movement “cannot expect people in the poorer countries to believe in this point if very few people in the richest countries do” (“Revisited” 218). Fair point, but Naess doesn’t propose specifics on how to accomplish the task. Then, in his discussion of the developing world, Naess talks about how fewer children would mean more available resources. But how many fewer children would constitute the necessary change? Also, communities could adopt a more altruistic ethic of care with fewer children acting as a collective to help larger numbers of the elderly, eliminating the need for excess children to act as a social security plan. Naess not only could have put forth tangible plans to reduce population, but he also had real examples to help guide his policy. Naess could have championed China’s one child policy that was implemented in 1979 as a model for at least the developed world to adhere to. In the end, Naess’ proposals for population reduction aren’t bad, or misguided, but his proposals aren’t pushing Deep Ecologists to make the difficult decisions necessary to change the world.

Naess knew he presented nothing revolutionary, or strategically effective, in his engagement with population reduction, and so he overcompensated by touting the amount of space on a page he devoted to the topic:

I have spent so much space talking about the population issue because I think that, in some countries, now is the time to reconsider the design of cities, and policies of spacing, so as to anticipate the slow decrease of population which may begin in the near future in some countries; say, within a couple of generations, or even sooner. (“Revisited” 219)

Naess has devoted so much time to a broad strokes vision of what population reduction would potentially look like... in the future some time... maybe a long time... but also maybe not so

long. Naess was unwilling to address tangible plans to bring about a Deep Ecological future, and his engagement, though instructive, did little to encourage his social movement to act.

Many critics, such as Murray Bookchin, interpreted Deep Ecology as misanthropic. But, instead of utilizing more concrete details to engage why Deep Ecology was not actually misanthropic, Naess chose to address misanthropy with more vague statements: “What we look for is not a shift of care from humans toward nonhumans, but an extension and a deepening of care” (“22nd Century” 311). Naess was proposing an authentic extension and deepening of care, but without explicitly addressing criticism with tangible solutions, critics would not be appeased. Snyder’s “Four Changes” solution is more directly defensible to criticism like Bookchin’s because, though harsh in the short-term, his plan can be argued for *not* being misanthropic in the long-term because the result could be a more sustainable, and prosperous human population.

Unauthorized Outsourcing

Deep Ecological philosophy is difficult to reconcile with a world where existing power structures dominate, which is why Deep Ecology wanted to be so radical in eliminating hierarchies through human ethical reorientation. However, Naess’ absence of functional leadership deferred a lot of strategic implications to other Deep Ecological thinkers, like Warwick Fox in his essay, “The Deep Ecology-Ecofeminism Debate and Its Parallels.” Other critical discourses may have had a lot in common with Deep Ecology, but many had a difficult time embracing it because an immediate shift to biospherical egalitarianism could mean a lack of accountability for Men, Whites, Westerners, Northerners, and so on. So, when ecofeminists asserted that Deep Ecology was ignoring the androcentric nature of human issues because “men have been far more implicated in the history of ecological destruction than women” (275), Fox

worked to include their critique, and he did the work to explain why ecofeminists and Deep Ecologists needed to work together. Fox recognized critical concerns but believed many criticisms were an opportunity to embrace other discourses because “deep ecologists also agree with similar charges derived from other social perspectives: for example, that capitalists, whites, and Westerners have been far more implicated in the history of ecological destruction” (275). For Fox, Deep Ecology agreed with ecofeminist critiques, and believed transcending human-based critical perspectives would result in “dismantling anthropocentrism” (275). Criticism of Deep Ecology was typically based on anthropocentric issues and instead of addressing anthropocentric issues of hierarchical subordination, Fox’s defense highlighted how Deep Ecology worked to transcend anthropocentrism.

Fox appropriately argued that Deep Ecology works on a deeper, more foundational, philosophical plane, and that “Deep ecologists are not primarily concerned with exposing the *classes of social factors* historically most responsible for social domination and ecological destruction ... [but rather] exposing the most fundamental kind of *legitimation* that they have habitually employed” (283). Deep Ecology wanted to focus on fundamental questions but also didn’t want to alienate other critical discourses because “ecofeminists, green socialists, and so on are also concerned with these questions in a different sense than deep ecologists” (283). Fox rhetorically transcended criticism of Deep Ecology by valuing and legitimizing other critical discourses “different sense” of fundamental questions, and then explaining how Deep Ecology went further and should be supported. Deep Ecology did present an egalitarian ideal that many potential followers, and critics, were able to agree with. But, Naess never properly addressed tangible steps toward dismantling the subordinating hierarchical systems, and though Fox engaged and explained the ultimate position of Deep Ecologists effectively, without any

authority to propose a concrete plan to dismantle hierarchies, the ecofeminists and other constituencies understandably continued to be critical and suspicious.

Early in Fox's argument, he falls into the same trap of ambiguity that plagued Naess: "it must be remembered that deep ecologists are not *intending* to advocate a specific set of guidelines for action; they are only intending to advocate a *general orientation*" (270). The reason Deep Ecology never gained any real traction as a movement is the same reason it won't die off due to criticism: It is too vague and noncommittal. There are so few footholds in the language of Deep Ecological theory, and Naess' subsequent defenses, that it cannot be properly utilized as a catalyzing agent for a forceful social movement.

Another Perspective

Twelve years after Deep Ecology was formally introduced to ecocritical thinkers, Jack Turner, in his book: *The Abstract Wild*, moved beyond any sort of philosophical charge against Deep Ecology, and engaged how ineffective the theory is in practice: "Effective protests are grounded in an alternative vision. Unfortunately, we have no coherent vision of an alternative to our present maladies. Deep ecology does not, as yet, offer a coherent vision" (23). Deep Ecology presented an alternative vision, but the vision is so vague and ambiguous that it offered nothing to create effective protest or action. Deep Ecology is a "hodgepodge of lists, principles, declarations, quotations, clippings from every conceivable tradition, and tidbits of New Age kitsch" (23). The reason there is no clear message from Deep Ecology is because there are no clear proposals for change. Naess had many opportunities to propose tangible solutions, or utilize the solutions presented by other Deep Ecologists to catalyze the movement towards environmental change, but Naess only wanted to argue validity of his philosophical framework.

The philosophical landscape was filled with many Deep Ecological writers and thinkers proposing unauthorized solutions, and the result was an ineffective and fractured movement: “The authors do not clearly say what they mean, they do not forcefully argue for what they believe, they do not create anything new” (Turner 23-4). Without a figure to properly exemplify Deep Ecology, the numerous ideas did little to spur change: “Presented as revolutionary tracts aimed at subverting Western civilization, these writings on deep ecology should embarrass us with their intellectual timidity” (Turner 24). The theory is toothless without *real* proposals moving Deep Ecology towards *real* change.

Turner’s final thought on Deep Ecology is the most damning to Naess’ development and engagement in fostering the theory: “Deep ecology is suspicious. It lacks passion, an absence that is acutely disturbing given our current state of affairs” (24). To empower a population to make difficult decisions, and truly make the changes necessary to transition to an ecocentric world, is impossible without a concrete strategy for change, and thirty-four years after the introduction of Deep Ecology, due to issues with climate and population growth, making difficult decisions more important than ever. Deep Ecology’s philosophical framework is in no danger of being disturbed or degraded because of Naess, but what good is a theory proposing a dramatic reorientation of fundamental values if it doesn’t prompt one to action?

As I have demonstrated throughout Naess’ philosophy, there are two major reasons why Deep Ecology has been largely ineffective as a social movement. Naess’ rhetorical failure is the first issue inhibiting Deep Ecology. Rhetorical theory going back to Cicero established three offices of oratory. James Burnette Eskridge describes Cicero’s three offices as

- (1) to instruct [*docere*]; (2) to please [*delectare*]; (3) to move [*movere*]; and their natural and legitimate spheres of action are in the regions, (1) of the intellect; (2)

of the sensibilities; (3) of the will, respectively. To instruct is of the intellect, to arouse or soothe the emotions, to move the will is the orator's part of the program in dealing with humanity. (16)

Naess didn't create Deep Ecology to simply add to an academic philosophical dialogue; Naess wanted *to move* humans to fundamentally change the way they engaged with the more-than-human world. Naess' creation of Deep Ecology, and his philosophical framework gave a logical and *instructive* path for Deep Ecologists to follow on their own journey towards a more ecocentric existence, but any philosophy needs to be more than just instructive if the goal is to become a forceful social movement.

Cicero believed "that the principal point an orator ought to aim at, is to persuade" (67). Cicero also believed that "the prudence and abilities of an accomplished orator, rests not only his own dignity, but the welfare of individuals without number, and even whole communities" (Cicero 21). Naess took on a rhetorical responsibility by claiming a larger social movement would grow out of Deep Ecological philosophy, but Naess was unwilling to take the necessary rhetorical steps to move his audience towards action because a) he thought any controversial claims would potentially critically limit Deep Ecological involvement, and b) because the process of engaging with Deep Ecology would result in a more "organic" movement towards biospherical egalitarianism. Naess had many opportunities to use his platform to move Deep Ecologists towards substantive changes to alter the way they lived, whether through addressing and identifying tangible solutions to the criticisms lodged against Deep Ecology, or being more explicit in proposing concrete solutions to the problems he diagnosed. Naess was right to try and respect different perspectives and cultures, but it is possible to respect difference while also proposing concrete actions because taking action was also an equally important goal.

The second reason Deep Ecology failed to coalesce as a social movement was because Naess' tenets were incompatible in critical places. Respecting a pure intrinsic value theory in a system that also privileges a human's right to satisfy vital needs, or the implementation of intrinsic value without explicitly dismantling human hierarchical social systems would be impossible. Warwick Fox was one of the major proponents of Deep Ecology who worked to remove complications and incompatibilities of the theory in his book *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*. Fox's purpose in examining and dissecting the faults of Deep Ecology was to create a new ecophilosophy devoid of Deep Ecology's rhetorical issues.

