

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Wilderness Ideologies in a Settler Colonial Society: A case study of the Everglades National Park

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0z25r0s2>

Author

Lannoy, Nicole

Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Wilderness Ideologies in a Settler Colonial Society:

A case study of the Everglades National Park

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Anthropology

by

Nicole Lannoy

2012

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Wilderness Ideologies in a Settler Colonial Society:

A case study of the Everglades National Park

By

Nicole Lannoy

Master of Arts in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Jessica R. Cattelino, Chair

In this thesis, I discuss the production of wilderness ideologies in a settler colonial society, based in part upon the dichotomization of nature from culture. Specifically, I analyze the effects of settler colonialism in the creation of America's National Park system, looking at the Everglades National Park as a unique case study that both perpetuates and breaks away from the traditional construct of National Parks. To do so, I use magazine narratives of the Everglades region and National Park from the 1930s-1960s. This work serves to contribute to the field of settler colonial studies by highlighting the interconnections between settler colonialism and American ideologies of wilderness.

The thesis of Nicole Lannoy is approved.

Sherry Ortner

Mariko Tamanoi

Jessica R. Cattelino, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

For my grandma, with love

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS.....	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	V
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
INTRODUCTION	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CONCEPTUAL APPARATUS	2
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW	5
<i>National Park system</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Everglades Region and the Everglades National Park.....</i>	<i>7</i>
WILDERNESS IN A SETTLER COLONIAL SOCIETY	9
UNPOPULATED YET VIBRANT WITH LIFE.....	10
<i>Wildlife</i>	<i>12</i>
Figure 1. Everglades National Park postcard and stamp..	13
<i>“No man’s land”</i>	<i>16</i>
Figure 2. Aerial view of the Everglades landscape.....	18
Figure 3. Everglades bird life.....	19
FRONTIER.....	19
<i>Vast.....</i>	<i>21</i>
Figure 4. Fields of Everglades saw grass.	21
<i>Edge of the world</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Indian in the landscape</i>	<i>25</i>
Figure 5. Seminole, canoe, and the Everglades.....	27
Figure 6. Seminole women preparing a meal.....	28
Figure 7. Seminole portraits..	28
UNKNOWNABLE.....	29
<i>Primitive and exotic.....</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Mystical and surreal</i>	<i>31</i>
Figure 8. Mangrove swamps.....	33
TREASURED PATRIMONY.....	34
<i>A frontier worth saving</i>	<i>35</i>
CONCLUSION	38
REFERENCES CITED:.....	41

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to extend thanks to the wonderful people I worked with in Florida throughout this research project, without whom this work would have been impossible. Special thanks to Bonnie Ciolino at the Everglades National Park archives, her availability on site and reactivity working long distance (even sending packages of photocopies!) was invaluable. And also thanks to Dawn Hugh at the HistoryMiami museum archives, her generous guidance and research assistance provided the core materials for this thesis.

Thanks to my wonderful committee, who thankfully pushed and challenged me every step of the way. To my chair Jessica Cattelino, thanks for believing in my potential and pushing me to keep working at it. Also, thanks for asking me to drive her car to Florida, without which this thesis likely would not have happened! To Sherry Ortner, thanks for challenging me theoretically and pushing my analysis deeper than I thought it could go. To Mariko Tamanoi, thanks for being my cheerleader, providing me with such insightful comments, and referring me to the perfect works to fill in the gaps. Also thanks to UCLA Grad Division for awarding me a Graduate Summer Research Mentorship and the Anthropology Department for a Research Grant which together allowed me to prepare for and complete my field visit to Florida.

Finally to my family: thanks for your love, always believing in me, and never letting me quit. My dad's constant questions ("have you finished your thesis yet?"), though tiresome, pushed me to stay determined and get it done. And thanks to my mom, who spent many years reading my papers and in the process molded me into a better writer.

Last but far from least, thanks to Michael, my love, for being my rock. Thanks for encouraging me, challenging me, and putting up with me through my doubts and existential crises as I went through the revision process. And endless thanks for reading the countless versions of this thesis without so much as a grumble! Even though this is not his field, his helpful comments, funny drawings in the margins, and sweet words lifted my heart and motivated me when I thought I couldn't write another page. I love you.

My deepest thanks to you all.

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Marjory Stoneman Douglas, an environmentalist and early advocate for the Everglades, begins her seminal book *River of Grass* with this line: “There are no other Everglades in the world” (Douglas 2010: 5). Unlike its National Park predecessors, the Everglades National Park lacks the majestic and awe-inspiring landscapes that characterize parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite. As such, it was the first National Park designed to emphasize and preserve its biological and ecological, rather than solely scenic, value. It thus provides a unique opportunity to explore the changing production of wilderness ideologies in a settler colonial society. Through an analysis of archival magazine articles, common themes of a settler colonial wilderness ideology become apparent. The articles I analyze are all in favor of the Park, designed to promote awareness and appreciation of the coming or existing Park, and are published in magazines geared towards the general public – *National Geographic*, *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, etc.¹ The narratives also illustrate how these ideologies are a form of the nature/culture binary that takes unique shape in a settler colonial society and thus contributes to the creation of our National Parks.

Using the Everglades National Park (hereafter ENP) as a case study, I argue that wilderness ideologies in a settler colonial society are characterized by depictions of an unpopulated, vast frontier landscape filled with wildlife and ultimately unknowable, all of which is undergirded by the dichotomization of nature from culture. Together, these themes contribute to a settler colonial vision of wilderness as a treasured patrimony. As a democratic project, they become America’s

¹ The vast majority of articles from the period I examined (1930s-1960s) were in favor of the Park. The few dissident voices I came across were primarily in the form of editorials voicing concerns about the size of the proposed or existing Park. They argued that it was important to save the Everglades, but that less land would be sufficient for these purposes as the rest was needed for fishing, agriculture, ranching, and housing development.

version of a national monument, a treasure to be saved for the enjoyment of future generations. In this way, wilderness spaces such as those in National Parks are symbolic of American national identity, a testament to the struggles of a settler past wherein untamed wild lands were acquired and dispossessed of indigenous populations to make way for the productive powers of civilization.

Conceptual apparatus

Anthropologist Jessica Cattelino argues: “to analyze the United States as a settler society is not to displace other conceptualizations (e.g., as a former slave state or an ongoing site of migration) but rather to capture the complexity of American political, economic, and cultural formations” (Cattelino 2010: 283). Using the structure of settler colonialism as a contextualizing framework for the study of American society is still in its infancy. Cattelino describes settler societies as “the liberal democratic settler states of the former British empire with indigenous minorities” (Cattelino 2011: 2). In a settler colonial society, acquiring land is key, and land dispossession (particularly of indigenous peoples) one of its tools. Historian Patrick Wolfe argues, and I agree, that the American (as a settler colonial society) relationship to nature is a particular one – in it, “territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (Wolfe 2010: 388). Invasion, destruction, and assimilation become the modus operandi of settler colonialism. Settler colonialism in its quest to acquire land “destroys to replace” (Wolfe 2006: 388). In the logic of elimination, the assimilation of American Indians “relentlessly sought the breakdown of the tribe and the absorption into White society,” both of individuals and of their land (Wolfe 2006: 400). In the United States cultural politics no longer revolve around the acquisition of land and indigenous dispossession, but these structures still influence society in a wide variety of ways from economics to social composition to politics.

In particular, I am interested in how this settler colonial structure influences the ways in which people interact with and understand their environment. The 1964 Wilderness Act provides a framework for analyzing wilderness values in the United States: “A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (“Wilderness Act”, 2012). Seemingly simple, it encapsulates all that wilderness has come to symbolize in a settler colonial society: wildlife, lack of man in a large natural space, and ultimately unknowable. Thus the settler colonial frontier experience, compounded by the industrial revolution and isolation of man from his environment, created an ideology of wilderness that is not just a natural landscape, but is rather a place completely lacking the imprint of civilized man.² Though National Parks are not part of the “wilderness” category as defined by the 1964 Wilderness Act, the Everglades National Park was nevertheless framed as a wilderness and promoted as such in part through narrative articles in popular magazines. The ways in which wilderness is defined in the Everglades both reflect a broader settler colonial history and its imprints left on our social structure, as well as the new directions this ideology has taken.

