Environmental Discourses and Cultural Identity on American Waterways: Regional Folklore, Folk Practice, and Natural Responsibility

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

At the University of Missouri

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in English

Ву

JACKSON MEDEL

Professor Elaine Lawless, Thesis Supervisor

JULY 2011

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School,

have examined the thesis entitled

ENVIRONMENTAL DISCOURSES AND CULTURAL IDENTITY ON AMERICAN WATERWAYS: REGIONAL FOLKLORE, FOLK PRACTICE, AND NATURAL RESPONSIBILITY

Presented by Jackson Medel

A candidate for the degree of

Master of Arts

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Elaine Lawless

Professor Joanna Hearne

Professor James Sandy Rikoon

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Elaine Lawless, for her infinite patience, unwavering support, and expressed confidence in both myself and this project, not to mention all of the guidance and her wealth of experience that she so generously gave to me. I thank Dr. Joanna Hearne for her always challenging and constructive comments and questions, as well as the time and patience that she devoted to this project. I also thank Dr. Sandy Rikoon for his time and patience in waiting for and reading this thesis. I would like to thank my fellow graduate students for all of their support, ideas, and questions during the process of researching and writing this thesis: Todd Richardson, Claire Schmidt, Darcy Holtgrave, Jenni Spitulnik, Luanne Roth, Eric Dragseth, Tom Fontana, Rebecca Mouser. A final thank you is extended to all of the staff and faculty of the English Department at the University of Missouri for providing me with the opportunity to do this work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgementsii
Prologueiv
Introductionv
Chapter 1: Performing the River-rat1
What has been my religious experience?
Narrative and Performance Conception
Critical Grounding
Conclusions and Directions
Chapter 2: A Desert River Trip18
Chapter 3: Related Folklore and Other Scholarship34
Introduction
Folklore studies and the outdoors
Related cultural geography and religious studies on landscape and the outdoors
Conclusion
Chapter 4: Vernacular Spirituality among River-rats44
A Vernacular Spiritual Lens
Magic, Belief, Practices
Conclusion
Conclusion65
Works Cited68
Bibliography

Prologue

It is important to say that this MA thesis is the beginning only of my scholarly attention to river-rat culture. It had been my intention to make this thesis based on ethnographic research and interviews. However, in the time allotted for the completion of the thesis, I had to postpone the interviews until the research phase of my dissertation work. This thesis is, however, ethnographic in the sense that it is based on my own personal experiences on the river for as long as I can remember. Doing this work has coalesced my own understanding of river culture beyond my own personal experiences, helping me place individual, collective, and American perception of human/nature interaction into a wider perspective.

The classes I have taken at the University of Missouri during my master's coursework have helped me stage my new understandings of folklore, performance, and literature through a direct interaction between personal narrative, performance presentation, ethnographic analysis, and ecological awareness to build a perspective on river-rat folk culture and identity. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the values embedded within folklore studies and the holistic, contextual nature of academic study. This thesis represents a first step into further ethnographic study of river-rat folk groups and the larger recreational paddling community.

Introduction

The material presented in this thesis is intended to provide evidence of the folk group characteristics of river-rats and white-water paddlers. The group identity, and the conceptualizations carried with it, form the central focus of this project and are contextualized by academic perspectives from folklore, performance studies, and environmental awareness. By taking an inter-disciplinary perspective in keeping with the scholarly heritage of folklore studies, I have attempted to delineate the importance and relevance of whitewater paddling in the formation of individual and communal identity for the people who engage in this activity and assert the groundwork of a methodology for further ethnographic study of these types of groups.

Chapter one provides an auto-ethnographic performance narrative from my own experiences which is focused on the spiritual awareness and understanding that being a river-rat has developed in my own life. The energy and texture that performance lends to the presentation of narratives, ethnographic or otherwise, creates a representation of the folk culture of river-rats and the way that the particular method of physical and mental engagement with the river informs and shapes personal and communal beliefs, practices, and attitudes.