Fox described Naess as "the bearer of so many perspectives that it would simply be impossible for him to be able to maintain them all at the same time without cutting the odd logical corner or engaging in a bit of plain bluffing" (89). Not only did Naess cut logical corners, but Fox also addressed potential practical incompatibilities with implementing Deep Ecological tenets since the "abundance of evidence to suggest that people do in fact draw upon basic philosophical and religious assumptions [level 1] to justify both ecocentric *and* anthropocentric views" (142). Naess wanted to be inclusive of a variety of viewpoints, but his strategy was not logically (or ecocentrically) coherent. It is impossible for a follower of Deep Ecology to fully respect intrinsic value and still prioritize "vital needs" in a fully compatible fashion. If a follower of Deep Ecology holds the ultimate religious premise to obey God, then the connotation, through interpretation of biblical text, would lead to that person privileging his/her own existence over other entities in the biosphere¹. One of Fox's rhetorical proposals was to change from the

¹ Fox methodically breaks down this scenario in "The 'Fundamental' Problem" section starting on p.131 in *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*

dichotomy of shallow and deep ecology movements in favor of the “*anthropocentric ecology movement* and the *ecocentric ecology movement*” (144). Utilizing more explicit appeals to encourage the development of an ecocentric viewpoint is only one of the many issues Fox addressed in *Transpersonal Ecology*. Fox diagnosed, and logically worked through, many of Deep Ecology’s other issues in his book, but he was mainly interested in discussing philosophy and not the efficacy of Naess’ rhetoric in establishing a social movement towards change. A person who adheres to Deep Ecology cannot do so faithfully to all the tenets which leaves writers, theorists, and activists, conflicted since they are only able to exhibit *some* Deep Ecological tendencies in their work.

Moving Forward

Though Deep Ecology has had a difficult past, the movement still has a lot of potential to help reorient the way humans exist with the more-than-human world, but the Deep Ecology of Naess is ill-equipped to move others to action. More modern environmental theories have emerged and have begun to move in different directions, in the aftermath of Deep Ecology’s stagnation as a theory; and in the case of The Dark Mountain Project, they have championed the poetry of Robinson Jeffers, his ethic of inhumanism, and his choice to exist outside of civilization, as a template to reconnect with more-than-human beauty and find productive ways of pursuing social and environmental justice in the face of environmental catastrophe. But, as I will demonstrate in chapter two, utilizing Jeffers is also rhetorically misguided because Jeffers had little faith in human nature, and even less interest in being the literary model of any human social movement. In chapter three, I propose John Steinbeck as an intellectual godfather of a more pragmatic Deep Ecology movement because Steinbeck developed and expressed many

Deep Ecological characteristics throughout his life, but he also worked to confront the ways capitalism served to undermine healthy human engagement within human society and with the more-than-human world, and he was intentionally more forceful in rhetorically motivating his audiences to address the issues he diagnosed.

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Taylor Hastings

Thesis Chapter 2

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Don't Go to the Dark Mountain

The human race will cease after a while and leave no trace, but the great splendors of nature will go on. (Jeffers, "To the American Humanist Association" 201)

The whole human race ought to be scrapped and is / on the way to it; ground like fish-meal for soil- / food. (Jeffers, *The Double Axe* 72)

On July 24th, 2017, Brian Calvert published the essay: "Down the Dark Mountain: Can a forgotten California poet guide us through the ecocide?" in the magazine *High Country News*. The Dark Mountain Project was established twenty-four years after Deep Ecology, and shortly after, and partially in response to, the 2008 global financial crisis. The founders of Dark Mountain, Dougald Hine and Paul Kingsnorth, called out to all demoralized, exhausted, and jaded environmentalists through their 2009 manifesto: "Uncivilisation: The Dark Mountain Manifesto²." Dark Mountain wanted environmentalists to face the facts: "We tried ruling the world; we tried acting as God's steward; then we tried ushering in the human revolution ... We failed in all of it" (20). Hine and Kingsnorth's reference to "ushering in the human revolution" is a nod to the stated goal and subsequent failure of Arne Naess' Deep Ecology movement, and the need to try something new. Since the failed Deep Ecology revolution, dominant human hierarchical systems have continued degrading the more-than-human world, and it left the Dark Mountain people believing that "we are doomed: even the politicians think this; even the environmentalists. Some of us deal with it by going shopping. Some deal with it by hoping it is

² I will be using the British spelling of civilised throughout for consistency.

true. Some give up in despair. Some work frantically to try and fend off the coming storm” (14). The Dark Mountain project was created in the aftermath of the failed Deep Ecological environmental movement to ask: what can humanity do besides giving in to desperation, or shopping, in the age of ecocide?

Calvert’s article defines the ecocide as “the total destruction of our home ... any number of ongoing catastrophes: mass extinction, climate chaos, flooded coasts, mega-drought; oceans turning to acid, permafrost to muck” (16). Facing such a dark reality, Hine and Kingsnorth’s manifesto proclaims that “This is the moment to ask deep questions and to ask them urgently ... It is time to look for new paths” (21). Dark Mountain followers are to escape the trappings of human society, to expose the human myths that have destroyed the environment, and use their art to inform their path forward. The poems of Robinson Jeffers, as well as explicit gestures to Jeffers’ philosophical influence, are made throughout the Dark Mountain Manifesto as an inspiration and a potential new path to follow. Jeffers’ work is influential because of his inhumanist ethic: “The shifting of emphasis from man to notman ... [which is for Dark Mountain] the aim of Uncivilised writing” (19). Jeffers’ inhumanist ethic had also endeared Jeffers to Deep Ecologists because it favored a shift towards a more ecocentric personal ethic. Hine and Kingsnorth champion the work of Jeffers because he “was writing Uncivilised verse seventy years before this manifesto was thought of” (18). Uncivilised art cannot be created by those who are complicit in perpetuating the myth of civilisation, and so the Dark Mountain followers “shall make the pilgrimage to [Jeffers’] Dark Mountain, to the great, immovable, inhuman heights which were here before us and will be here after” (21). The new paths with the inspiration of Jeffers is set to dismantle the myth of civilisation, but to what end? Dark Mountain

chose an effective instructor with a clear message in Jeffers, but his message does not align with Dark Mountain's view of human nature, or forging a positive human future.

Jeffers believed that human separation from the more-than-human world was caused by consciousness, and fundamentally interfered with the human ability to recognize and engage beauty, and the solution was to remove any hierarchical privilege from humans in favor of a more egalitarian sensibility to recapture an appreciation of beauty. The Dark Mountain Manifesto, and the eight principles of uncivilisation³ at the end of the manifesto, mirror the path

³ THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF UNCIVILISATION.

1. We live in a time of social, economic and ecological unravelling. All around us are signs that our whole way of living is already passing into history. We will face this reality honestly and learn how to live with it.
2. We reject the faith which holds that the converging crises of our times can be reduced to a set of 'problems' in need of technological or political 'solutions'.
3. We believe that the roots of these crises lie in the stories we have been telling ourselves. We intend to challenge the stories which underpin our civilisation: the myth of progress, the myth of human centrality, and the myth of our separation from 'nature'. These myths are more dangerous for the fact that we have forgotten they are myths.
4. We will reassert the role of storytelling as more than mere entertainment. It is through stories that we weave reality.

Jeffers took in removing himself from civilisation and envisions a future where uncivilised writers are “Apart but engaged, its practitioners always willing to get their hands dirty; aware, in fact, that dirt is essential; that keyboards should be tapped by those with soil under their fingernails and wilderness in their heads” (20). Brian Calvert goes even further than Dark Mountain to claim that a return to connection with the more-than-human would recuperate beauty, but also: “the creation of beauty can come from advocates of justice. A human rights lawyer, a sanctuary church, protesters for women’s rights or science or both, demonstrations against police violence—these heal injury also, rebalance the whole, adding beauty to the world” (24). Both Kingsnorth and Calvert believe Jeffers’ engagement with the convalescent beauty of more-than-human nature is a healthy blueprint for dealing with the grief of the ecocide, and they

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5. Humans are not the point and purpose of the planet. Our art will begin with the attempt to step outside the human bubble. By careful attention, we will reengage with the non-human world.
 6. We will celebrate writing and art which is grounded in a sense of place and of time. Our literature has been dominated for too long by those who inhabit the cosmopolitan citadels.
 7. We will not lose ourselves in the elaboration of theories or ideologies. Our words will be elemental. We write with dirt under our fingernails.
 8. The end of the world as we know it is not the end of the world full stop. Together, we will find the hope beyond hope, the paths which lead to the unknown world ahead of us. (Hine and Kingsnorth 23)

may not be rhetorically misguided in their use of Jeffers as an exemplary literary model *if* they only care to remove themselves from society and chastise anyone who perpetuates degrading human myths; but, if Calvert and Dark Mountain intend on using Jeffers to bring about any positive human social, or environmental, change, then Dark Mountain has chosen the wrong writer. Jeffers did not imagine a future world where humans exist in *any* positive sense. Jeffers' was mainly interested in chastising humanity, and he didn't want to lead an organized revolt against human civilisation, much less lead an effort to pursue human social justice. Jeffers only saw inhumanist beauty in his apocalyptic visions of a world *devoid of humans*. For Jeffers, the health of the more-than-human world was not dependent on humanity moving past an anthropocentric orientation but rather in the more-than-human world moving on from humans.

Dark Mountain, like Deep Ecology before it, wants humans to recognize that their actions have consequences and to help people come to terms and cope with their destructive systemic actions but also look for a more productive way forward through engaging the more-than-human world. Dark Mountain's strategy for dismantling societal myths is through the creation of art, and their belief "that only artists can do it" (17). Following Jeffers' *literal* example of moving away from civilisation, Dark Mountain "will collect the words and the images of those who consider themselves Uncivilised ... who want to help us attack the citadels" (22). Uncivilised writing "is writing which attempts to stand outside the human bubble and see us as we are: highly evolved apes with an array of talents and abilities which we are unleashing without sufficient thought, control, compassion or intelligence" (17). The Dark Mountain project does not see the gentle rhetorical nudge towards ecocentrism that Deep Ecology employed as effective, nor does it see more practical engagements with environmentalism as being productive because Deep Ecology and environmentalism exist and function in the realm of civilisation.