The particular shape wilderness ideology takes in a settler colonial society is one form of the basic modernist nature/culture binary. “Nature” and “culture” are concepts that are still often reified into distinct, separate places – e.g. culture is in the cities and suburbs, nature is ‘out there’ away from civilization. Environmental historian William Cronon’s analysis, later echoed by geographer Bruce Braun and others, argues “‘nature’ is a human idea, with a long and

² The word “civilized” is key; indigenous peoples were often collapsed into this wilderness frame as they considered “savages.” As such, they could become part of the wilderness without impinging upon the framework of man as separate from nature.

complicated cultural history which has led different human beings to conceive of the natural world in very different ways” (Cronon 1996: 20). Thus, in acknowledging the cultural history of ‘nature’, he highlights the notion that nature, and consequently wilderness, are social constructs that change over time, dialectically reflecting and influencing the social systems that constructed them. In criticizing the logic of a nature-culture dichotomy, geographer Bruce Braun argues that nature is framed as external, “a place to which one *goes*” (Braun 2002: ix). The ideal of these constructs is separation – nature is where wildlife (both plant and animal) dominates, whereas culture is the domain of civilized man.³

In a settler colonial society, wilderness ideology as one form of the nature/culture binary is particularly reified. The binary itself is born of a historical moment when the industrial revolution pushed man ever further from nature, leading to increasing isolation. If culture is the seat of human civilization, nature is where wilderness (as ‘pure’ nature) resides. It “leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God’s natural cathedral” (Cronon 1996: 81). Cronon theorizes that in popular American imagination, wilderness is “the last remaining place where civilization, that all too human disease, has not fully infected the earth, . . . the one place we can turn for escape from our own too-muchness” (Cronon 1996: 69). Anthropologists like Anna Tsing also challenge the nature-culture dichotomy by calling attention to the importance of attending to the gaps, the interstitial zones between domains such as cultivated/wild, farmland/forest (Tsing 2004). And yet it is this dichotomous separation of nature from culture that underlies the development of a wilderness ideology in America – true nature (wilderness) must be bounded and kept apart from civilized

³ I purposely use the word “ideal” because in practice nature is never truly separate from civilization. Humans are inescapably enmeshed in, and are themselves, some form of nature.

man in order for it to retain its value as such. The resultant wilderness ideology conditioned by settler colonial histories of practice and interaction with the natural landscape allowed for a National Park System wherein wild lands are patrimonial treasures. The ENP represents both a continuation of this ideology as well as a shift away from it.

Historical overview

National Park system

A confluence of social structures, philosophies, and events conspired to produce the National Park System as representative of wilderness ideology in a settler colonial society. The compound effect of industrialization's isolating effects of people from the landscape and the 'maelstrom of modernity' it accompanied produced a modernist philosophy wherein man was separate from nature. Furthermore, as historian Mark Spence argues, much of what underlies the National Park System has to do with indigeneity. Indians (as exemplary of 'natural man') and wilderness, conflated into a single entity on the other side of a semiofficial policed frontier, were considered a "uniquely American condition" (Spence 1999: 17). In part because of these constructs of a uniquely American "Indian wilderness" (themselves drawing on American romanticist philosophies of the mid-1800s), as the land was acquired by settlers and developed for profit or livelihood, the frontier pushed ever further west and the land itself gained value as a patrimonial treasure and symbol of American identity. Impressive scenery in a wild, and in some ways unknowable, landscape across a frontier border became a cultural icon and asset. Similarly, Ian Tyrrell asserts that national parks have long been considered the pinnacle of American attitudes and beliefs towards nature. He cites Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, which proclaimed, "an American cultural nationalist and quasi-religious encounter with the sublime character of wilderness [became a place wherein] Americans sought and ultimately preserved the

nation's unique heritage" (Tyrrell 2012: 1). Spence aptly calls the National Parks "America's holiest shrines," in part because in these wild lands lay both direct access to the sublime, and Indians as exemplary of 'natural man' (Spence 1999: 7). Thus in addition to their potential for land and wildlife preservation, National Parks became a moral and spiritual solution against the corruptions of modern civilization.⁴

In 1872, Yellowstone became America's first National Park.⁵ It "had less to do with ideas about undisturbed nature than a desire to keep the region's scenic wonders out of the hands of private interests" (Spence 1999: 55). The rugged, spectacular scenery "assured [that] a marginal landscape already devoid of other values" such as arable land and timber retained some value (Runte 2010: 44).⁶ As the number of National Parks increased, a National Park System developed in the 1890s. As the frontiers closed and city living became the dominant lifestyle, the parks developed a secondary purpose of conserving 'monumental' wildlife such as bison, bear, and moose, while maintaining the primary goal of protecting the nation's natural wonders as

⁴ In 1829 Catlin also declared national parks a possible solution against civilization's corruptions: "'A nation's park ... for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages!'" (Catlin in Runte 2010: 22).

⁵ National parks are defined by Congressional Act as follows:

"1. A national park is an area maintained by the Federal Government and "dedicated and set apart for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Such Federal maintenance should occur only where the preservation of the area in question is of national interest because of its outstanding value from a scenic, scientific, or historical point of view. Whether a certain area is to be so maintained by the Federal Government as a national park should not depend upon the financial capacity of the state within which it is located, or upon its nearness to centers of population which would insure a large attendance therefrom, or upon its remoteness from such centers which would insure its majority attendance from without its state. It should depend up on its own outstanding scenic, scientific, or historical quality and the resultant national interest in its preservation" They are also permanent: "National parks, established for the permanent preservation of areas and objects of national interest, are intended to exist forever" ("A Brief History of the National Park Service", 2003).

⁶ The reading of value in the land was transferred from its productive qualities (timber, agriculture, etc.) to more scenic, aesthetic qualities. Badlands National Park for example was established in 1939 for primarily aesthetic reasons, as the land was too "bad" for agriculture. Thus, even with increasing awareness about the importance of wildlife and ecological conservation in the late 19th century as development and industrialization picked up, the dominant feeling remained that "national parks should be restricted to worthless lands" (Runte 2010: 48). John Muir himself argued for a larger Yosemite Reservation, but only because the land was not deemed "valuable for any other use than the use of beauty" (Muir in Runte 2010: 53).

national patrimony.⁷ The historical circumstance of America as a settler colonial society provided the context wherein the acquisition and subsequent taming of such wild lands became symbolic of American identity and the struggles of a settler past. Drawing on the separation of nature from culture so integral to the early modern moment of industrialization, a unique wilderness ideology developed that constructed wilderness as a wild, unpopulated space on the other side of an ultimately unknowable frontier. This enabled a two-fold preservation goal: conserve the scenery and wildlife from further development, and keep these available as national patrimony for man's pleasure and as a reminder of the origins of American national identity.

Everglades Region and the Everglades National Park

The history of development of the Everglades region and later the National Park is a continuation as well as an evolution of 'traditional' wilderness values in the American National Park System. The Everglades are a sheet of water over a prairie of saw grass interspersed with hardwood hammocks, what Marjory Stoneman Douglas called the "river of grass". It is the heart of an ecosystem connecting all of southern Florida. At first, the region was proclaimed a useless bog that was destined to be reclaimed: it was "a dismal impenetrable swamp, and even conservationists dreamed of draining it; converting wet land into productive land" (Grunwald 2006b: 4). The motivation to convert encountered lands into productive ones is of course symptomatic of a settler colonial society. In the 1850s, the Everglades "seemed like an agricultural diamond in the rough," as south Florida had all the requisites of good farming – soil,

⁷ In 1906, the Antiquities Act became instrumental in setting aside objects as well as land; it gave the President the authority to declare tracts of land, historical landmarks, etc. to be national monuments, which therefore paved the way for the creation of more National Parks. The National Park Service Organic Act, which became law in 1916, stipulated the creation of the National Park Service, which was created to "promote and regulate" the use of areas "which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations" ("National Park Service Organic Act" 1916).

sun, and rain (Grunwald 2006b: 6). Since the lands were covered in a sheet of water, the obvious solution was to drain the Everglades.⁸

The production of nature as a discrete resource to be acquired, and consequently wilderness to be conquered, are thus key components of settler colonialism. Wolfe argues that “agriculture, with its life-sustaining connectedness to land, is a potent symbol of settler-colonial identity” (Wolfe 2006: 396). During the 1920s, in the Everglades region the value of land lay in agriculture and development. The Florida land boom thus saw south Florida lands sold to northerners sight unseen on the promise that it would soon be rich farmland. To accomplish this settler colonial dream, canals were built to drain the Everglades to the sea. However, by the 1930s the damage these drainage efforts had caused became obvious; they “had only intensified the natural cycle of Everglades fires and floods, while luring pioneers into their horrific path” (Grunwald 2006b: 195). Following natural disasters of the 1920s, flood control became the new solution to manage the water flows. This brought different negative consequences and by the 1930s, much of the rich agricultural lands had dried up.⁹

In 1947, in her seminal book “River of Grass,” Marjory Stoneman Douglas warned that “what had been a river of grass and sweet water that had given meaning and life and uniqueness to this enormous geography through centuries in which man had no place here was made, in one chaotic

⁸ Drainage also fit in with Christian philosophy of man’s dominion over nature, as well as Manifest Destiny, which affirmed that American civilization would reach from sea to sea.