Chapter two presents a narrative of a typical river trip from my own personal perspective. The experiences, events, feelings, conversations, and locations are not

specific to any one trip, though it is set in the context of a particular trip on a particular river, but drawn from multiple trips during my own lifetime of running rivers. This chapter focuses on providing thick description of the river trip experience and a sense of how individuals communicate and interact in this type of setting. The purpose is to provide a more detailed context for a folkloric analysis of this community of practice.

Chapter 3 contains an overview of relevant scholarship from folklore studies on the interaction between human communities and nature. The cultural functions of rituals, specific outdoor settings, beliefs, and practices are examined by several scholars and their interpretations serve to provide context for my own analysis of the rituals and beliefs at hand. Scholarship from cultural geography provides further methods and frameworks for the interpretations presented in this project on the relationship between human communities and the landscapes that they live and work in. Discussion of academic work in religious studies that examine the connection between new, informal ways of approaching religion and the specific aquatic contexts and recreational activities that they form in provides useful and relevant ways of interpreting the folk culture and beliefs of whitewater paddlers.

Chapter 4 asserts the presence of vernacular spirituality among river-rat communities. Several rituals that invoke an ambiguous set "river gods" are examined as tangible folk evidence of these types of belief systems. The direct interaction between the human and the river, that whitewater paddling entails, creates a necessary

identification with that environment and this is expressed through the rituals and practices of river-rats. The presence of these types of beliefs and interpretations is also evidenced in the preceding performance script. These beliefs and practices are strongly influenced by the variety of discourses that make up the modern American culture from the environmental, to the artistic, to the historical.

Chapter 1:

Performing the River-rat

What has been my religious experience?

I've had a good life. Mostly fulfilling, sometimes exciting, enough pleasure mixed with the pain to know how good I have had it. And that's the thing, right? Finding what works and what doesn't?

You know, my first memory, the first thing I can clearly remember, is a thunder storm. Jagged lightning and cracks of thunder directly above me, angry clouds and big, fat drops of rain. I remember looking up through the frame made by the gunwales and thwarts of my father's canoe. I remember being terrified and bundled tight by my parents. I couldn't have been much more than 13 or 14 months old at the time and my parents had taken me out to Island Park to go camping. I don't remember a lot of my childhood, memory is cloudy and unclear for me but I do remember that storm, framed by that old canoe.

When I was in second grade, this kid asked me what church I went to (probably he asked what ward my family went to) and I said, "I don't go to church." His response was that if I didn't go to church, I didn't believe in god. I remember being stunned, insulted, and confused. I wasn't angry, really, or feeling a "righteous sense of indignation," I think it was like, "That was rude, you're a dick." Probably, it was more like, "You're a poopy pants and I'm gonna go play Transformers."

Now, you have to know that where I grew up in south eastern Idaho, is a place where the Mormons in Salt Lake City say, "Damn, those guys are Mormon." I grew up 5 miles outside of a town of 700, playing by myself in the sage brush and juniper covered foothills of the Caribou National Forest. Everyone around us, and I do mean everyone, went to the Mormon churches that dot the towns and can be spotted in each from I-15 as it cuts north to south through the deserts and forests of the Rocky Mountains and the canyon country of the Southwest. I don't remember precisely but I know that shortly after this incident, my mother declared we were going to start going to church. I was and still am very close with my mother and I have shared a lot of my life with her, so I am sure that I told her about that kid and that is part of why we started going. I know that in later years my mum has told me and my sister that we started going to church because she wanted to give us "ammunition against the Mormon kids."

As I said, I have shared a lot with my mom and even though I don't really remember this, it always sounds familiar when she tells the story. She told me, after we had been going to the Inkom Community Bible Church, one of the few churches in the area that wasn't LDS, for some amount of time that we came home from church one Sunday and I told her that my Sunday school teacher had said to us that AIDS was god's curse on the homosexuals and that I said to her, "But that's not true, Mom." Often she talks about her pride at this point in the story. Another time at this church, and this one I remember all by myself, during the portion of the service when anyone in the congregation can stand up and make announcements or ask for prayers or whatever, this older woman stands up, I think she was the pianist/organist, and says, "I just

wanted to tell everyone that Disney movies are inspired by Satan and blah, blah, blah [probably something about banning them and/or speaking out against them]." Now, I never have been nor am I now a supporter of Disney but I just remember thinking, "That's stupid, I don't even like Disney and that's just ridiculous." After maybe 2 years, we stopped going to church.