Going back to rhetorical theory from the first chapter, the three aims of the orator are “(1) to instruct [*docere*]; (2) to please [*delectare*]; (3) to move [*movere*]” (Eskridge 16). Jeffers literally moved away from civilization, but he never rhetorically moved his audiences to action; instead, Jeffers used his perspective from outside human civilization to instruct humanity on the reality of its darker nature. The Dark Mountain Project’s goal of dismantling human myths of progress and civilization that have perpetuated more-than-human degradation is honorable. But, by pursuing the end of dismantling systemic human myths through the literary example of Robinson Jeffers, the Dark Mountain people have engaged in environmental activism and therefore can be judged on their rhetorical strategy towards environmental change.

Much like the failed Deep Ecology movement, the rhetorical message of Dark Mountain, and its ultimate goals, are ambitious, but also ambiguous. At the end of the Dark Mountain manifesto, they ask: “Where does it end? Nobody knows. Where will it lead? We are not sure” (22). The Ecocide is upon us, and humanity needs to address and pursue tangible solutions to environmental issues. Jeffers’ work posed a solution that was salutary for his own sanity, but even in the early 20th century his prescription was highly privileged and unreasonable on a larger scale. The appropriation of Jeffers today as a way for people to deal with the ecocide represents an even more privileged solution. The Dark Mountain Project’s interpretation of Jeffers is not intrinsically bad, and I do not mean to construe it as such, but it is misguided. To accept Dark Mountain’s pursuit of art to subvert societal myths, and grieve ecological disaster, is a band-aid for the privileged in society to mitigate guilty feelings. If society is resigned to the capitalistic model, as it has shown itself to be, then concerted efforts to change infrastructure to renewable technologies, and investment in other climate mitigation technologies, must be the priority. To accept and appreciate nature’s intrinsic value is needed but will not save us if we do

not have a clear strategic path. Jeffers should be celebrated as a great American poet, but Jeffers' work does not propose a practical way forward.

Jeffers' Concern with Consciousness

To read Jeffers is to understand his disdain for humanity. Jeffers wanted humans to strive to shed their separation from the more than human world, but he didn't believe humanity was capable of this; Jeffers wasn't just disillusioned with human myths, he was disillusioned with human nature. In Albert Gelpi's introduction to *The Wild God of the World*, he describes Jeffers' religious views as a "Calvinist agnosticism: Calvinism without Christ, without God's redemptive incarnation in the human condition" (9). Humanity did not represent a positive transcendence of the natural world, in fact "Jeffers' reading in science and psychology confirmed his conviction that consciousness, which Christians like Dante and humanists like Emerson took to be the distinguishing and crowning glory of humans, was in fact the original sin that separated us from the divine processes of nature" (10-11). Jeffers' notion of consciousness had ramifications in his writing. Jeffers' issue was not with consciousness alone, but rather with "its selfishness and self-centeredness that separates our species from the others" (Kopecký 112). In "The Answer," Jeffers expresses his anguish and disgust over humanity's conscious separation, writing:

Integrity is wholeness,
 the greatest beauty is
 Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty
 of the universe. Love that, not man
 Apart from that, or else you will share man's pitiful confusions,
 or drown in despair when his days darken. (Hunt 522)

Jeffers believed humanity's separation from the more-than-human world through consciousness caused humans to be unable to appreciate beauty, and the divine beauty of the universe is one of wholeness. Jeffers tells us to "Love that, not man / Apart from that." To exist in a world where humans are separate from the more-than-human relegates humanity to pitiful confusion and despair. Jeffers believed consciousness led to the proliferation of negative human qualities, and therefore relished living in the Tor house, a house he helped build from local granite on the Carmel, California coast, away from modern human civilisation.

Jeffers' experience building the house was influential in his engagement with deep time through a love of rocks and geological processes. In Jeffers' poem "Granite and Cypress," he tries to understand his limited temporal perspective in the context of his new home:

I have
granite and cypress,
Both long-lasting,
Planted in the earth; but the granite sea-boulders [sic] are prey to no hawk's
wing, they have taken worse pounding,
Like me they remember
Old wars and are quiet; for we think that the future is one piece with the
past, we wonder why tree-tops
And people are so shaken. (39)

Jeffers takes the long view. What does a few years of war mean in terms of the life of a tree, which can be hundreds of years? What about a piece of granite, which can exist for millions, if not billions of years, in the right conditions? Jeffers was comforted knowing the more-than-human world would survive humanity, and he knew, in a geologic sense, that a war waged is no

more destructive than the blow from a hawk's wing, just as the life of a tree seems fleeting when put into the context of deep time.

In a letter to Sister Mary James Power in 1934, Jeffers reluctantly expressed his belief “that the universe is one being, all its parts are different expressions of the same energy, and they are all in communication with each other, influencing each other, therefore parts of one organic whole” (Jeffers, “Letter” 189). Jeffers’ holistic thinking was beautiful, and he tried to find communion with everything so he could recognize and appreciate beauty. Jeffers’ notion of beauty was unconventional though. In “Fire on the Hills,” Jeffers describes

the roaring wave of the brushfire;
I thought of the smaller lives that were caught.
Beauty is not always lovely; the fire was beautiful, the terror
of the deer was beautiful. (150)

For Jeffers, Beauty was not only expressed in aesthetically pleasing ways, but also in the raw power of the more-than-human world. Beauty came out of the order of, and communion with, the more-than-human world. In Jeffers’ poem, “Boats in a Fog,” he is able to find beauty in the ordinary:

A flight of pelicans
Is nothing lovelier to look at;
The flight of the planets is nothing nobler; all the arts lose virtue
Against the essential reality
Of creatures going about their business among the equally
Earnest elements of nature. (38)

Jeffers' love of the world was simple, and he reveled in the simplicity, and universality, of nature. Earnest elements of nature express large and small scale beauty. Jeffers states that his art, and the art of any human construction, could never compare to the simple beauty of the natural processes, and order, of the more-than-human world.

Cawdor

Jeffers was never shy in sharing his opinions with the outside world, even when it meant people would attack his work to minimize his influence. William Everson wrote in the introduction to *Cawdor* that it was “enthusiastically received” (vii), and helped Jeffers to obtain prominence as a writer. However, the economic depression, and the second World War, followed his rise to fame, and “Jeffers was conscious of the change in taste but refused to conform to it. He also refused to celebrate the war efforts and the American patriotism . . . In fact, Jeffers’ criticism of the narcissistic human race sharpened during and after the war” (Kopecký 52). Jeffers was disgusted with humanity’s propensity for violence, and believed “violence was the human condition, the inevitable consequence of the aggressive ego aggrandized into national ego” (Gelpi, “Introduction” 7). Jeffers was writing from outside human civilization, much like the followers of Dark Mountain, but he wasn’t merely critical of societal institutions; Jeffers believed the human condition was aggressive, violent, and degraded. Jeffers’ anti-American criticism forced his work into obscurity for many years because of the backlash during the war. In 1992, Dana Gioia wrote that “no major American poet has been treated worse by posterity than Robinson Jeffers” (Tangney xiv). Jeffers’ most difficult critical reception was during World War II because of his anti-war rhetoric. After the war, Jeffers’ work was marginalized in popularity, but he continued to be a force for sharp criticism of modern human society.

William Everson also wrote in the *Cawdor* introduction that Jeffers' intention with *Cawdor* "was to write a simple narrative, classically sound, in which his doctrine, his 'inhumanism,' as he was to call it, is implicit, not obtrusive" (xiii). Jeffers was still formulating his inhumanist ethic, and he used *Cawdor* as a way of criticizing the increasingly alienated relationship humans had with the more-than-human world. *Cawdor* is a man living on the California coast who maintains a reciprocal relationship to the land as a farmer, and *Cawdor*'s themes closely mirror the ideals Jeffers himself held.

Cawdor's oldest child is Hood, a hunter, and in *Cawdor*'s eyes, a taker from the land. The story takes place years after Hood shot an eagle, and then left his family because Hood and *Cawdor* fought over Hood's behavior. When Hood returns to his father's land, *Cawdor* tells his daughter, Michal, that Hood will stay: "As long as you don't ask him to work. George works, but [Hood] / Is only a hunter" (14). *Cawdor* has little respect for hunters because they do not give anything back to the land. Michal is tasked with rehabilitating the eagle Hood had injured, and she takes it upon herself to try and maintain some semblance of a natural order through trapping, injuring, and sacrificing squirrels to the eagle because she "can't let him be killed. And now, day after day, / I have to be cruel to bring him a little happiness" (16). *Cawdor*, like Jeffers, has a belief in a natural order that results in connection and beauty, but Hood's violation of that order resulted in disconnection and ugliness.

Jeffers uses *Cawdor* to highlight his issues with the modern capitalistic machine that worked to separate people from nature. *Cawdor* finds capitalistic pursuits to be troubling, and fruitless:

I was brought
up hard. I did a man's work at twelve

And bossed a gang at eighteen. That gets you nowhere. I learned
 that ruling poor men's hands is nothing,
 Ruling men's money's a wedge in the world.

.....

The trick inside it, the filthy nothing, the fooled men and rotten faces. (8-9)

Cawdor finds no pleasure or fulfillment through ruling over other men. Cawdor sees no god in money. Cawdor believes taking part in the exercise leads men to be fooled, and spoiled. Jeffers, through Cawdor, does serve to break down the importance of money, and the way capitalism pits humans against each other in artificial ways that would be useful to Dark Mountain, but they don't address that Jeffers wanted nothing to do with humans.