⁹ In 1926 and 1928, hurricanes blew through the region, causing Lake Okeechobee, which had been previously dammed, to overflow killing thousands in its floodplain. To control the volatile water flow, the emphasis was turned towards flood control, resulting in building the initially 66-mile (later extending to well over 100 miles) Hoover Dike around Lake Okeechobee, completed in 1937. This was thought to solve the problem of water control, but it only created different problems. Though it helped with the flooding especially in case of hurricanes, it also contributed to drought situations. In the mid-1930s an extensive drought occurred, and because the water was trapped in the lake by the dike, much of the Everglades dried up and the rich soil disappeared through peat fires and oxidation.

gesture of greed and ignorance and folly, a river of fire” (Douglas 2010: 375). Seeking a solution to the excesses and droughts of Everglades water while still maintaining lands for agricultural and livestock production, compartmentalization of the landscape became the ideal compromise. Congress approved the creation of Central and South Florida Flood Control Projects in 1947 to better manage water flows through levees, Water Conservation Areas, Everglades Agricultural Areas and canals. It is in part due to this compartmentalization, and Ernest Coe’s decades-long fight to preserve the landscape, that a portion of the Everglades were set aside and established as a National Park in 1947.¹⁰

WILDERNESS IN A SETTLER COLONIAL SOCIETY

Introduction

Cattellino summarizes that “since the mid-1800s, Everglades politics have been dominated by two settler imperatives, with a third added more recently: first, to make land agriculturally productive; second, to develop a permanent residential population in south Florida; and more recently, to restore the Everglades” (Cattellino 2009: 5). These settler colonial imperatives are key in understanding the production of nature and wilderness in National Parks generally, as well as in the region that became the Everglades National Park. Settler colonialism as a societal structure and historical event has a continuing impact on how wilderness is defined, what is to be done with it, and what happens to the inhabitants (particularly indigenous peoples) of this newly ‘untouched’ wilderness area.

¹⁰ Ernest Coe, a landscape architect who fell in love with the Everglades, began fighting for its preservation in 1928. He spent nearly 20 years corresponding with Congress, Senators, and other groups, leading the Everglades National Park Association in shepherding it towards its establishment. However, the park’s final size was less than half what he proposed.

The following narratives point to a settler colonial wilderness ideology based on envisioning the landscape as an unpopulated, wild, unknowable frontier. In analyzing these narratives, I also want to draw attention to the importance of place-making in constructing these stories of the Everglades.¹¹ Place as “a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings” allows us to imagine it as multiple and shifting, imbued with experience and memory of past events (Massey 1984: 5).¹² Particularly useful is the connection Casey draws between embodiment and enculturation – “a body is at once encultured and emplaced *and* enculturating and emplacing” (Casey 1996: 34). This dialectical relationship enables us to envision how knowledge systems such as wilderness ideologies can be reproduced between on an individual level. These narratives can thus act as potent examples of wilderness ideologies settler colonial society.¹³

Unpopulated yet vibrant with life

The National Park System was able to expand in part by attracting tourists to view the majestic landscapes within the Parks. However, by the early 1920s “alternative ideas for the use of national parks were elaborated, building on older preservationist, aesthetic, and ethical approaches as well as on newer scientific and educational categories” (Kupper 2009: 67). Part of this shift stemmed from a criticism of industrialization and an excessive focus on consumerism

¹¹ To address the production of wilderness it is useful to briefly summarize the concepts ‘space’ and ‘place’. In the social sciences, there has been a “rediscovery of space in critical social theory and the emphasis on difference” (Smith 1992: 60). Casey argues that space has been defined as a “neutral, pre-given medium, a tabula rasa onto which the particularities of culture and history come to be inscribed” (Casey 1996: 14). Place then is often considered to be the more specific and inhabited variation of space; Setha Low describes place as “space made meaningful” (in Hoey 2010: 238).

¹² For Tuan, “place is a center of meaning constructed by experience” – as such, places are both spatial as well as visceral (Tuan 1975: 152). Similarly, for Casey, “the crux in matters of place is the role of perception... the perceiver finds herself in the midst of a teeming place-world rather than in a confusing kaleidoscope of free-floating sensory data” (Casey 1996: 17).

¹³ See Hugh Raffles’ 2002 work on the production of nature in the Amazon, and Keith Basso’s classic 1996 work on Western Apache moral stories embedded in the landscape for other ethnographic examples of landscape place-making through discourse.

that developed during the interwar period. The high numbers of tourists arriving in the National Parks began to destroy that for which they were created – preservation of monumental scenery and life. By the 1930s, ecological research, education, and science were forefront and the National Park Service adopted a “definite policy of preserving research reserves inside national parks” (Department of the Interior, 1931).¹⁴ President Roosevelt’s New Deal provided funds to the Park Service that financed this interest shift towards the ecological and biological value of the Parks. Though the scientific focus of National Parks was later dropped due in part to the economic crisis of the Great Depression and World War II, this interwar period and its emphasis on an alternative value for National Parks laid the groundwork for more ecologically oriented Parks such as the Everglades National Park.

This ecological interest is both a continuation of and deviation from the pre-existing settler colonial wilderness ideology. It draws on the theme of wilderness as an unpopulated place, a dominant concept since the beginnings of the National Park System. However, it also takes this theme in a new direction by emphasizing the biological and ecological value – the wildlife itself – as a counterpoint to the overwhelming human presence in developing areas. Rather than focusing primarily on the majestic scenery as evidence of a landscape inherently void of man’s imprint, the ecological shift represented by the Everglades National Park focuses instead on the wildlife. Precisely because it lacked the canyons, waterfalls, gorges, geysers, etc. of the other parks, “the protection of native plants and animals alone seemed justification” enough (Runte 2010: 101). The Everglades thus became the first Park to make an “unmistakable pledge to the protection of natural environments” (Runte 2010: 101). Unremarkable in its scenery, it is the first

¹⁴ In 1926 at the National Conference on Outdoor Recreation, John Merriam, a trustee of the National Parks Association, had significant responsibility for this shift by urging a new approach for the parks centered on education and inspiration as well as recreation.

truly dynamic Park, preserved for life, rather than the more static Parks preserved for scenery that can be captured in a postcard.

Wildlife

Grunwald's 2006 *Smithsonian Magazine* article summed it up best: "the Everglades was less about beauty than about subtlety and originality.... If the Grand Canyon was a breathtaking painting, the Everglades was a complex drama, and everything in it had a role" (Grunwald 2006a: 52). This drama is highlighted in numerous articles from the period. In particular, what makes the region 'wild' is its abundance of wildlife, framed as a worthwhile Park feature in opposition to the other National Parks with their majestic scenery. Below are the first-issue postcard and stamp celebrating the establishment of the ENP. They emphasize a magical wilderness teeming with life. Focusing on the birds, the back of the card reads: "Ever see a flight of roseate spoonbills winging over Florida Bay from their feeding grounds on the Florida Keys? It's like watching a ribbon of animated rose pink petals suspended in a dream world of blue sky and aqua-tinted sea. Then the great birds break their long garlands to form swirling bouquets as they hover over the emerald isle which is their nesting place. This is only one of many marvels found by nature lovers in the new Everglades National Park" (postcard, 1947).



Figure 1. Everglades National Park postcard and stamp. First-day issue. 1947.

Nearly ten years later, in 1956 John Pennekamp (an early Park supporter) echoed the sentiment: “Everglades National Park marks a departure in the National Park system. It is the first park in which the biological rather than the geological features are stressed. The Park Service people have found in their other parks that the native animal life appeals more to visitors than the scenery itself. Thus, in Yellowstone, a couple or three chipmunks feeding will draw the crowds away from Old Faithful, the geyser. With its deer, bear, otter, bird sanctuaries and many, many

other forms of wildlife, our Park makes this appeal far beyond any other” (Pennekamp 1956).

The establishment of the Everglades National Park thus reflected a broader trend towards ecological awareness and environmentalism that began with early conservationists and transcendentalists like Thoreau and Muir and continued to pick up speed into the mid-20th century, while remaining a prime example of settler colonial wilderness ideology.¹⁵

Following panoramic landscape photos, 1940 magazine author John O’Reilly concludes his article with a description of the abundant wildlife – particularly bird life – that is present.

Poetically describing the “coming of the cranes,” he tells us: “from the direction of the lake came the buglelike notes of a Florida crane. Soon a pair of the huge birds approached us, flying low and silhouetted against the sunset” (O’Reilly 1940). The spectacle of the sight gives the impression of truly natural landscape, where man is invisible. To show us how wild this place actually is, he launches into a description of the flora and fauna, aptly titled, “Haunt of Bears, Birds, Alligators”: “Barred from the road by junglelike growth are vast cypress swamps, where wild orchids decorate the aisles of trees, and exotic water birds rear their young.... Where panthers, bears, and wild turkeys are still found, and alligators dig caves” (O’Reilly 1940). These exotic creatures are mentioned to foster images of a non-human wilderness. It was a “strange world, the only inhabitants of which were birds” (O’Reilly 1940).