I think my mother wanted to raise us to be Christian, I think she has a faith system that is based on Christianity but truthfully we never really talked about it. My father was raised in the Mexican American Catholic tradition but he doesn't practice and I don't think he really holds to it in any real way. As I said, our family has never really talked about beliefs and faith much. I have always felt a strange disconnect from my Hispanic heritage, not being raised as a Catholic has created a barrier for me in truly identifying with that part of my family, not to mention the fact that our closest blood relatives were ten hours away. I have always self-identified as a Mexican-American even if I don't really present that way but I have also always had a layer of abstraction and distance from not only that part of my heritage but also that part of my family.

Sometimes I wish that my parents had raised us to be Catholic, then at least I would have that frame of reference, shit, I don't even think I was ever baptized as a christian let alone a Catholic.

One year, probably when I was 14 or 15 years old, our family was on a river trip on the Main Salmon River in Central Idaho. It was the second day, I think and we had planned a lay-over day at Magpie Creek camp, a beautiful camp with a large sandy bank, a small but excellent eddy for swimming, and various trees and plants that

typically only grow in the Pacific Northwest, plants you wouldn't expect to see in a high mountain desert. A layover, by the way, is when you camp for two nights at a single camp rather than the usual one night, well it may have been a pseudo-layover in that we only floated for about an hour, covering maybe five miles, so that it just felt like a layover. Anyway, that evening some of the old rats, who I have known for years and really are a part of my family, gathered us young people and the newbies together and took us for a short walk through the forest to Magpie Creek. This is a clear, cold mountain stream that pours directly into the river. In this creek someone has built a small dam that created a pool about 5 or 6 feet long, 4 or 5 feet wide and about 3 feet deep. Once we arrived these old rats said that we were going to have a baptism, a "baptism into the religion of the river gods." So, one by one these two men took each of us into the pool and without ceremony, words, or anything took us in their arms and lowered us into the water. I remember it being very cold and I remember the rush of air out of my lungs when I was plunged under the water and I also remember the gratitude I felt for the warm summer air that replaced the cold, penetrating chill of the creek. And that was that, once everyone had been baptized we headed back to camp, back to our drinks, back to our dinners, back to our smokes. Looking back I know that this was a pivotal moment for me, I remember feeling a sense of fulfillment that I never had experienced before, a fulfillment that has always been a part of my experiences on the water. I can't say that the baptism made me feel the connection I have to my environment, to the rivers that I love so much, but I know that, in a way, it helped me to

see the sacred in the world and to see that love and acceptance are there for each of as long as we are able to open our eyes to it and to the wonder that is all around us.

I have found peace and love and happiness in my experiences on the water and I can honestly say that I always feel a pure happiness when I am on the water and using my paddle to quide my boat. I feel a communion with the world around me and I feel a balance and a wholeness that is often missing in the rest of my life. An important lesson that I learned very early on when my old man was teaching me to row his old dory was that you can never beat the river, you can never overpower the river, it will always be stronger than you, but you can reach a distinct and important balance where you work with the flow of the river. Rather than trying to conquer the river (like climbers "conquer" mountains), you simply join the river and move with and within it. I also learned, perhaps the first time I was popped out of the boat in the middle of a rapid, that fearing the river is unproductive. That is something I always tell anyone I have as a passenger in my boat, after the requisite high-siding and in the drink safety talk, that they shouldn't fear this river. Yes, it **is** more powerful than you and it can easily kill you and destroy this boat but you shouldn't fear it. You should respect it and respect its power, that way you will be able to more effectively understand and react to it. Respect the river but do not fear it.