Dark Mountain wants humans to be humbled and there are some passages in *Cawdor* that serve their purpose. *Cawdor* acts as a forum for Jeffers to reckon his notions of existence and the relevance of human life. Jeffers alludes to the idea of deep time when discussing the land he farms, saying:

“There were people
 here before us,” he said, “and others will come
 After our time. These poor flints were their knives, wherever
 you dig you find them.” (107)

Cawdor recognizes the insignificance of his existence, and of all human existence. Not only will more come after Cawdor, but potentially many people, for many years. In that context, how can Cawdor see his life as important? Jeffers' notion of deep time worked to humble the relevance of a single lifetime; but deep time, and the connection through artifacts, also harken to the universal nature of existence, and the deep connections as he describes “black-shouldered stone universes /

Of color and life” (17), highlighting and conflating tide pools and the universe. Cawdor’s engagement with place is holistic and reciprocal to the point that “he knew / His hills as if he had nerves under the grass” (23). Jeffers championed such engagement with the more-than-human, but he didn’t believe the separation from nature through consciousness enabled humans to connect with the more-than-human world in effective ways.

Some of Jeffers’ most interesting passages show a subtle criticism of human subordination of the more-than-human world. Fera, Cawdor’s young wife, is described as having to endure Cawdor at night “if he pleased / As this earth endures man” (20). Humanity is not a natural being, and the human relationship with the earth is one to be endured, not shared or reciprocal. Later in the story, Fera yells out:

We have no right. The trees
are decent, but we! A redwood cut
To make a coffin, an oak’s roots for a grave: some
day the coast will lose patience and dip
And be clean. (54)

Jeffers describes Fera’s belief of the human/nature relationship as Hood begins to cut a bough from a tree. Not only do humans not have the right to make earth suffer the desires of humanity, but the earth still holds power and can shrug off humanity when it sees fit. Jeffers believed that a reciprocal relationship was a natural relationship, and the domination and subordination of the more-than-human by humans was deplorable.

In Jeffers’ poem, “Carmel Point,” he is in awe of the temperament of the more-than-human, as he exclaims: “The extraordinary patience of things!” (175). Jeffers believed “We must uncenter our minds from ourselves; / We must unhumanize our views a little, and become

confident / As the rock and ocean that we were made from” (175). Jeffers wanted humans to transcend fickle insecurities by reconnecting with our surrounding environments. In some passages of *Cawdor*, and Jeffers’ other poetry, Dark Mountain has a case for utilizing Jeffers as a literary example of their movement, but later in Jeffers’ career, he only became more disillusioned with humanity.

The Double Axe

In 1948, Jeffers published *The Double Axe* and fully elucidated his ethic of inhumanism that became so appealing to both Deep Ecologists and the Dark Mountaineers. Jeffers, in his preface, believed *The Double Axe*’s “burden, as of some other previous work of mine, is to present a certain philosophical attitude, which might be called Inhumanism, a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not-man; the rejection of human solipsism and recognition of the transhuman magnificence” (xxi). Jeffers’ inhumanism firmly aligns his personal philosophy with Deep Ecology and Dark Mountain because Jeffers wished for a transcendence from the relationship of human domination of the more-than-human, to a relationship of reciprocity and respect. Jeffers did not write simply as a personal cathartic exercise but believed his viewpoint was necessary for the rest of humanity to reckon with, and *The Double Axe* held Jeffers’ conscientious burden of chastising modern human orientations to the world.

Jeffers went further in his criticism of humanity in his preface, saying: “It seems time that our race began to think as an adult does, rather than like an egocentric baby or insane person. This manner of thought and feeling is neither misanthropic nor pessimist ... It involves no falsehoods, and is a means of maintaining sanity in slippery times; it has objective truth and

human value” (xxi). Jeffers was secure in his pragmatic criticism of humanity. He saw no reason to be irrational; Jeffers believed humanity needed to face the objective problems created from an egomaniacal orientation to the more-than-human. Jeffers could not agree with, or be complicit in, the devaluation of human, and more-than-human, life in the 20th century. Jeffers wanted to be clear that his viewpoint was sane and reasonable, and that those who perpetuate war and alienation from the earth were headed towards destruction.

Jeffers’ criticism was so heavy-handed that the publisher offered a disclaimer at the beginning of the book, establishing that “Random House feels compelled to go on record with its disagreement over some of the political views pronounced by the poet in this volume” (xxiii). Jeffers felt that humans needed a radical reorientation to the more-than-human world. Deep Ecology tried to be inclusive and accepting of as many viewpoints so society would gradually move towards a more biologically egalitarian sensibility; Jeffers decided the best way to pull people out of their horrific and degrading sensibility was a rhetorical slap across the face.

In part one of *The Double Axe*, “The Love and the Hate,” the main character Hoult has died in the war, but he is resurrected through his pain of feeling “gypped out of life, / fooled and despised and lied to” (7). The spectral Hoult comes home to express the full human ramifications of war. Hoult’s soul cannot rest, and he blames “War-peddlers’ lies and the people’s imbecility / That raked me out of my grave” (7). Jeffers shocked people out of complicity with war and destruction through Hoult. He chose to write about the result of war, which is violence and death, instead of writing a patriotic novel privileging an American sensibility, or discussing the merits of one governmental system over another. Jeffers was unwilling to move past the death and destruction, and he refused to rationalize such a cost for any tangible societal gain. Jeffers wanted people to understand the bloody ramifications of war.

Hoult confronts his father who served in a previous war, asking: “Did you / And your old buddies decide what the war’s about? / I came to ask. You were all for it, you know; And keeping safe away from it” (12). War wasn’t rational to Jeffers, no matter the cost. War was a horrific human commodity to be sold and rationalized through degraded human systems. Jeffers did not agree with the acts of Hitler, or any other bellicose cruelties, but he instead saw all such egregious acts as deriving from the same root philosophy of human superiority. Hoult not only represents the costs of war but also the cruelty, when he asks his parents: “Have you ever seen a flame-thrower? No, I suppose, / Not in your time. We roast them, you know, screaming, / in their little nests. That was my occupation” (17). Jeffers made spectacle of the horrors of war. Even Hoult’s descriptions that dehumanize the people he was killing makes the story more troubling. There was no cloak of righteousness, or patriotism; righteousness and patriotism are rationalizations for horrific acts. Jeffers was unrelenting in his criticism of the war, and its rationalization, through many scenes where Hoult begs for someone to explain how war is justifiable. Hoult turns his begging into criticism by giving conditions for any explanation, telling his parents he won’t accept

that the world

Will be improved, or good will be earned, or peace

Made perfect by blasting cities and nations into bloody

choppets: if you believe *that*

You’ll believe anything. (26)

Jeffers wanted people to recognize their folly in engaging war, but more so wanted to chastise people for tacitly accepting these consequences, and mitigating any recognition of truth through cheap patriotism. Humans were arrogant and easily swayed to commit atrocities because of fear;

Jeffers knew people would “believe anything” that rationalized terrible behavior, and he saw that human relationships to the more-than-human world were just as irrational and destructive.

Jeffers gave more weight to Hoult’s criticism of humanity through his resurrection. Hoult tells his family “I am the only dead body / that has had the energy to get up again / Since Jesus Christ” (35). Jesus was put on earth to help people be forgiven for their sins, and Hoult is resurrected to hold people accountable. As a fire approaches the house, and the family is dying, Hoult talks of justice for those committed to war. Hoult wishes “that every man who approved this war, / In which we had no right, reason nor justice, / Were crawling there in the fire’s way with his back broken” (48). Hoult describes the punishment as a sort of justice or penance for misdeeds. Hoult believes humanity needs to be cleansed of such horrid behavior, and sees the virtue of fire, telling his family to “Look: it is God’s work: I believe in / God: he sent the fire, / He lined the sights” (48). Jeffers had a sense that the only way to cure the ills of humanity was through an apocalypse, and his criticism of humanity in *The Double Axe* reinforces his reasons for wanting an apocalyptic end. Jeffers did not hold such a pessimistic view of humanity early in his career, but watching human arrogance and violence in war only pushed him farther away.

Jeffers’ Faith in Humanity

In the end, Jeffers found no faith in humanity and concluded that “the whole human race ought to be scrapped and is / on the way to it; ground like fish-meal for soil- / food” (72). Jeffers expressed more value of the human race for enriching the soil, rather than existing as it has. Jeffers saw no value in the ways humans dominate, and their belief in their right to dominate. Part two of *The Double Axe*, “The Inhumanist,” follows an old caretaker of the land after the fire. Upon saving a drowning man, who wanted to die, the old man recognizes “I have acted against

reason / And against instinct.’ He laughed and said: ‘But that’s the condition of being human: to betray reason / And deny instinct’ (98). Jeffers didn’t want any notion of human consciousness to equate to human superiority. Consciousness makes humans question, and make unnecessary judgments, and pulls humans out of sync with the more-than-human world. Jeffers described the brutality humans are able to inflict upon others, and he could not help but remind humans of their “bestiality— / I mean, that humanity— / Man and no other animal—performed itself” (78).

Jeffers had no patience or sympathy for any conceived superiority given to humanity by humans; Jeffers believed we are all animals, and our denial is degrading. The problems are not intrinsically human, but “It is the people-lovers and nation- / leaders, the human-centered, / Have bloody chops” (81). Those who privilege some human life over others are the ones who are most degraded. In war, Jeffers believed Hitler was evil because he prized one arbitrary form of humanity over another. But Jeffers also believed America, by entering into World War II, had degraded itself since it meant Americans felt they could also adjudicate human value.

Jeffers wrote his preface so the reader would recognize and attribute the messages of *The Double Axe* to his own thinking and philosophy. The old man in part two is a contemplative mouthpiece for Jeffers’ own philosophical engagement as he ponders “A conscious God—The question has no importance. But / I am conscious: where else / Did this consciousness come from” (53). The old man tries to understand expressions of energy, and the ways consciousness had separated humans from the more-than-human world. Once again, for Jeffers, consciousness was the reason humans separated from nature and legitimize destructive acts against each other and the more-than-human world. The caretaker’s narrative is a stream of thoughts and contemplations and is broken into 52 vignettes, that sometimes flow together, and other times are disjointed. The old man sees “‘nothing,’ ... / ‘Is not alive.’ ... ‘I see that all things have souls. /

But only God's is immortal" (54). Jeffers was concerned with the unnatural hierarchies of life human society created, but Jeffers also expressed an animistic sense that life is universal, and the soul is not limited to humans.