To further emphasize the abundance of wildlife, and drawing on his experience, he tells us that poling through the waters, “in not more than 20 minutes, 34 species were seen. Never had I seen

¹⁵ Indeed, it is this difference, this affirmation of and desire to preserve the variety of wildlife that enabled the Everglades National park to exist. Environmentalist Aldo Leopold believed that mankind should respect the environment (as expounded in his 1949 work, *A Sand County Almanac*) had repercussions in the way we approach nature and wilderness spaces such as the National Parks. Photographers like Ansel Adams and groups such as the Sierra Club promoted greater ecological awareness, and later environmental awareness about issues like air and water pollution.

so many species of wild birds in one spot” (O’Reilly 1940). Describing his encounters with alligators and water moccasins, “crawling over fallen logs and cypress knees,” one gets the impression of an enjoyable but difficult voyage through a true wilderness (O’Reilly 1940). He concludes his story with the following: “the greatest souvenir of my visit was a lasting impression of the wilderness area of south Florida, a region which has no counterpart anywhere in the United States” (O’Reilly 1940).

In 1957, ten years after the Park’s establishment, author Hubert Saal continues to emphasize the wildlife as the primary *raison d’être* of the Park, in opposition to the other National Parks famed for their scenic beauty: “Present are none of the geological wonders we are accustomed to in other national parks: no mountains, waterfalls, rapids, or canyons. This Park will always be dedicated more as a sanctuary for wildlife than as picknicking grounds for its visitors. Its purpose is to preserve this last wilderness” (Saal 1957). Saal lingers on the teeming wildlife, describing each species of snake and bird and plant, and using embodied superlatives such as “they’re everywhere,” “in indescribable numbers,” “countless,” and “thousands upon thousands” to impress on the readers the sheer numbers of the wildlife. For tourists in 1960, the Everglades guidebooks capitalize on this abundant wildlife, highlighting that the Park is a “zoo without cages, where you can get close to nature” (Bird 1960). John Bird also provides a litany of plants and animals – alligator, gar, butterflies, diving birds, wild orchids, mahogany trees, etc. – to emphasize the abundance of wildlife. And this wildlife is truly wild – Bird tells us that “A few plants wear “DON’T TOUCH” signs” and one is even called the ‘tree of death’ (Bird 1960). This emphasis on lands filled with wildlife that may not be tamed is indicative of a settler colonial past wherein settlers sought to conquer wild lands and render the inhabitable habitable.

“No man’s land”

The presence of wildlife is part of a settler colonial duality that implies these lands are unpopulated and thus free for the taking. A 1940 article narrates a personal experience in this “strange inland wilderness,” the author confessing that: “I wanted to go far into the big swamps, for swamps have always fascinated me as places where Nature puts on her most abundant show. It was to be a wilderness trip” (O’Reilly 1940). He idolizes nature, particularly when it comes to referencing industrialization and development: “straight sidewalks stretching out across the prairie, leading nowhere... were concrete reminders of the Florida land boom, marking places where dream cities were to have stood. Now they were being reclaimed by Nature” (O’Reilly 1940).

The place as he describes it could literally swallow a man whole: “sweet myrtle, willows, cattails, saw grass, bulrushes, and other plants formed a tangle impenetrable to human beings. Any attempt a man might make to walk there would result in a disappearance through the heavy muck to the ooze beneath” (O’Reilly 1940). Interestingly, a later article acknowledges it is not truly “untouched,” though in popular imagination it might as well be: “It is too late, now, to speak of it as being untouched. But certainly in a popular conception, as well as under the definition of the preservationists, it is wilderness” (Griswold 1948). In what would become the Everglades National Park, “vegetation grows to its full stature and natural age without interference from man” (Small 1937). In 1944 the Audubon Society claimed, “no one has really seen the Everglades, except the Seminole Indians who live there and a few hardy white spirits

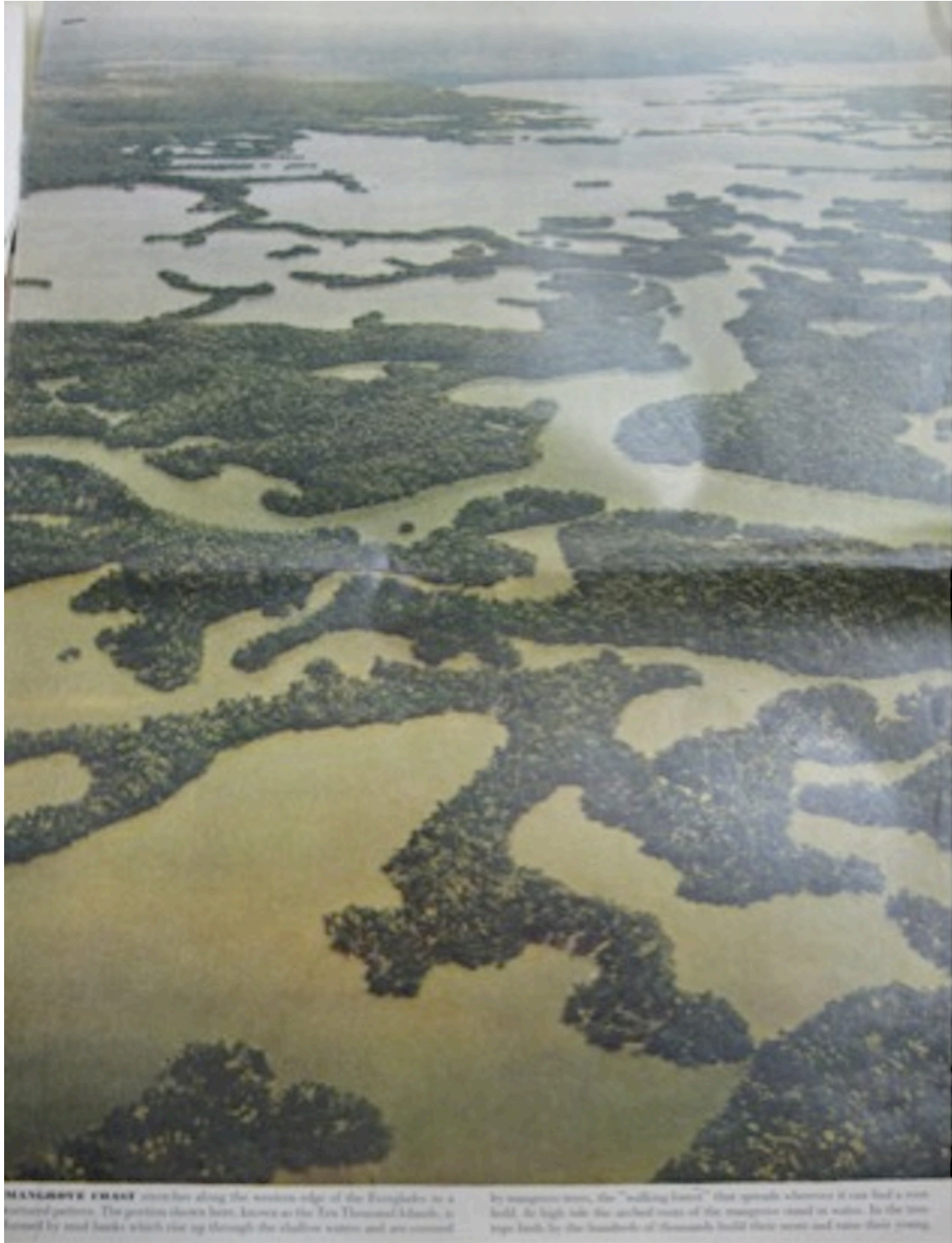
who, for one reason or another, have tentatively stabbed at its implacable secretiveness” (Sprunt 1944).¹⁶

Braun argues that nature is “produced through the discursive and material practices of everyday life,” (Braun 2002: x) a key feature of which is the “spectacularization of nature”. Narratives that depict a landscape void of human life yet teeming with ‘wild’ life produce a spectacular and idealized image of an untouched wilderness, enticing readers to support and visit the ENP.

Wilderness as a national treasure is thus envisioned as a place without people but filled with wildlife. However, it is key to note that not just any animal life is fore-fronted, but rather it is life that cannot be tamed or conquered. This emphasis on the inherent wildness of the landscape has a direct link to a settler colonial past that sought to conquer wild lands for settlement. The continued emphasis on these wilderness places in National Parks is both a testament to settler struggles for dominion in this new rugged American landscape, and indexes a certain kind of American national identity that links rugged landscape with rugged character.

The ENP takes this a step further building on the interwar period emphasis on ecology and science, continuing the importance of the lack of man in wilderness while also developing a new focus on the wildlife itself. Below follows typical photographic evidence of the vast and natural aspects of the Everglades. The first is an image of the mangrove forests along the coast, and the second highlights the types of abundant wildlife seen in the untouched wilderness of the ENP:

¹⁶ We will later come back to the question of Seminole Indians and their erasure from the landscape, enabling the land to be envisioned as empty – a perspective influenced by settler experiences when confronted with a landscape seemingly ‘free’ for the taking.