I remember the fear I felt when I was a baby on the floor of my father's canoe but I don't fear storms anymore. I don't fear the lightning or the thunder or even the after-effects of such storms anymore. Now, I only see the wonder and the power of the world around me.

Narrative and Performance Conception

As a student of folklore, ethnography, and literature, I have a vested interest in narrative and its power at social, political, and individual levels. I have been trained to analyze and interpret narratives, whether fictional or factual, and recognize patterns, strategies, and images to draw out the meanings and representations that are being utilized. I have been taught that narrative has empowering and transformational properties and that there is an important intersection between academic scholarship, personal narrative, and social activism. When I was asked to develop a performance script that emphasizes an issue of social justice, the first idea that came to my mind was to write a personal narrative related to my research project on river-rat folk culture. I had the idea that, while performance of other people's work is effective and tantalizing, telling my own story would be the most effective way for me to be able to create the type of performance that I wanted with the subject matter that was most interesting and important to me at both a personal and a professional level and would allow for me to craft a story that would provide important contexts of paddling culture. By creating a narrative that described the types of spiritual and religious experiences that I have had, both positive and negative, I felt that I would be able to talk about issues of religious bigotry and ostracism at the same time that I would be able to show an advocacy for open-mindedness in spiritual experiences and perhaps to be able to help other people recognize the value of environmental awareness and the importance of fostering that kind of critical ecological awareness in others. I feel that my narrative effectively

demonstrates the strength and growing importance of personal narrative as scholarship and activism and serves as an apt example of the formation of vernacular, folk beliefs within paddling communities.

I knew that in order to create an effective performance, I would need to know how I wanted to tell the story that I had put together. Various strategies came to mind, inspired by performances that I had seen and read about, where I would perform different actions to highlight parts of the narrative, move around the performance space in accordance with the subject, dress up in the "costume" of a river rat, smoke and drink beer, etc., but none of these ideas really struck home with me, not to mention being impractical. I considered the way that Tim Miller used objects as images of and within the stories he told. I thought about how Miller uses humor to enhance the performance and manipulate audience reception. But, again, I found that these ideas did not seem to work for my performance. When I read portions from E. Patrick Johnson's Sweet Tea, I found that I had a clear idea of how I wanted to perform my narrative. Johnson talks about how, in his book, and evidenced in his performance, he kept his questions in the interviews within the text of his performance because he found them important for maintaining the idea for the reader/audience that these interviews were conversations and keeping the questions in the performance text created an authentic representation of the narrator's stories. To further this goal, Johnson says "I also retain many of the narrators' stutters, pauses, and tangents to capture their voices in a way that does not render their speech 'sterile' and to capture the performative nature of southern speech in general" (9). I found this idea to be very important for how I wanted to perform my

story. I did not want to have an elaborate, highly constructed performance. Rather than seeing it as a performance piece, I wanted my audience to feel like they were being told a story in a reasonably informal, naturalistic way.

While my performance was scripted and actively constructed, these were stories that I knew, stories that I had thought about many times over the course of my life and I wanted my audience to see that in my performance. To work towards that goal, I kept E. Patrick Johnson in mind as well as M. Heather Carver and Elaine Lawless' 2009 book, *Troubling Violence*, as reference points for how to approach my own performance. Carver and Lawless write in a performative mode as they tell their own stories and present the stories of others within the context of the book itself and the performance troupe which served as inspiration for the book. The performance of interview extracts from the troupe, and Lawless' earlier book Women Escaping Violence, gave me the specific setting in which I wanted to perform my narrative. I wanted to perform my story as though I had been asked the question in an ethnographic/oral history interview, "What has been your religious experience?" It did feel artificial to craft a specific narrative, using literary and storytelling techniques such as apposition, with the notion of performing it as an unscripted answer to a question, but I felt that this setting would give me the necessary room to create a compelling and believable performance. Moving my performance towards a naturalistic, authentic style was a relatively simple matter: I would tell the stories off the top of my head. Rather than focus on memorizing all of the exact wording and order that I had written, I would let the narrative break apart and be told in the manner and order that it arrived in performance and I would have a natural

usage of pauses, filler words, and repetition to help create the feel and texture of an interview context.