Jeffers questioned humanity's ability to grasp beauty through consciousness, as the old man discusses how beauty

Is in the beholder's brain—the human mind's translation
of their transhuman

Intrinsic value ... Which is *like* beauty. It is *like* nobility. It
has no name—and that's lucky, for names

Foul in the mouthing. (56-57)

Intrinsic beauty exists before conscious human translation, and is only degraded by the human translations and evaluations. Value exists in "the endless inhuman beauty of things; / even of humanity and human history / The inhuman beauty" (81). The inhuman and intrinsic nature of beauty for Jeffers is comforting because beauty will continue to exist no matter what humanity does. For humans to rationalize, and assign value, is to degrade, and separate themselves from the beauty. Beauty not only transcends human value, but beauty translated through human value is lost. Jeffers believed the only way humans could interact with inhuman beauty was to try to exist with the more-than-human without judgment.

Jeffers spent most his time explicitly criticizing and reprimanding humanity, and he took solace in viewing the issues of humanity through the lens of deep time. Jeffers explained how

It is more than comfort: it is the deep peace
and final joy

To know that the great world lives, whether man dies or

not. The beauty of things is not harnessed to
human. (113)

As can be seen throughout *The Double Axe*, and the rest of Jeffers' work, he had the ability, through his deep time perspective, to mitigate his own misery over the damages inflicted by humanity, which was helpful since Jeffers devoted a large part of his life to telling other humans how and why they were wrong for being and acting a certain way. In a letter to the American Humanist Association in 1951, Jeffers told them: "'Naturalistic Humanism'—in the modern sense—is no doubt a better philosophical attitude than many others; but the emphasis seems wrong; 'human naturalism' would seem to me more satisfactory, but with little accent on the 'human.' Man is part of nature, but a nearly infinitesimal part" (201). Jeffers' minimizing human interference through a temporal lens allowed him to engage the intrinsic beauty of the world without extensive emotional entanglement, or activism, to try and change humanity in the future.

Shortly after the conclusion of World War II, Jeffers wrote "Original Sin," one of his more scathing poems that depicts a prehistoric scene of early man. After describing how "man-brained and man-handed ground-ape[s]" brutally burn a mammoth alive, Jeffers concludes that

I would rather
Be a worm in a wild apple than a son of man.
But we are what we are, and we might remember
Not to hate any person, for all are vicious;
And not be astonished at any evil, all are deserved;
And not fear death; it is the only way to be cleansed. (172)

Humans were arrogant, and a failed experiment to Jeffers, and his belief in the human propensity for fear, hatred, and violence, allowed Jeffers to take solace in the notion human history would be a relatively short experiment in context of the earth's history.

Don't Go

Brian Calvert declares that “the immensity of the ecocide demands more. Our grief comes from the takers and their modern machine, which is one of violence and injury. If our sanity is to survive the ecocide, we must address these two pains in tandem: grief for the loss of things to come *and* the injustices that surround us” (22). One is compelled to ask: who gives a damn about our sanity if there is nothing left? The one tangible solution Calvert highlights comes from the heart of the “modern machine” in the way “Jeffers’ works had an impact on Doug Tompkins, the billionaire conservationist and founder of North Face ... At the time of his death, he and his wife, Kris, had managed to preserve 2.2 million acres of land” (22). Is this the lesson to take from Jeffers? Humans should invest in the capitalist system, then become incredibly successful and use that success to buy massive tracts of land for preservation from development? This solution is logical, but it cannot be attributed to Jeffers.

Brian Calvert also asserts that “Jeffers also saw humans as an integral part of an interconnected whole” (19), but Calvert and Dark Mountain are wrong. Jeffers did not view humans as integral, but instead as abominable. Jeffers did not want to help guide others through their grief as they reckoned with ecological disaster, Jeffers wanted to shame them. Jeffers worked to bring humility to humanity and did so effectively, but he gave no practical solution to social and environmental problems. Jeffers’ inhumanistic ethic aligned him well with Deep Ecology and The Dark Mountain project, and is rhetorically instructive; but, neither Jeffers’

inhumanist ethic, nor any of his other works, were intended to move humans towards any systemic change for the better.

Dark Mountain uses Jeffers' example of societal withdrawal as defensible "because refusing to help the machine advance—refusing to tighten the ratchet further—is a deeply moral position" (19). Dark Mountain utilized Jeffers' inhumanism, and his path of moving away from civilization, but Jeffers didn't want other people to join him. Jeffers would rather witness the human apocalypse, from the edge of civilisation, than join, let alone lead, any social movement, no matter how much Dark Mountain's beliefs aligned with his. The people of the Dark Mountain Project claim some greater goal than retreating to nature to intuit nature's needs, but where? Dark Mountain proposes solutions for emotional mitigation of people who have enough resources to afford to spend time in nature, not systemic solutions. The preservation of sanity, integrity, and justice are all commendable goals but are not enough to fight against systemic environmental destruction. Humanity now faces much higher populations, and more environmental degradation⁴. Humans need to deal with our issues, not check out of the environmental fight to develop greater personal integrity and gain new appreciations for intrinsic beauty of the more-than-human world. Calvert talks about the ecocide as "no cause for despair; it is a reminder to be meaningful, to be makers instead of takers, to be of service to something—

⁴ Pre-industrial revolution atmospheric CO₂ ranged between 180 and 280 parts per million. As of January 2018, global atmospheric ppm of CO₂ has risen to 407.54. In 1984, global atmospheric ppm of CO₂ was 344.65 (*Earth System Research Laboratory*). The world population has grown from 4.8 billion people in 1984 (*World Population by Year*), to 7.4 billion in 2018 (*U.S. and World Population Clock*).

beauty, justice, loved ones, strangers, lilacs, worms. This is what Jeffers, the poet laureate of the ecocide, has to teach us” (23). Jeffers isn’t the poet laureate of the ecocide; Jeffers is the one cheering on the destruction so more-than-human beauty can reestablish its rightful place on earth. The problems of humanity are political, and societal, and without addressing those issues in pragmatic, effective ways, then Jeffers’ vision of the human experiment will be short-lived, and intrinsic beauty will endure, and that would be just fine by him.

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Taylor Hastings

Thesis Chapter 3

Spring 2018

We Must Think About This

Whenever we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe. (Muir 211)

They seemed to trust one another for the division. And certainly they felt there was no chance of their being robbed. Perhaps they are not civilized and do not know how valuable money is. The poor little savages seem not to have learned the great principle of cheating one another. (*The Log from the Sea of Cortez* 93)

But where does it stop? Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me. (*The Grapes of Wrath* 36)

The goal of Arne Naess' Deep Ecology movement was to convince humanity that it needed to change from an anthropocentric viewpoint in favor of a more ecocentric sensibility, but the movement failed for two reasons: a) because Naess preferred to be rhetorically instructive, instead of choosing to move people to action through proposing concrete solutions, which resulted in an ineffective movement, and b) because Deep Ecological theory makes it impossible for any one person to be completely faithful to all eight tenets. The Dark Mountain Project, a movement subsequent to Deep Ecology, has also suffered from the same flaws because their literary example, Robinson Jeffers, was only interested in chastising humanity for its flaws, not rhetorically moving people to engaging societal and environmental problems; and the concrete actions posed by Dark Mountain are too privileged and impractical for any substantial population to engage fully. A Deep Ecological message, with more forceful rhetorical leadership, is a more effective way of engaging people to change their orientation to the more-than-human

world in tandem with addressing social and environmental problems. The works of John Steinbeck accommodate the needs of such a movement.

Steinbeck believed the purpose of his writing was to “bring about [a] change in perception by making the reader (re)discover [a] new eye” (Kopecký 113). Most of Steinbeck’s novels had strong more-than-human environmental presences that he utilized to bring a greater understanding of ecological relationships to the reader. Steinbeck pushed his reader to understand that everything affects everything else, and he knew there was a responsibility that came with that knowledge. Steinbeck believed that through the accumulation of knowledge, books “regulate our lives and give us a responsibility” (Demott, *To a God* viii), and he also believed his responsibility as a writer was to push humans to establish and engage a more “just society that would be sensitive to the natural world” (Kopecký 92). For some of Steinbeck’s audience, their reaction was to ban, or burn his books⁵; but for many others, Steinbeck’s writing has helped define their social and environmental conscience. Steinbeck pursued scientific literacy and saw the problems of the more-than-human world were tied up in hierarchical human systems, and only in addressing human systems could he begin to engage any semblance of a Deep Ecological vision. Though Steinbeck’s works are not explicitly seen as a precursor to Deep Ecology, his Deep Ecological respect for intrinsic value of all entities in the biosphere is explicitly developed in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez*, and it permeates much of his other work; where Steinbeck goes beyond Naess and Dark Mountain is when he used his ecological

⁵ Quite a few articles and scholarship on public accusations of obscenity of Steinbeck’s works.

The most recent (and conveniently explicit) example is a book by Rick Wartzman, titled:

Obscene in the Extreme: The Burning and Banning of John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath.

philosophy, as well as his understanding of human issues that degraded ecological systems, through *The Grapes of Wrath*, and many other works, to rhetorically move readers to explicitly address the capitalist hierarchical forces that work to oppress and degrade social and environmental relationships; Steinbeck's Deep Ecological ethic, in addition to his ability to forcefully use writing as a call to action for people to reestablish more reciprocal, respectful, and connected relationships between humans and the more-than-human world makes him the most effective exemplary intellectual godfather of the Deep Ecological movement.