MANGROVE FOREST stretches along the western edge of the Everglades in a scattered pattern. The portion shown here, known as the Ten Thousand Islands, is formed by mud banks which rise up through the shallow waters and are covered

by mangrove trees, the "walking forest" that spreads wherever it can find a root hold. Its high tide the arched roots of the mangrove stand in water. In the low-tide bath in the hundreds of thousands build their nests and raise their young.

Figure 2. Aerial view of the Everglades landscape. From "The Everglades: Wildlife abounds in grass-clad Florida jungle" in *Life*. 1952.



Figure 3. Everglades bird life. From “The Everglades: Wildlife abounds in grass-clad Florida jungle” in *Life*. 1952.

Frontier

The expansive landscapes of the settler colonial frontier experience are also an important part of this evolving wilderness ideology. Yi-Fu Tuan tells us that “space, not place, tantalized Americans when the frontiers were open and resources appeared limitless” (Tuan 1975: 164). The Western frontier thus provided the ideal site for the cultivation of these ideas of pure nature and wilderness. Cattelino describes the frontier as follows: “for much of American history, the frontier was taken to be a space that divided settler from American Indian occupancy and, in a misplaced Lockean view, divided productive from not-yet-productive uses of land” (Cattelino

2009). Productivity was determined by proper use (e.g. agriculture or development) through ownership – though Indians lived on the land, they were also considered uncivilized and part of the land. As such they could not own the land as property and therefore weren't putting it to full productive use. The frontier thus marked the beginning of a wild, uncivilized space to be discovered and made productive. In 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner proclaimed that “the frontier has gone, and with its going has closed the first period of American history” (Turner 1960). The central claim of Turner's frontier thesis revolved around free land, that the characteristics of the frontier led to the development of a uniquely American character: "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development." (Turner 1894). While many have critiqued Turner's thesis on the role of the frontier, Cronon finds some value to it: “the frontier thesis, in effect, set American space in motion and gave it a plot” (Cronon 1987). Regardless of the validity of the frontier, the myth was powerful and instrumental in framing the ENP as a wilderness some 50 years later.

In a settler colonial society, expansive frontier wilderness landscapes embody one-half of the nature/culture duality. These lands lay on the other side of the border between settled, productive lands and the yet-to-be settled, on the other side of a frontier that divides the dangerous and wild from that which is tame and civilized. However, with settler expansion into the ‘Wild West’ and increasing industrialization in America, wilderness ideology evolved to be more than simply a savage wasteland in need of the redemptive hand of civilization. As more and more land was transformed for development and agriculture, the ‘ills of modernity’ (and especially industrialization) spread during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Framed in this way, wilderness in a settler colonial society developed a twin identity. On the one hand it was a no

man's land, an expanse on the edge of the world filled with dangerous creatures that have yet to be tamed. Yet it was also the last refuge of 'true man' (embodied by American Indians who were simultaneously dispossessed of the lands that made them 'true man') and of the divine.

Vast

Below is a typical sample of photographic evidence of the vastness of this wilderness, highlighting the isolation of any man that sets forth into it. The caption reads: "Grass Higher than a Man's Head, Stretching to Horizons of the 'Glades, Ripples Like Wheat in the Wind" (photo caption, 1948).



Figure 4. Fields of Everglades saw grass. From "Haunting Heart of the Everglades" in *National Geographic Magazine*. 1948.

The Everglades National Park is a perfect example of this wilderness vision. The geology of the landscape only further enables the myth – the land is flat and seems to stretch endlessly, also reminiscent of the endless prairies of the Western frontier. O’Reilly describes the region as “a vast area, rich in natural beauty and wild life, which lies beyond the eye of the visitor or winter resident – lies there in the hot sunshine almost unchanged since four centuries ago” (O’Reilly 1940). This idea of wilderness as vast and open for the taking (or in this case the experiencing) reflect the vast, wild frontier experience of settler colonialism. In this representation, elements of civilization, man, and historic time are erased – nature is presented as pure and unchanging. Similarly, the Seminole Indians who lived in the Everglades are treated like the American Indians of the West – those that are not physically removed are collapsed into the landscape as features of the wilderness.

The visceral, sensory quality of narrative enables us to envision a place forgotten in time, a subtropical wilderness isolated from the touch of man. Other terms emphasize the expanse of it, echoing settler colonial frontier experiences of wide open spaces begging to be discovered – to do so the author employs terms and phrases like “spreading out for mile upon mile,” “vast,” “beyond eye range,” “vast plains” that “swept away to the horizon”. After this enticing introduction into the sensory qualities of the place, O’Reilly returns to contextualizing the place historically, recounting the removal of the Seminoles and those that remained, equating the presence of the few remaining Seminoles as proof of the wildness of the place. In taking a seaplane voyage over the region, he describes his first aerial glimpse of the Everglades: “Before us lay the Everglades, one of the strangest of American landscapes. Flat as a table and seemingly endless, the sun-baked land spread out beneath us” (O’Reilly 1940).

Even over a decade after the Park's establishment, this emphasis on the vast expanses as evidence of it being an untouched wilderness lived on. In the *Saturday Evening Post*, John Bird assures the reader that "the Glades still retains its primitive beauty and excitement" (Bird 1960). Emphasizing the size of the Park, in 1957 Hubert Saal in *Town and Country* describes the landscape as "dominated by the swamp that extends beyond every horizon," calling it illimitable. Even the flora in the landscape are over-sized – there are air plants high in the air, and "strap ferns [that] are fifteen feet tall, and royal palms as high as eighty feet" (Saal 1957). Referring to the size of the Park, John Bird in 1960 wrote that it was the same size as Delaware, and is "considerably more than a collection of unusual birds and beasts. It also is an awesome primeval landscape" (Bird 1960). To reassure the reader of its wildness, Bird highlights his own experience, sharing that "the new roads and facilities may give the impression that the Everglades have been subdued at last,... after spending a strenuous week exploring... I can testify that most of the landscape is untouched" (Bird 1960). These personal narratives created an image of the Everglades as a vast, untouched wilderness ready to be explored. Framing it as a frontier reinforces the nature/culture binary, while also recalling the frontier experience of settler colonialism.

Edge of the world

The frontier discourse is thus key in enabling the separation of this space as a wilderness apart; it reflects a nostalgic longing for the wild frontiers of the West, as well as its satisfying rediscovery in the backyard of the East coast. This place is not only framed as the last wild frontier on the edge of civilization, but also as possessed of a certain primeval timelessness. In the first article mentioned, the region is described as "the heart of nature", a "great primitive region," "one of America's last primeval wildernesses" (Morrison 1941). In detailing his own experience in the

Park, the author proclaims that “one half expects to encounter a sign bearing the legend ‘Brink of the World – 10 Miles” (Morrison 1941). These perceptions persist well after the Park’s establishment. The Park’s first Superintendent Dan Beard acknowledges that in the beginning, “the Glades were still something of a frontier. If you wanted something in the Glades, you took it” (Bird 1960). Like in Western frontier mythology, “the tradition of the Glades as a sanctuary for the antisocial and lawless runs deep” (Bird 1960). Descriptions of Rangers chasing poachers like ‘Wild West’ sheriffs chasing bandits are rampant (see Simmons & Ogden 1998 and Ogden 2011). This sort of commentary only further entrenches the image of the Everglades as the last frontier.

A component of being able to access this wild frontier (after some struggle) is the ability to escape from society, again reinforcing the separation of nature from culture with the frontier as a boundary line slowly moving westward, reducing what wild spaces are left. A pamphlet entitled ‘The Park Story’ asserts that “the Everglades National Park, and places like it, exist because man dimly realizes that he is yet too close to real frontiers and all of his beginnings to thrive indefinitely in a world of asphalt and concrete. Places of refuge from the hurly-burly still are needed, places where one may escape, if only briefly, all sight and sound of fellow humans” (Robertson 1989). Magazine author Michael Frome also describes the Everglades as a place where “he can find peace and inspiration, while discovering the wonders of the natural world” (Frome 1968). It is a place where man can escape from man. This emphasis on escapism again creates a certain kind of wilderness ideology, and reflects the expansive land of the frontier era so integral to settler colonial structures.