An additional element of the interview context that I felt was extremely important within my performance was the conceptualization of my interviewer/interrogator. Rather than, to my perception, a more traditional theatrical method of performing as though the audience is not present, drawing on the notion of a suspension of disbelief, and addressing my remarks to a not-present interviewer, I chose to directly talk to my audience as though they were a collective interrogator. By making eye contact, looking around the audience, and often looking at no one in particular, I felt I would involve the audience in the performance as the impetus for the storytelling event. I felt that making the audience be at least passively involved in the narrative as the receivers of the story would help to make it effective for showing the real presence of religious discrimination and the ways in which an informal ideological view of the world can lead to true, meaningful social change and acceptance.

The notion that ethnographic research and performance can be brought together, as both scholarship and art, is an important idea which has large implications for me at both personal and professional levels. Combining these areas of interest helps me to understand the social impact that scholarship can have beyond the relatively narrow theoretical confines of much academic work. An important element of this activist feeling within scholarship is voiced by Della Pollock (2006):

Ideally, ethnographic work folds back on the researcher-subject, catching her in surprising, even disarming, processes of transformation. In so doing, it gives the lie to fantasies of activist instrumentality, as if we were in possessive charge of

the knowledge produced, rather than dispossessed and charged by it. We tend to ask, with the best of intentions: now that we know this, what are we going to do with it? (328)

Indeed, what are we to do with the information gleaned from ethnographic research? I believe that the use of performance as a representational medium for ethnographic description and narrative exemplifies the goals of social justice by making the stories of oppression, pain, violence, happiness, acceptance, rejection, love, hate unavoidable and relatable. My performance narrative, of religious experience as it formed in various social contexts and developed into a strong identification with whitewater rafting, and paddling in general, as the lens through which my beliefs were formed, helps to create a sense of the ethical shifts that social justice requires. The way in which a narrative performance impacts the audience at a personal level that goes beyond an academic audience and into the wider world creates a powerful identification with performer, narrative, and meaning that shows the great importance of this type of work for building towards a just global society.

Critical Grounding

As I was considering how to construct a performance script with an emphasis on social justice, one of the most important elements that entered my mind was the effectiveness of personal narrative as a tool for creating critical social consciousness.

The power of telling narratives is exemplified by performers such as Anna Deavere

Smith and Tim Miller who perform the stories of others and their own, respectively, and use those narratives to create positive change in others and foster the growth of acceptance for other beliefs, appearances, sexualities, and ideologies. It is important to

grasp the power of narrative not only because of the potential of the words themselves and the content that they carry but because of the ways in which the performance or oral presentation of them can increase that power. It is always interesting to see the ways in which performers create the appearance, feel, and cadence of other people who have been interviewed or recorded as they tell their own stories and provide their own perspectives. The way in which a person tells their own story carries a degree of significance that is difficult to define but important to include and interpret.

In the 2001 book, *Women Escaping Violence*, Elaine Lawless provides a powerful juxtaposition of the efficacy of social institutions versus spoken narrative:

Simply being there in that room with other women they see as *like them* provides the discursive potential for transformation. They are invited to share their story, and "story" here carries the weight of power and potential. However, that potential can be illusory, since the very institutions that have been established to "help victims" of domestic violence can actually victimize the victims again and again as the women seek to escape their physical abusers. (emphasis in original) (37)

This provides a clear instance where the telling of a story can both empower an individual and help them to grow and understand. Yet, the ways in which systems, both social and governmental, often serve to undermine the transformative powers of narrative indicate the primary importance of broadening the penetration of narratives such as the ones referred to above. If these stories were heard and taken in by a broader group of people the potential for change would be increased and the disparity between social systems and personal empowerment would be at least partially bridged. The notion of the political and social efficacy of narrative, performance, and art highlights the importance of these methods of representation for fostering individual