Deep Ecological Ethic

Steinbeck is not the perfect Deep Ecologist, but as Warwick Fox elucidated in *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology*, it is impossible for a person to be wholly compatible with Deep Ecological theory⁶. The most important fundamental quality John Steinbeck shared with Deep Ecology was his belief in intrinsic value of all entities in the biosphere, but that quality did not automatically make Steinbeck an explicit precursor to Deep Ecology. Petr Kopecký's *California Crucible: Literary Harbingers of Deep Ecology*, works extensively to bring Steinbeck's writing out of the Deep Ecological shadows by utilizing prominent Deep Ecologists to validate Steinbeck's ecological philosophy that embraced intrinsic value, such as Gary Snyder who viewed "*The Log from the Sea of Cortez* as a big leap for its time 'because it calls for an ethic that values all life forms'" (58). Kopecký also references how "As Bill Devall himself admitted

⁶ From Chapter One: Fox described Naess as "the bearer of so many perspectives that it would simply be impossible for him to be able to maintain them all at the same time without cutting the odd logical corner or engaging in a bit of plain bluffing" (89).

in private correspondence, Steinbeck expresses his own ecosophy in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* and, therefore, ‘not including Steinbeck [in *Deep Ecology*] was a sin of omission’” (161). Steinbeck isn’t a well-known Deep Ecological thinker, and his writing did not fully adhere to all tenets of the philosophy, but Steinbeck’s belief in, and advocacy for, intrinsic value, as well as being recognized by two prominent Deep Ecologists for having his own thoughtful ecological philosophy, is enough evidence to view Steinbeck as a Deep Ecological writer.

Steinbeck’s Deep Ecological engagement existed throughout his writing and can even be found in his personal journals. Robert Demott, in his preface to *To a God Unknown*, revealed in Steinbeck’s 1932 journal that Steinbeck believed “Each figure is a population, and the stones, the trees, the muscled mountains are the world—but not the world apart from man—the world and man—the one indescribable unit man plus his environment” (xiv). Steinbeck’s interpretation of ecology “underscored the relational character of life, as distinct from the hierarchical one” (Kopecký 74) because humans were not only connected to the more-than-human world in innumerable ways, but humans were also not distinguishable as superior to the rest of the world. The more Steinbeck engaged the more-than-human world, the more he recognized endless connections between humans and everything else in the biosphere.

Throughout Steinbeck’s career, he would engage ecological complexity and show his audience that actions have consequences when humans adjudicate value in the more-than-human world. Early in *To a God Unknown* the main character, Joseph Wayne, rides his horse towards his home, and he hears “an agonizing squealing, and turning the grove’s shoulder he came in sight of a huge boar ... [who] sat on its haunches and tearingly ate the hind quarters of a still-squealing little pig” (5). Joseph is horrified with the cannibalistic behavior of the boar, and his first instinct is to kill the boar for behavior he doesn’t like, or understand. After Joseph “pulled

his rifle from its scabbard and aimed between the yellow eyes of the boar,” (6), he realizes his lack of authority in the more-than-human world. Joseph puts the gun away and says: “I’m taking too great power into my hands ... Why he’s the father of fifty pigs and he may be the source of fifty more” (6). Joseph is not willing to project his own limited value system upon the boar. Joseph recognizes his own foolishness in thinking he should adjudicate against a boar, who may be critically important to the health of his species, and therefore the entire ecosystem. Steinbeck, much like Joseph, saw the limitations of his own singular perspective, and Joseph’s unwillingness to adjudicate value shows a respect for intrinsic value.

The fact that Steinbeck was also an informal, yet methodical, student of ecological science can most effectively be seen through his friendship with Ed Ricketts. Ricketts was a marine biologist, and Kopecký argues that “The cooperative element, and interrelatedness of organisms, and the holistic conception of life were three significant lessons Ricketts taught to Steinbeck” (55). Rickett’s friendship heavily influenced Steinbeck in the way he engaged the world, and the ecological lessons learned by Steinbeck from Ricketts are most clearly elucidated in *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* through their marine expedition.

Steinbeck’s mission for the expedition in *Log* was to garner a greater understanding of the ways coastal marine ecosystems functioned. When explaining the process of taking animals for scientific study, Steinbeck shows a strong awareness of the interrelated nature of life:

We take a tiny colony of soft corals from a rock in a little water world. And that isn’t terribly important to the tide pool. Fifty miles away the Japanese shrimp boats are dredging with overlapping scoops, bringing up tons of shrimps, rapidly destroying the species so that it may never come back, and with the species destroying the ecological balance of the whole region. That isn’t very important in

the world. And thousands of miles away the great bombs are falling, and the stars are not moved thereby. None of it is important or all of it is. (3)

Steinbeck engaged the results of actions to encourage his audience to understand the complexity of ecological relationships with the reader. Steinbeck pushed his reader in the final sentence of the passage to recognize the intrinsic importance of every entity, and every action; everything is connected and any change has ramifications for everything else. Steinbeck also wanted to introduce to the reader his belief that everything has consequences early in the text. Ecology does not take any factor for granted because any individual piece, even at a great distance, can dramatically change the nature of the whole ecological puzzle. Steinbeck, and the rest of his research group, were taking animal specimens to study, and even though he believed the knowledge gained through his endeavor was worth the cost, Steinbeck was clear with his audience that there would be real effects from altering environments, regardless of how humans assign value to coastal ecosystems. Steinbeck did not have a romantic vision of ecosystems where every calm stasis is the norm; instead, Steinbeck learned (and respected) that a healthy ecosystem is one where “Everything [eats] everything else with a furious exuberance” (41). Steinbeck did not pretend to understand every mysterious encounter with the more-than-human, but he did strive to understand more of the incomprehensibly complicated nature of ecology.

In his study of ecological science, and the innumerable factors that can influence and change ecosystems, Steinbeck turned his attention to the ways humans have tried to intervene in natural processes. Steinbeck showed that not only is it nearly impossible to understand the full ramifications of any action, but he also showed how not being well versed in the full ecological picture can be destructive. Steinbeck highlights how humans can misread an ecosystem and create detrimental effects through an example of humans hunting hawks that preyed upon the

willow grouse in an attempt to save the game bird in Norway: “An ecological analysis into the relational aspects of the situation disclosed that a parasitic disease . . . in its incipient stages, the disease so reduced the flying speed of the grouse that the mildly ill individuals became easy prey for the hawks” (120). The reduced predation from the hawks allowed the disease to flourish through the willow grouse population. The result was a totally depleted, and diseased, willow grouse community: “Thus the presumed enemies of the grouse [the hawks], by controlling the epizootic aspects of the disease, proved to be friends in disguise” (120). The humans were unable to restore the willow grouse, even though they had a specific intention of helping the bird re-establish its population. Steinbeck would not insist any comprehensive understanding of ecology, but he did insist on the incredibly complicated nature of ecosystems, and the need for thoughtful, and respectful, relationships between humans and the more-than-human.

Steinbeck implored humanity to be more wary and respectful of the more-than-human by showing how humans have the tendency, and ability, to critically disrupt and destroy environments without fully understanding the ramifications of their actions. Throughout *Log*, Steinbeck intentionally engaged thoughtful speculation of potential ecological disturbances in order for readers to understand full ramifications of seemingly minor changes. For instance, Steinbeck pointed out that “The disappearance of plankton, although the components are microscopic, would probably in a short time eliminate every living thing in the sea and change the whole of man’s life, if it did not through seismic disturbance of balance eliminate all life on the globe” (178). Though the elimination of plankton is a dramatic example, Steinbeck wanted to make the point because of the way humans had historically been blind and thoughtless in interactions with the more-than-human world. Steinbeck was especially critical of Western society’s engagement with the more-than-human world, and he believed “We in the United

States have done so much to destroy our own resources, our timber, our land, our fishes, that we should be taken as a horrible example and our methods avoided by any government and people enlightened enough to envision a continuing economy” (207). Steinbeck understood the dangers of intervening in more-than-human processes when humans were well informed of the potential ecological complications, which made him more critical of the systems that did intervene in blatantly ignorant ways, and so he advocated for minimizing uninformed destructive human practices. Steinbeck wanted people to reconcile the wasteful treatment of land, and timber, and any other critically destructive practice as critically destructive, and not just the byproduct of human progress.

Steinbeck wrote *Log* to let humans know what the consequences of environmentally degrading actions are, and he not only pushed readers to recognize the intrinsic and relational value of all entities within the biosphere, but he also highlighted the ways humans are wasteful and have gone far beyond satisfying any Deep Ecological notion of “vital needs.” Another example of mass degradation of ecosystems takes place when Steinbeck encounters Japanese shrimp boats. Steinbeck describes “twelve boats in the combined fleet including the mother ship, and they were doing a very systematic job, not only of taking every shrimp from the bottom, but every other living thing as well” (204). Not only are there multiple large vessels operating, but they worked quickly and efficiently because “Any animal which escaped must have been very fast indeed, for not even the sharks got away” (204-205). Steinbeck used the shrimp boats to highlight how effectively destructive humans can be: “The big scraper ... deposited many tons of animals on the deck ... sierras; pompano of several species ... hammer-heads; eagle rays and butterfly rays; small tuna; catfish ... And there were bottom-samples with anemones and grass-like gorgonians. The sea bottom must have been scraped completely clean” (205), but also how

wasteful and dismissive humans are. The aftermath of dragging every living thing onto the boats was “Fish ... thrown overboard immediately, and only the shrimps kept. The sea was littered with dead fish” (205). Steinbeck’s description is devastating. Humans do not simply manipulate ecosystems in small ways, but they have the capability, and a willingness, to destroy entire ecosystems so they can salvage a single small portion. The fishing boats dredging the seafloor for a small amount of shrimp is like cutting down an old growth forest for a few bushels of acorns. Steinbeck views the actions of the shrimp boats as abhorrent, and his analysis forces the reader to see the greater implications of a multitude of reckless actions. Steinbeck, throughout *The Log*, kept returning to the interrelated nature of ecology because he wanted the audience to know that no matter the scale of intervention and manipulation of ecosystems, the consequences are real; the removal of a coral is as disruptive to a tide pool, as the dredging of the seafloor is to the Sea of Cortez, as the bombs falling on the other side of the world is to the whole of the earth.