Indian in the landscape

Cattelino asserts that “settler conceptions of wilderness are haunted by the spectre of indigenous peoples” (Cattelino 2011: 5). Indeed the removal of indigenous peoples became necessary in order to reclaim and preserve wilderness areas from productive development – to create a place truly untouched by man, indigenous peoples must be collapsed into or erased from the landscape. In describing First Nations in British Columbia, Braun argues that in terms of indigenous peoples’ positionality, in order for land to be thought of as pure nature they must become a part of the land or disappear completely (see Braun 2002). Here there is a duality to indigenous elimination. On the one hand they become ‘noble savages’, in tune with nature and thus inherently a part of the landscape. On the other, they are physically removed from the land, thus achieving the same goal.¹⁷ American Indians, because they were seen as ‘noble savages’ living in close connection with nature, become emblematic of the ideal man in touch with nature.

Reflecting this ideal, in antebellum America, “forests were wild because Indians and beasts lived there, and Indians were wild because they lived in the forests” (Spence 1999: 10). George Catlin proposed that “some great protecting policy of government” preserve a large expanse of land in all “its pristine beauty and wildness... where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his horse... amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes” (Catlin in Spence 1999: 10).¹⁸ Here we see the collapse of American Indians into the scene of the wild landscape; in his vision National Parks would include all that is majestic and wild about the

¹⁷ It is possible that this duality hinges in part on numbers. For example, it often seems that once the majority of American Indians are physically removed, the few that remain, rather than being seen as marginal and a threat, often become ‘noble savages’, quiet figments of the natural landscape. In the context of wilderness production, they are considered part of the landscape, subsumed into it and become like ghosts, remnants of a past ideal ‘natural man’ way of life that has been moved aside by ‘progress’.

¹⁸ George Catlin was a 19th century American painter, author, and traveller, famous in his own lifetime for his paintings of American West landscapes and Native American portraits.

land – the geology, the animals, and the indigenous people as well.¹⁹ These 19th century views of nature, born in part out of a settler colonial experience with the conquest of a vast and wild landscape, were widespread in America and laid the foundation for the National Parks to come.

These forms of indigenous elimination are integral to settler colonialism and persist in the wilderness ideology that undergirds the ENP. Though Seminole Indians lived in the region, they were often considered little more than part of the wilderness landscape. Describing his visit, one author depicts “brightly-clad Seminole Indians” as “picturesque features of the Everglades” (Morrison 1941). In *National Geographic Magazine*, a 1940 article describes how “human inhabitants of the interior of south Florida blend with its untamed atmosphere” (O’Reilly 1940). He depicts them as one with and highly knowledgeable about this forbidding landscape: “When not in villages, they roam the Everglades and the cypress swamps, where they still hunt alligators for their hides, wandering about in country still almost inaccessible to the white man” (O’Reilly 1940). In referring to young Seminole men as bucks, this furthers the mythology of the Indian as a part of the landscape, almost like an animal (Brown 1948). By spatially incarcerating the native (see Appadurai 1988) in this wilderness, they ensure that the presence of Seminoles does not disturb the vision of the Everglades as a true wilderness. In the photo below, the Seminole’s presence in the background is almost invisible, and his canoe in the foreground becomes just another part of the landscape.

¹⁹ See Shepard Krech’s 1999 work on “The Ecological Indian” (as well as his critics) for a discussion of the portrayal of American Indians as ecologically knowledgeable stewards of the land. See also William Cronon’s 1983 book, “Changes in the Land” for a historical analysis on the relationship of Indians and colonists to the ecology of New England.



Figure 5. Seminole, canoe, and the Everglades. From the History Museum of Miami archives. Date unknown.

Consequently, while not entirely devoid of identity (names and locations are provided), those Seminoles who did remain were objectified. The images below show Seminole people – primarily women, children, and the elderly – practicing ‘traditional’ crafts with “dignity and grace,” “stolid face[s],” and the “skill of ages” (photo captions, 1948).



Figure 6. Seminole women preparing a meal. From “Haunting Heart of the Everglades” in *National Geographic Magazine*. 1948.



Figure 7. Seminole portraits. From “Haunting Heart of the Everglades” in *National Geographic Magazine*. 1948.

Unknowable

The production of the Everglades as a wilderness in a settler colonial society, in addition to an emphasis on wildlife and a frontier landscape, is also based on the idea that wilderness is ultimately unknowable to the average settler. That it is a vast expanse uninhabited and populated by creatures that can't be tamed (including Indians) is one half of the duality of settler colonial wilderness ideology. The other half imagines the wilderness as sublime, precisely because of its very wildness and construction as a landscape across a frontier. Authors thus emphasize the mysterious and sometimes even mystical quality of the Everglades – “a land [Florida] where everybody goes, but one that almost nobody knows” (O'Reilly 1940). The impression of it as unfathomable is in part due to settler colonial structures born in an early modernist moment where wilderness becomes “the best antidote to the ills of an overly refined and civilized world” (Cronon 1996: 76). This conceit of nature is “a response to the physical and cultural dislocations of modernization and imperialism, whereby what has been destroyed (primitive cultures, nature) comes to be eulogized by the very agents of its destruction” (Braun 2002: 111). Modernity and industrialization, and the settler colonial drive to conquer the unknown, thus enabled a vision of wilderness as so different from civilized places as to be unknowable.

For nineteenth century American Romanticists, “wilderness not only offered an escape from society but also provided the ideal setting for romantic individuals ‘to exercise the cult’ they made of their own souls” (Spence 1999: 11).²⁰ Terms such as “strange”, “mystery”, “eerie”, and “haunting” litter articles of the period. A 1957 *Town and Country* article describes the Everglades National Park as “a strange, eerie place,” full of strange animal noises he calls “the

²⁰ Great American writers such as Thoreau and Emerson also played a part. Thoreau for example was desperate to contact nature: “What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! – Think of our life in Nature, - dayly to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, - rocks, tress, wind on our cheeks! The *solid* earth! The *actual* world! The *common sense*! *Contact!* *Contact!* *Who are we? Where are we?*” (Thoreau in Spence 1999: 21). His vision of wilderness as pure wild nature, pregnant with wisdom, was emblematic of 19th century wilderness philosophy.

sounds... of the wilderness” (Saal 1957). In these narratives, it is a place so remote and untouched that it is shrouded in the surreal, and so different from the typical American landscape (and those in National Parks), that it is even supernatural. The general sentiment was that the true soul and the sublime can be found in nature, and thus it must be separate from humanity and civilization to be pure.

Primitive and exotic

A 1936 article titled “Mangroves and Mystery” illustrates this narrative, describing the mangrove forests in particular as “of another world” (Williamson 1936). Supportive of the Park’s establishment, this author proclaims “the area will be a sanctuary where primeval nature with its wealth of tropical plant and animal life may remain practically undisturbed through the years to come” (Williamson 1936). John Bird describes the reaction of a paleobotanist when he visited the Park: “Why, this is still in the coal age! I can imagine seeing dinosaurs here” (Bird 1960). Indeed with the swamps, over-sized flora, and abundant reptilian fauna, the area retained a very ‘primitive’ feel. It became a land outside time, unchanged since time immemorial: “wildlife exists as they did before recorded time” in a “watery wilderness” (Frome 1968). Because it is either otherworldly, or exists in a preserved prehistoric past, it is ultimately unknowable. Saal describes it “like some great prehistoric wonder, the Everglades have defied the laws of evolution and extinction” (Saal 1957). While this discourse does point out the teeming wildlife, its mystery also lies in its primitive quality – as such it becomes ancient and foreign, on the outer edges of our comprehension. This prehistoric quality is thus part of the appeal, reflecting a settler colonial interest in maintaining ‘primitive’ or untouched areas – places that still have room to explore.

In a similar vein, tales of pirates and buried treasure pepper the various islands of the keys that would become part of the Park (see Williamson 1936). Williamson describes the long pre-historical record of the area, further adding to the impression of the region as primitive. “Civilizations appeared and vanished” and prehistoric fossil remains “of beasts so totally alien from the present fauna that even the scientist is amazed at the animals which once roamed the prairies” (Williamson 1936). In his mind there is no doubt, “South Florida is a wilderness,” and “the area will be a sanctuary where primeval nature with its wealth of tropical plant and animal life may remain practically undisturbed through the years to come” (Williamson 1936). Even artifacts of indigenous populations are given the moniker: “Mysterious piles, some 30 feet high, apparently were discards from aboriginal shore dinners” (Brown 1948). The idea that aboriginal discards are mysterious fits with a perception of indigenous peoples as relics of another time, and their practices as uncanny, other, and thus unsettling – a perspective common to settler colonial societies (see Head 2000, and Gelder & Jacobs 1998).

Mystical and surreal

A 1941 article quotes one W.M. Buswell, who in 1933 described his exploration of the Everglades as follows: “Gliding across the many colored waters of Florida Bay this warm summer-like afternoon I seem to have been transported to Fairyland where there is no such thing as worry and depression. This is the heart of nature with nothing but beauty on every hand” (Morrison 1941). Through his experience, we are transported into a land of myth and legend, where anything might happen. The ENP is thus described as a magical wilderness, reflecting a settler colonial structure that values the mysterious and awe-inspiring qualities of America’s unique landscape, a territory worth occupying. Morrison himself refers to the saw grass prairies as a “trackless land of sleepy tranquility” (Morrison 1941). Describing dusk, Morrison poetically

shares how “Life had come into a dead place at the close of day; many sounds were breaking an abysmal stillness and the very skeletons of the trees took on a softly luminous glow... The stars came out above, night closed down, and another day was written into the ageless history of that mangrove wilderness” (Sprunt 1944). This depiction of dusk setting over the Everglades encapsulates the mystical/surreal mystique.