and social growth, as well as providing support for the critical usage of a variety of representational strategies in popular and academic presentation. Ethnographers such as Selva Raj in the 2009 article, "The Tie that Binds: Connecting Biography and Ethnography," put a degree of emphasis on being self-reflexive and directly addressing the ways in which researchers both affect and are affected by the settings in which they find themselves. More importantly, there is direct recognition of how the personal life of the researcher often provides both entrance and motivation for the work that they do, "Put differently, the kind of ethnography one does is determined, among other things, by the life-stages of the ethnographer. Drawing on my personal biography and ethnographic encounters, I propose to reflect on how shifts and changes in the ethnographer's personal and professional biography shape the ethnographic encounter" (Raj, 73). By making the direct connection between the personal life and professional choices of the researcher/ethnographer, Raj provides a clear window into the mutually influential world of research and action that provides strong support for a greater degree of critical reflexivity and the strength of the personal narrative as both scholarship and activism.

A clear example of the intersection between ethnographic scholarship, performance art, and social justice comes from Barbara Dennis' work with Theater of the Oppressed (TO), which is described in the 2009 article "Acting Up: Theater of the Oppressed as Critical Ethnography." In this article Dennis describes her use of TO in gathering ethnographic data on English language learners and teachers in a U.S. high school. Dennis draws special attention to how this method of ethnographic immersion

broke down of the borders between data collection and analysis and how that transgression served to enhance her own scholarship as well as the efficacy of TO as a tool for positive social change. This is one of the key ideas that strikes me as important in this context, using performance as a method of ethnographic interaction at the same time that it is actively working for social change, "Using theater as ethnography blurs the line between what is and what could be; in other words, between what is and what ought to be. Furthermore, it challenges uncomplicated notions of *naturalistic* and observation, seeking to find something new and to juxtapose what participants see in their own experiences with what they think about those experiences" (emphasis in original) (Dennis, 70). Where in traditional ethnography the researcher strives to have the least impact possible on the community, here, the emphasis is on actively re-shaping the community at the same time that the current conditions are being documented. The major cross-pollination between what ethnography is supposed to do (collect, record, describe) and what it can do (inform, educate, change) is important for conceptualizing the ways in which performance, as an ethnographic medium for research and representation, can serve the dual goals of description and activism.

The correlations between scholarship, ethnography, performance, art, and activism are clearly highlighted by many scholars and the importance of narrative within these areas is recognized at a variety of levels. A key observation that Della Pollock makes in her introduction to *Remembering: Oral History Performance* (2006) clearly demonstrates the centrality of narrative in the work of social change:

...[T]he essential of [sic] promise of oral history performance: that the body remembering, the bodies remembered, and the bodies listening in order to remember ("you remember, I told you...") will be redeemed in some kind of change---the small changes that come with repetition in different moments with different listeners; the large changes that might result from entering the memories of a whole body politic...into the human record of daily living. (2)

By conceptualizing scholarly and artistic pursuits as part of a narrative of change and social justice, recognizing how a story is told, shaped, and informed helps the receivers to understand how the story has re-shaped them in the receiving of it. The changes that occur in the audience of a performance or narrative event are the end goal of any project that works in the realm of social justice and the language that Pollock uses highlights how narrative, especially in performance, can serve didactic, transformational ends. This is the goal of work in social justice, to advocate for positive social change, and narrative is a powerful tool for creating those changes, for changing perceptions through enacted, embodied storytelling.

Conclusions and Directions

The way in which performance brings narrative into the world and puts the story into an actual body, whether its own or another's, is a key element of what makes performance an especially effective representational tool. Dani Snyder-Young (2010) says, "Body knowledge can be built in collaboration and in relationship with performance events, but it is fundamentally individualized, and individual audience members and participants in performance events have agency in how they interpret live performance" (887) and this idea of individuation in audience reception of performance and narrative events carries deep implications for how a performance is constructed.

The individual, specific changes that are wrought in each audience member are specific to them but also representational of the goal of social change, even if the changes are small or not in the specific direction that the researcher/performer intends. The way that a performance can embody a message and a narrative creates a broader appeal for potential audiences but also leads to change in the audience at different, individual levels and just creating the opportunity for dialogue through those changes, whatever they may be, is an important achievement. The intensity of performance provides a useful method with which to represent the experience of whitewater paddling and the formation of individual and folk identity among paddlers.