Steinbeck extrapolates the human caused result of irresponsible fishing, and posits that the “Japanese will obviously soon clean out the shrimps of the region. And it is not true that a species thus attacked comes back. The disturbed balance often gives a new species ascendancy and destroys forever the old relationship. In addition to the shrimps, these boats kill and waste many hundreds of tons of fish every day” (206). Steinbeck calls attention to the infinite nature of ecological relations and how the depleted ecosystem will never return to its former state.

Steinbeck was not only gaining a greater ecological perspective for himself, but he also pushed the reader to develop a more complex ecological perspective.

Steinbeck’s endeavor to learn more about ecology helped him engage and embrace intrinsic value of all life, which is fundamental to a Deep Ecological ethic, and also pushed him further to develop a holistic and relational orientation to the world. When looking at a tide pool,

Steinbeck discusses how “a man looking at reality brings his own limitations to the world. If he has strength and energy of mind the tide pool stretches both ways, digs back to electrons and leaps space into the universe and fights out of the moment into non-conceptual time. Then ecology has a synonym which is ALL” (71-72). Humans bring their own personal limitations to understanding the world, so Steinbeck pushed his reader to go develop a greater strength and energy of mind so they could engage with the more-than-human world more effectively.

Steinbeck wanted to develop his audience’s ecological fluency because he believed that if people were more informed and had a sense of the innumerable connections in ecological relationships, then they would be more cautious and responsible when engaging the more-than-human world, even through relatively passive actions, like purchasing fresh caught shrimp.

Steinbeck was persistent in trying to elucidate his ecological vision to his audience throughout *Log*. Even though the expedition’s “interest lay in relationships of animal to animal. If one observes in this relational sense, it seems that species are only commas in a sentence” (178). Steinbeck broke down hierarchical thinking by putting all life on one continuous plane, or “sentence,” to further help the reader understand that everything is related. Steinbeck began by engaging the relationality of animals in environments, but he was unable to ignore forces of the larger environmental whole. Steinbeck ultimately believed “One merges into another, groups melt into ecological groups until the time when what we know as life meets and enters what we think of as non-life: barnacle and rock, rock and earth, earth and tree, tree and rain and air. And the units nestle into the whole and are inseparable from it” (178). Ecology for Steinbeck means all, including humans, and Steinbeck worked to establish how easily and thoroughly humans are able to disrupt, and degrade, the more-than-human world

Human Nature

Steinbeck was forceful in his criticism of broadly negative human societal issues, but he did not disparage individuals. Instead, Steinbeck utilized his ecological perspective to assess humans as a species through a scientific lens, and catalogued the scientific human traits in *Log*.

Steinbeck shows how humans

do not objectively observe our own species as a species ... If we used the same smug observation on ourselves that we do on hermit crabs we would be forced to say ... “It is one diagnostic trait of *Homo sapiens* that groups of individuals are periodically infected with a feverish nervousness which causes the individual to turn on and destroy, not only his own kind, but the works of his own kind.” (15)

Steinbeck viewed the human biological drive towards survival, and procreation, as natural as the need for conflict. Steinbeck sardonically classifying humans as *Homo sapiens* also removed any superior standing in a biological sense and therefore subtly dismantled hierarchical notions.

Steinbeck believed humans as a whole are not an enlightened, or superior, species; humans are subject to bouts of irrationality and can affect the more-than-human world in profound ways.

Steinbeck was not as critical of humans as Robinson Jeffers, though. After watching the mass degradation from the Japanese shrimp boats, Steinbeck does not criticize the individuals on the boats. Instead, he claims that “We like the people on this boat very much. They were good men, but they were caught in a large destructive machine, good men doing a bad thing” (206).

Steinbeck’s issue was with human hierarchical structures that suppressed traits of individuality and critical thinking; and aside from societal tendencies towards violence and destruction,

Steinbeck saw the individual human as predominantly good. When the expedition goes into San Diego, Steinbeck is captivated by the fact that “All about us the war bustled, although we had no

war; steel and thunder, powder and men—the men preparing thoughtlessly, like dead men, to destroy things ... The military mind must *limit its thinking* to be able to perform its function at all” [emphasis added] (35). The successful implementation of the military mind kept soldiers from thinking for themselves. There is no incentive for the hierarchical structure of the military to encourage free thought, or for the Japanese fishermen to fully realize the extent of their environmental destruction. The result of soldiers coming to terms with the fact that their actions would result in “families torn to pieces, a thousand generations influenced” (35) would dissolve any effective fighting force. Steinbeck was careful to be critical of systems and not of individuals. The mindless soldier “is too humble to take the responsibility for thinking. The whole structure of his world would be endangered if he permitted himself to think” (35). Steinbeck wrote to make humans more aware of the systems that opposed thoughtful and engaged action. War represented a feverish nervousness to Steinbeck, but war was not the most insidious and destructive human creation.

War for Steinbeck was instead one of the many ways the most destructive human practice of capitalism thrived. At the beginning of *Sweet Thursday* Steinbeck proclaims:

The canneries themselves fought the war by getting the limit taken off fish and catching them all. It was done for patriotic reasons, but that didn't bring the fish back. As with the oysters in *Alice*, 'They'd eaten every one.' It was the same noble impulse that stripped the forests of the West and right now is pumping water out of California's earth faster than it can rain back in. (1)

The novel has almost no other engagement with wartime activity, which makes Steinbeck's claim so forceful. Steinbeck put this line on the first page of his entire novel because he wanted no ambiguity of his message. Steinbeck could have given a more simplistic background to the

novel about the people of Cannery Row, or withheld judgment, but Steinbeck wanted people to know the truth. Regardless of good people existing within a bad system, Steinbeck wanted readers to recognize the destruction, limitations, and ramifications of irresponsible human action. Steinbeck didn't adjudicate the necessity of war, but he did make sure people considered the real environmental consequences of patriotic action.

Capitalism profits from war and teaches people to act irresponsibly towards other humans. Steinbeck addresses his own objection to the bizarre qualities of capitalism in *Log*:

There is a strange duality in the human which makes for an ethical paradox. We have definitions of good qualities and of bad; not changing things, but generally considered good and bad throughout the ages and throughout the species. Of the good, we think always of wisdom, tolerance, kindness, generosity, humility; and the qualities of cruelty, greed, self-interest, graspingness, and rapacity are universally considered undesirable. And yet in our structure of society, the so-called and considered good qualities are invariable concomitants of failure, while the bad ones are the cornerstones of success. (80)

Steinbeck believed the introduction of capitalistic hierarchies changed human engagement with other humans and the more-than-human in terrible ways. Steinbeck was confronted with the unnatural function of capitalism when hiring Mexican children to collect specimens for his expedition. The children are paid out in one large sum, and “They seemed to trust one another for the division ... The poor little savages seem not to have learned the great principle of cheating one another” (93). The notion of being civilized is to exercise capitalistic tendencies of greed and the willingness to cheat others. Steinbeck playfully refers to the honest children as savages, when he really sees their behavior as more decent and civil. Steinbeck wanted to be

very explicit in his critique of the destruction of capitalism in *Log*, but his most effective rebuke comes from *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Push for Social and Environmental Change

During Steinbeck's lifetime, he saw human society, through technological advancements, begin to impose itself more forcefully upon the more-than-human world. *The Grapes of Wrath* represents Steinbeck's most effective rhetorical appeal to humanity to make fundamental changes. *Grapes* won the National Book Award, the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, and was an instrumental in Steinbeck winning the Nobel Prize for literature. Robert Demott, in his introduction to the novel, claims that *Grapes* "resolutely entered both the American consciousness and its conscience. Few novels can make that claim" (xi). Steinbeck published *Grapes* twelve years before *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* because he was concerned for humanity in the aftermath of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Steinbeck also utilized *Grapes* to bring awareness of the ways "human behavior aimed at the control of nature [was] self-destructive because ... of the interdependence between people and the environment" (Kopecký 82-83). Steinbeck wrote the book to make people think of the hierarchical power structures that affected their lives and environments, and to move them towards action. In fact, *Grapes* was widely banned because it was so effective at making people consider their own place in society through its challenge to the effects of capitalism. Steinbeck could have left out any criticism of capitalism, and still had a compelling narrative about a family with a streak of bad luck, but Steinbeck wanted his audience to understand that the Joad family was not simply the victim of bad luck; instead, the plight of the Joad family was a logical result to capitalistic processes.

Steinbeck begins his critique of capitalism early in the novel. The novel takes place during the Dust Bowl, where unsustainable farming practices sapped the land of its vitality. As the environment changes, men and women are unable to make ends meet through farming. So, they go to the bank help them get by in the short-term. Eventually the farmers fall short on their harvest one too many times, and the banks foreclose on the farmer so they can sell the farms to people who don't care about the land. The new owners only care about profit. The farmers are allowed by the new owners to continue farming as tenants, but once a cheaper means of production arises, the people are forced to move out, and move on. Steinbeck intentionally refers to capitalism, and more specifically "The bank [as] the monster [that] has to have profits all the time. It can't wait. It'll die ... When the monster stops growing, it dies. It can't stay one size" (32). Capitalism is represented as the monster because of what it does to working people.

Steinbeck asserts that, in a capitalist system, every decision on the farm is made for the "health" of the banks. Bankers and farm owners "don't like to [enact unsustainable farming practices]. But the monster's sick. Something's happened to the monster" (33). When the tenant farmers declare that "you'll kill the land with cotton," the owners reply: "We know. We've got to take cotton quick before our land dies. Then we'll sell the land" (33). Steinbeck argues that farmers would not be so irresponsible with their farms if not for the constant threat of a capitalist hierarchy taking their land away. The process of removing good people from their relationship to the land is complicated, and not all the owners are bad people who only care about profit, but owners realize that "all of them were caught in something larger than themselves" (31), and if they don't favor profit over people then their livelihood is likely to be destroyed as well. The abstracted monster of capitalism favors the tractor over tenant farmers because "One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop"

(33). The math works out. One man on a tractor not only allows for more efficient farming, but a tractor doesn't eat like fourteen families, and all excess resources represent potential profit. Steinbeck shows how the workers, who know ways to sustainably engage with the more-than-human environment, are effectively alienated by the capitalist system.