An even earlier article describes the landscape as follows: “Stunted trees without a vestige of foliage presented a most sinister spectacle. Dismal gray moss, greenish lichens clothed the trees in a spectre-like garb; bright orange moss on the limbs, drooping like Neptune’s locks... A hushed silence hung over the scene and added to the oppressive gloom... so unreal the landscape seemed” (Williamson 1936). It is this unreal, somewhat ominous landscape that is part of the appeal. A ‘proper’ wilderness should be so far removed from common human experience that it can almost be frightening. A much later author writing in *Popular Mechanics* describes how “Florida’s Everglades become mysterious, even ominous at night; lonely pools turn black and darkness engulfs the trees on scattered jungle islands. This is the killing time” (Hartley 1966). In *Nature* magazine the author describes the Glades as “remote, mysterious... guarded by natural defenses” (Cahalane 1947). Another article in *Nature* magazine describes it as “a strange country, a land of anomalies and the grotesque” (Small 1937). These narratives of a mysterious wilderness produce the appeal of the Everglades through adventure, and highlight it as a last frontier of a settler colonial society. And yet the ENP deviates in some ways from this norm – the unknowable is emphasized, but as an ecologically and biologically oriented Park in reality it enables a truer, deeper knowledge of the place in the quest to understand the unknowable. Below are images of the “wierd and mysterious” mangroves and swamps of the Everglades.



Figure 8. Mangrove swamps. From “Mangroves and Mystery: Such, in short, is the story of the proposed Everglades National Park.” in *American Forests*. 1936.

Treasured patrimony

Americans were enthralled with the rugged, wild landscapes of the West. The purity of the wilderness spaces as wild and unknowable on the other side of a frontier gave them a dual value. On the one hand, the goal of the National Park System was to preserve this wildlife and wild landscape for its own sake. Equally important however was the preservation of these spaces for the enjoyment of future generations as part of American national patrimony. Runte argues: “just as Europe retained custody of the artifacts of Western civilization, so the United States might sanctify its natural wonders” (Runte 2010: 9). Impressive scenery became a cultural icon and asset, and this reflects the almost-necessary emphasis on land and territory present in settler colonial societies. For how does a society without “deep” settler history, without historic man-made monuments create its own sense of patrimony and distinctiveness, and still avoid the dispossession of the indigenous peoples already in the landscape?

Preservationists wanted to save these economically marginal natural landscapes for their own sake, but other groups shifted the focus to use “by democratizing access and by identifying American wilderness scenery with cultural nationalism” (Tyrrell 2012: 2). The monumental landscape’s “fabled geysers, waterfalls, canyons, and other ‘curiosities’ engrossed the nation as a cultural repository” (Runte 2010: 30). The idea to create National Parks thus stemmed in part from the need to save the land for future generations: “out of the excesses of a country in the making grew the conviction of national parks. Before changing the land, Americans ought to know it in the original. Never would such beauty come again” (Runte 2010: xviii). The parks and what they contain are cultural icons, intimately tied to America’s status as a settler colonial society. The landscape as patrimony therefore has distinctive qualities in a settler colonial societies.

The Everglades region is considered a national treasure; Michael Grunwald in his history of the Everglades calls it “the ecological equivalent of motherhood and apple pie” (Grunwald 2006b: 4). Like European monuments of Western civilization, these Parks are monuments of a uniquely American rugged landscape that, as Frederick Jackson Turner would argue, is integral to American character traits of individualism and the pioneering adventurer spirit. Though these traits are generalizations of just one component of American national identity, linking the landscape to identity does seem to have some merit. It can be argued that these traits were only able to develop in part because settlers were confronted with a ‘virgin’ landscape so different and wild that it needed these strengths to be conquered and made productive. Like the other Parks, there is also an element of preserving the wild frontier so critical to settler colonial societies – once the West was ‘lost’, the ENP became the figurehead for the last of the American frontier, a final wilderness, symbolic of a settler colonial past, all the more in need of preservation. Drawing on the dichotomization of nature from culture, the positive results of saving the Everglades were quickly apparent with the return of native wildlife and helping to re-establish a balanced ecosystem.

A frontier worth saving

In a 1951 article entitled “Rangers patrol the Everglades,” the region is described as being “like nothing else. That’s why, of course, this ‘last frontier’ of subtropical wilderness was selected for preservation” (Williams 1951). The landscape of the Everglades National Park is thus considered a national treasure worth preserving. A 1983 publication by the Friends of the Everglades proclaims “the channelization of the Kissimmee [an] outstanding example of the frontier-hangover belief that natural areas are worthless unless used to produce products directly measurable in dollar values. Although we now know better, we still don’t put dollar signs on

good health, or clean water, or non-consumable plants and animals that are components of natural systems. It's only after all these good things are lost and we have to pay millions for substitute hardware and medicines that we come to realize that nature's free gifts were priceless, not worthless" (Friends of the Everglades 1983).

As previously indicated, National Parks are based on the lack of traditional economic and productive value, and the idea that the scenic or majestic landscapes can have aesthetic value. The Friends of the Everglades reference yet another regime of value - one that considers the biological diversity and import of these natural places as priceless. The landscape becomes valuable beyond economic measure – that is, the value is not in economics but in human health and spiritual well-being, which relies on the health of the global environment and local ecosystems. Frome calls the landscape “a treasure of the nation” (Frome 1968). And indeed this fits with the broader ideology of National Parks in a settler colonial society wherein the Parks are considered part of our nation's cultural heritage (in parallel to European heritage of Western civilization monuments), and thus treasures to be preserved. Interestingly, as Frome argues, part of the value of land lies in its perennial preservation: “the Everglades and other remnants of the original land become steadily more valuable by remaining as they have always been” (Frome 1968). In “Rangers Patrol the Everglades,” poachers are condemned for considering it “their right to plunder the jewels of this land” (Williams 1951). Although the “jewels” of the land (wild orchids, alligator skins, etc.) may have a monetary value as they can be sold, at this time, the value is in the land's potential to provide physical and emotional well-being to humans, a well-being that depends on the health of the land and wildlife being preserved.²¹

²¹ Of course it should be noted that valuation of the land changes regularly according to broader social movements, practices, etc.

This rhetoric of treasure is part of the frontier experience unique to a settler colonial society. Given the nostalgia for a wild west that was lost, the desire to protect this treasure, this last frontier, is powerful. At the Park's dedication ceremony, Senator Pepper remarked: "Amid these scenes of enchanting interest today the President of the United States and the Governor of Florida rededicate to nature and to the people, this vast area of half a million acres which has ever been nature's majestic own. Hereafter and for all time it belongs only to nature, to nature's God, and to the American people. For today this primeval expanse, containing vast acres where white man has never set foot, becomes the twenty-eighth national park". He spoke of a "museum of nature" which "to the people's Federal Government and to the National Park Service we happily commit the protection and care of this rare and beautiful treasure for the help and happiness of all the American people. May it long be a comforting refuge to those who seek inspiration and satisfaction at the shrines of nature" (Pepper 1947). These words encapsulate all the narratives we have thus far examined. They call forth the imagery of an untouched, expansive wilderness teeming with wildlife, a mysterious and mystical treasured place to which man can escape.

This is all the more true because the park was developed just as the Western frontier was closing – its establishment thus allowed the frontier myth a final holdout and "enacted American stewardship over the land, in a nationalist articulation of preservation as a sign of American progress" (Cattelino 2009). It is the last frontier of the true American wilderness, a "shrine of nature" which must be preserved at all costs. Though the intents have since been expanded beyond pleasure, the primary goal of the parks was to conserve from profiteers "great and unusual works of nature, and interpreted in terms of public recreation" (Kieley 1940).

Furthermore, if American character is based in part on frontier experiences (adventure, individualism, pioneering spirit), then the epic landscapes and beasts of wilderness as one key feature of the American geographical and cultural identity must be preserved. This conception of natural spaces is thus two-fold – in part to preserve *scenery* and *wild life*, and secondly and perhaps more importantly to ensure this wild life and scenic landscape can be enjoyed for generations to come.

CONCLUSION

At the Park's dedication in December, 1947, President Harry S. Truman remarked: "Here are no lofty peaks seeking the sky, no mighty glaciers or rushing streams wearing away at the uplifted land. Here is land, tranquil in its quiet beauty, serving not as the source of water but as the last receiver of it. To its natural abundance we owe the spectacular plant and animal life that distinguishes this place from all others in our country... Here we may draw strength and peace of mind from our surroundings" (Truman 1947). Indeed, this remark best encapsulates all of the issues at hand – wilderness as an untouched, mysterious frontier space teeming with wildlife, a national treasure.

In the case of the Everglades National Park, popular literature narratives serve as a lens through which to discover a piece of America's conceptualization of nature and wilderness. In my analysis I have found that in terms of National Parks, the ever-evolving wilderness ideology in a settler colonial society revolves primarily around three themes. For a place to be considered a wilderness, it must be unpopulated yet alive with wildlife, a vast landscape across a frontier that separates civilization from the yet-to-be civilized, and ultimately unknowable. Its very expanse

allows for a sense of grandeur and immeasurability, and the lack of inhabitants yet abundance of dangerous and exotic wildlife (often inclusive of American Indians) reinforces the frontier separation of wilderness from society.

These themes reflect a settler colonial wilderness ideology that draws on a modernist dichotomization of nature from culture. As early as 1968, the interconnection between the social and the natural in the Everglades region was recognized: “the park is a many-sided spectacle in its own right, but is not an island apart from the land around it. It should be seen, enjoyed, and understood in connection with choice related areas nearby” (Frome 1968). However, in spite of movements towards considering landscape as both human and nonhuman intertwined, in cases like the Everglades there was lasting value in separating nature from culture, often protecting wilderness spaces from encroachment in the process. Deep ecological and biological knowledge of the Everglades ecosystem (awareness of the ‘beasts and flowers’ advocated by Tsing, 2006), as evidenced by the first Park Superintendent Dan Beard’s monthly reports of the wildlife and water level status, as well as biological studies underway in the Park (see Beard, 1947-1957), was thus made possible by the very dichotomous separation of man from nature and culture from wilderness that is often refuted.

An awareness of the settler colonial underpinnings of American ideologies of wilderness provides tools necessary for a more complete understanding of America’s relationship to nature. I would further argue that the focus on preserving this ‘wilderness’ has contributed to a deeper contemporary understanding of the interconnections between nature and culture in the region, promoting more holistic water and landscape policies and practices so critical to the landscape

for both its human and nonhuman denizens.²² Analyzing the narratives of the Everglades region and National Park thus provides a case study for exploring the influence of settler colonialism on defining nature and wilderness in America, and serves as a reminder for the usefulness of nature / culture dichotomies in the preservation of our natural spaces.

²² Policies such as the 1994 Everglades Forever Act imposing water quality standards for agriculturalists including US sugar, and farmers' Best Management Practices regarding phosphorous loads in their runoff, reflect this shift.

REFERENCES CITED

- “A brief history of the national park service.” 1940. In *National Park Service* website. Retrieved on May 2, 2012. http://www.cr.nps.gov/history/online_books/kieley/kieley3.htm
- Basso, Keith. 1996. *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- Beard, Dan. 1947-1958. Everglades National Park Superintendent’s Monthly Reports.
- Bird, John. Nov 1960. “They’ll never tame the Everglades.” *Saturday Evening Post*
- Braun, Bruce. 2002. *The intemperate rainforest: nature, culture, and power on Canada's west coast*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Brown, Andrew. 1948. “Haunting Heart of the Everglades” *National Geographic Magazine*
- Cahalane, Victor. Dec. 1947. “The Everglades – Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.” *Nature Magazine*
- Casey, Edward. 1996. “How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena,” in S. Feld and K. Basso (eds), *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe: SAR Press, 13-52.
- Cattelino, Jessica R. 2009. “Florida Seminoles and the Cultural Politics of the Everglades.” Unpublished.
- _____. 2010. "Anthropologies of the United States". *Annual Review of Anthropology*.
- _____. 2011. "Thoughts on the U.S. as a Settler Society (Plenary Remarks, 2010 SANA Conference)". *North American Dialogue*. 14 (1).
- Cronon, William. 1983. *Changes in the land: Indians, colonists, and the ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- _____. 1987. "Revisiting the Vanishing Frontier: The Legacy of Frederick Jackson Turner". *The Western Historical Quarterly*. 18 (2): 157-176
- _____. 1996. *Uncommon ground: rethinking the human place in nature*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Department of the Interior press release. 1931.
- Douglas, Marjory Stoneman. 2010 [1947]. *The Everglades: river of grass*. Florida: Pineapple Press.

- Eisenstaedt, Alfred. 1952. "The Everglades: Wildlife abounds in grass-clad Florida jungle." *Life* Everglades National Park first-issue postcard. December 1947.
- Frome, Michael. 1968. "The Everglades: Where Man May Escape from Man." *Southern Living Magazine*.
- Gelder, Ken, and Jane M. Jacobs. 1998. *Uncanny Australia: sacredness and identity in a postcolonial nation*. Carlton South, Vic., Australia: Melbourne University Press.
- Griswold, Oliver. 1948. "Have we Saved the Everglades?" *The Living Wilderness*
- Grunwald, Michael. 2006a. "Everglades: The nation's storied wetland is the focus of the world's largest environmental restoration project. But will that be enough?" *Smithsonian Magazine*
- _____. 2006b. *The swamp: the Everglades, Florida, and the politics of paradise*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Head, Lesley. 2000. *Second nature: the history and implications of Australia as Aboriginal landscape*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.
- Hoey, Brian. 2010. "Place for Personhood: Individual and Local Character in Lifestyle Migration". In *City & Society*, 22 (2): 237-261
- Kieley, James. 1940. "A Brief history of the National Park Service" *US Department of the Interior*
- Krech, Shepard. 1999. *The ecological Indian: Myth and history*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Kupper, Patrick. 2009. "Science and the National Parks: A Transatlantic Perspective on the Interwar Years". *Environmental History*. 14 (1): 58-81.
- Massey, Doreen. 1984. "Introduction: Geography Matters." *Geography Matters*. Cambridge University Press, 1-11.
- Morrison, Kenneth. Dec. 1941. "The Florida Everglades, perhaps the site of our next National Park, is – America's Last Frontier." *Nature Magazine*
- "National Park Service Organic Act." 1916. In *National Park Service* website. Retrieved on May 18, 2012. http://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/FHPL_NPSOrganic1.pdf
- Ogden, Laura. 2011. *Swamplife: people, gators, and mangroves entangled in the Everglades*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- O'Reilly, John. Jan. 1940. "South Florida's Amazing Everglades." *National Geographic Magazine*
- Pennekamp, John. 1956. Correspondence.
- Pepper, Claude. 1947. *Remarks at the Dedication Ceremonies for Everglades National Park.*
- Raffles, Hugh. 2002. *In Amazonia: A Natural History.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Robertson Jr., William. 1989. *Everglades – The Park Story.* Florida National Parks and Monuments Association, Inc.
- Runte, Alfred. 2010. *National parks: the American experience.* Lanham, Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing.
- Saal, Hubert. 1957. "Last wilderness – Everglades National Park." *Town and Country*
- Simmons, Glen, and Laura Ogden. 1998. *Gladesmen: gator hunters, moonshiners, and skiffers.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida.
- Small, John K. 1937. "The Proposed Everglades National Park, U.S.A." *Nature Magazine*
- Smith, Neal. 1992. "Geography, Difference and the Politics of Scale." In Doherty, J., Graham, E. & Malek, M., eds., *Postmodernism and the Social Sciences.* Eds London: Macmillan.
- Spence, Mark David. 1999. *Dispossessing the wilderness: Indian removal and the making of the national parks.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sprunt Jr., Alexander. Mar-Apr 1944. "Strange Wilderness." *Audubon Magazine*
- Tsing, Anna. 2004. "Chapter 5: A History of Weediness." In *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 171-204.
- Truman, Harry S. 1947. *Address at the Dedication Ceremonies for Everglades National Park.*
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. 1975. "Place: An Experiential Perspective." *Geographical Review* 65 (2): 151-165.
- Turner, Frederick Jackson. 1894. *The significance of the frontier in American history: address delivered at the forty-first annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, December 14, 1893*
- _____. 1960. *The significance of the frontier in American history.* El Paso, Texas: Printed at Texas Western College Press for Academic Reprints.

Tyrrell, Ian. 2012. "America's National Parks: The Transnational Creation of National Space in the Progressive Era". *Journal of American Studies*. 46 (1).

Unknown. 1983. "For the future of Florida – Repair the Everglades." *Friends of the Everglades pamphlet*

"Wilderness Act." 2012. In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved on May 12, 2012.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilderness_Act

Williams, Verne. 1951. "Rangers patrol the Everglades." *Popular Mechanics*

Williamson, W. Adrian. Feb. 1936. "Mangroves and Mystery: Such, in short, is the story of the proposed Everglades National Park." *American Forests*

Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native". *Journal of Genocide Research*.