As the people are alienated and pushed off the farmlands they have worked, the owners and the bankers are described as obscure pieces in the larger capitalist hierarchical power structure. The farm owners are able to displace tenant farmers with impunity because "The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it" (33). Steinbeck shows how capitalism abstracts labor to legitimize dehumanized action⁷; the bank is something else, or the bank is something more than men. Men created the bank, and they hate it, but people cannot control the bank.

The angry farmers want to fight back, but the source of power is too far removed and diffused. One farmer intends to shoot a new tractor driver, whose job replaces multiple tenant farmers, but realizes killing the man would be useless as he asks "where does it stop? Who can we shoot? I don't aim to starve to death before I kill the man that's starving me" (36). The pursuit of capital turns people into numbers, and with technological advancement it doesn't make mathematical sense to use tenant farmers. Steinbeck shows how the small farmer has no incentive to destroy his home, or his environment, because the small farmer understands the

⁷ Steinbeck made references to Marx in *Grapes*, and though he didn't explicitly align himself to Marx's communist theory, the novel was widely hailed as a "great proletarian novel" (Wald 671).

consequences of monoculture crops of cotton, and other reckless practices. The small farmer has an incentive to pay attention to the needs of the environment and not engage in superficial accounting that champions short-term profit over long-term viability. The larger capitalist system fundamentally fractures and destroys people's ability to make positive choices and maintain some semblance of a reciprocal relationship with their home environments. Steinbeck wrote for society to understand the insidious capitalistic process that quietly destroyed ecological relationships people had with the land.

The result of utilizing technology instead of people to grow food is further alienation from healthy human engagement with the more-than-human world. Steinbeck describes how "The tractors came over the roads and into the fields, great crawlers moving like insects, having the incredible strength of insects" (35). The power of the machines is far greater than any tenant farmer. The machines are more efficient, and therefore more profitable, but the human is lost. Steinbeck also shows how "The man sitting in the iron seat did not look like a man; gloved, goggled, rubber dust mask over nose and mouth, he was part of the monster, a robot in the seat" (35). The man who drives the tractor is physically assimilated by the machine, and loses his humanity in the process. Capitalism prefers the machine because of its efficiency, but the superficial accounting of capitalism has consequences.

Steinbeck saw the loss of the human/more-than-human relationship represented in the tractor driver to be devastating: "He could not see the land as it was, he could not smell the land as it smelled; his feet did not stamp the clods or feel the warmth and power of the earth. He sat in an iron seat and stepped on iron pedals" (35). The worker has no relationship to the land, and therefore "loved the land no more than the bank loved the land ... proud of the power he could not control. And when that crop grew, and was harvested, no man had crumbled a hot clod in his

fingers and let the earth sift past his fingertips. No man had touched the seed, or lusted for the growth” (36). Steinbeck laments the relational loss throughout the novel, and wanted his readers to see that the Dust Bowl was the consequence of irresponsible farming. Tenant farmers, who have a strong incentive to engage in a relationship with the land based on reciprocity and respect, being replaced by tractor drivers, who are physically removed from the land, resulted in “Men [who] ate what they had not raised, had no connection with the bread. The land bore under iron, and under iron gradually died; for it was not loved or hated, it had no prayers or curses” (36). Steinbeck showed how technological advancement was the result of capitalist impulses, and land farmed through hierarchical calculation and domination, instead of a strong relational aspect, was doomed to failure.

Steinbeck holistic relational ethic is similar to other prominent environmental thinkers and activists, including, most prominently, Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic, which argued for a responsible and reciprocal relationship with the more-than-human world. Leopold believed more-than-human interference could be judged as “right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (262). Steinbeck believed that monoculture farming massive tracts of land fundamentally disturbs integrity, stability, and beauty, just as scraping the seafloor clean with the intention of harvesting shrimp has massive ecological consequences. Steinbeck believed “nitrates are not the land, nor phosphates and the length of fiber in the cotton is not the land. Carbon is not a man, nor salt nor water nor calcium. He is all these, but he is much more, much more; and the land is so much more than its analysis” (115). Technology and science, through heavy machinery and fertilizers, had suddenly allowed humanity to manipulate environments so much more effectively than before, and Steinbeck wanted the world to comprehend how dangerous the physical,

mathematical, and abstract chemical processes used to manipulate land could be. The essence of man, and the essence of the land aren't quantifiable, and cannot be understood without intimate engagement. Even bonding with an environment does not allow for any measure of control; bonding only leads to basic understanding and an appreciation for the dynamic nature of an environment.

The narrative structure of *Grapes* oscillates between the Joad family, who are displaced from their farm, and vignettes of the larger national/capitalist narrative of people being displaced and preyed upon. When the Joads try to sell possessions they cannot take on their move to California, they are manipulated into taking almost no money in return, and the family feels “weary and frightened because they had gone against a system they did not understand and it had beaten them” (97). Steinbeck wants the reader to recognize that the plight of the Joad family is the result of the capitalist hierarchy, and not unique. As the farmers leave the fields, they are further exposed to the cold nature of capitalism. Some displaced farmers need transportation, and used car salesmen are sure to squeeze every penny out of their pockets: “Get ‘em under obligation. Make ‘em take up your time. Don’t let ‘em forget they’re takin’ your time. People are nice, mostly. They hate to put you out. Make ‘em put you out, an’ then sock it to ‘em” (62). Farmers can’t assimilate before they are ruined because of the capitalist infrastructure waiting to prey upon the farmer’s misfortune. Capitalism doesn’t care if you have a family, or you have a limited amount of money. Gotta keep movin’, Get ‘em out in a jalopy. Let them know they have been taking up your time!

The displaced farmers are severely jarred by the lack of humanity and trust in the world beyond their farms and cannot square the capitalist sensibility with their own. One displaced man muses that “You go steal that tire an’ you’re a thief, but he tried to steal your four dollars for a

busted tire. They call that sound business” (121). Steinbeck’s vignettes become more explicit in his critique of the systemic evils of capitalism as the story progresses. In one section, Steinbeck addresses how capitalism tries to convince people that “business is noble and not the curious ritualized thievery they know it is; that business men are intelligent in spite of their records of their stupidity; that they are kind and charitable in spite of the principles of sound business” (155). Steinbeck accuses “business” of being stupid, uncharitable, and ritualized thievery, and he wants readers to know that sound business has served to disenfranchise honest people.

Steinbeck forced readers to deal with the insidious nature of capitalism. Not only are the farmers displaced and manipulated, but they are also systematically rationalized as less-than in a society where the amount of money in your bank account is more important than your honesty, decency, or willingness to work. The car salesmen, the waitresses in the diners on the road to California, and just about every other character in the book who isn’t forced from their homes, thinks of the people displaced from the Midwest as, per the California landowners watching the hordes of migrants, “These goddamned Okies . . . dirty and ignorant. They’re degenerate, sexual maniacs . . . They bring disease, they’re filthy. We can’t have them in the schools” (283). Steinbeck establishes the humanity of the Okies throughout the novel and then exposes the reader to the processes of othering that rationalize treating the farmers badly. The Okies have no chance with the lack of a social safety net, and their unfamiliarity with the capitalistic mindset. The Okies are set at a disadvantage that only grows as they get further from home with fewer resources.

Steinbeck’s most powerful rhetorical moment comes when he is contemplating the ramifications of capitalism and technology, and Steinbeck tells the reader that a “tractor does two things—it turns the land and turns us off the land. There is little difference between this tractor

and a tank. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both” (151). Steinbeck finishes the thought by telling the reader that “We must think about this” (151). We must think about this. Steinbeck moved narratively to explicitly engaging with his audience and forcing his reader to think about the ways capitalism reorients and distorts how humans treat each other—and in the larger context of the book—the ways capitalism degrades human relationships with the more-than-human world. “We must think about this” signifies a challenge to readers to push themselves into deeper questioning of their fundamental value systems, and how their values may be incompatible with their complicity in the hierarchical capitalist system. “We must think about this” moves the reader to make changes to the ways they engage their world.

The Power to Move

Steinbeck was more forceful than Naess in rhetorically motivating people towards substantive changes to their relationships with other humans and the more-than-human world. Steinbeck not only used his novels and works of nonfiction to inform his audiences to the hierarchical forces of degradation, but he also used his extensive influence from his writing to address “environmental problems in his numerous encounters with the leading decision-makers, including four US presidents, whom he served as an advisor” (Kopecký 98). Steinbeck utilized his influence where it would be most effective, and though he believed in the destructive force of capitalism, Steinbeck was also pragmatic in advocating better environmental policies to powerful people within existing power structures.

Steinbeck also recognized the importance of addressing human issues if humans were to enact any substantive changes to their relationship with the more-than-human world. Steinbeck didn’t write *Log* to simply discuss sea creatures; Steinbeck wanted to understand the way the

world functioned ecologically, and wanted his audience to find common ground with his ecological philosophy, as well as push them to understand the human capacity for environmental destruction. Steinbeck didn't write *Grapes* to simply inform humans about the dangers of the capitalist hierarchical system; Steinbeck explicitly pushed readers to understand the real-world effects of capitalism in an attempt to make positive, ameliorative changes to human relationships with other humans, as well as engaging more thoughtfully with the more-than-human. Arne Naess' creation of Deep Ecology is important, but he was unable to move people to action; Robinson Jeffers' poetry is powerful, but he was easily marginalized when his views became more controversial; John Steinbeck effectively challenged the status quo, and he was so dangerous in his ability to move people that opponents to Steinbeck's messages fearfully resorted to banning and burning his books. Steinbeck is a logical intellectual godfather of the Deep Ecological movement because he didn't simply ask his audience to make changes to the ways they functioned in the world—he pushed them.

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