D. Soyini Madison (2006) says, "As critical ethnographers, we do not hide our selfhood and subjectivity, transparency is not an issue, nor do we make ourselves the primary subject of our own study. Instead, we are critical and self-reflexive of *how* we think about our positionality and the implications of our thoughts and judgments" (emphasis in original) (322) and I believe that this holds true as a key practice in ethnography and is especially important for auto-ethnographic projects, which Madison is critical of, "Although I find the term politically problematic, it is not just the term that is a problem but the content of any work, particularly ethnographic work, where the rootedness and embellishments of the self diminish the thickness and complexities of the encompassing terrain" (321). Clearly, the concern over looking inward too much when one is supposed to be looking outward is important to consider when the personal narrative of the researcher is intertwined with that of the research

storytelling, or interview or daily life, event is an important element of ethnographic wholeness and representation and should be critically pursued for both methodological and analytical reasons. The reasons and influences for a narrative event are important considerations in ethnographic analysis and the researcher is an important part of that dynamic. Indeed, it seems that the ethnographic researcher has some ethical and methodological obligations to share their story and provide their context for their participants in order to do effective research and the dialogic exchange between researcher and participant is an important element to recognize, especially as it relates to the effectiveness of representation and analysis.

performer of a personal narrative in a specific context. I chose the context of an ethnographic interview because I felt that the mediation provided by this conceptualization of my performance space allowed to me to authentically perform a scripted narrative as it might be told without preparation. I believe that the concept of social justice was brought in through my religious experiences of alienation, ignorance, and discrimination and my spiritual growth into an informal, non-religious environmentally-based world-view through my experiences as a river-rat. Matti Kappinen (2009) describes the role of rationality in the description and study of religion, asserting that rationality is of primary importance in delineating the difference between a truly religious belief and a customary practice based on religious belief and this idea has large implications for my particular performance and the way that paddling and paddling culture has shaped my beliefs. My belief in the world around me, and the way I

understand it through philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific lenses, is based on the idea that I live in a rational world where certain rules govern actions and reactions. I believe that there is a wholeness to the parts of our world, from the grains of sand that erode a riverbank to the complexity of bio-electrochemical signals that transmit our thoughts and actions, that carries over into the realm of social action. The wholeness that I perceive directly implies the mutually dependent nature of social and ecological systems, once a change has been effected on how an individual perceives the other people around them a change will occur in how they perceive the environment that they live in. Vice versa, if a change is effected in how people conceptualize their relationship to the environment, how they affect and are affected by changes in the ecological balance of natural systems, then there will be a subsequent change in how they perceive others and the differences that are present from individual to individual. Environmental justice is closely connected to social justice and by fostering the growth of one we can contribute to the growth of the other. Paddling provides a specific site of interaction within which it possible to create shifts in social structure, attitudes, and ideologies that make that growth possible.

Chapter 2:

A Desert River Trip

Around January and February the calls start going out. Announcements are made to friends and family about the receipt of permits, plans are made with great excitement, exuberance, and frustration. Often secretive and usually quite political, invitations for extended river trips mark the beginning of the paddling season for regulated rivers throughout the United States and the lottery system creates a competitive market where private and commercial boaters share the limited amount of permits. Once the calls are made, friends told and invited, the politics of personalities comes in to play as well as the dynamics between passengers, pilots, and boats. The old dogs with their systems, the new guys with shiny gear, the professionals with competitive skills and equally shiny gear, passengers of various sizes and shapes from the experienced river-rat to the never been camping type to the six year old child, these things and more must be balanced and discussed in the planning of the river trip.

When my father called me, a week before I was flying back to Idaho from Missouri, and asked me if I wanted to go on a trip on the Lower Owyhee, I was undeniably excited. Up until this point I had thought that there wasn't going to be a chance for me to go on a proper river trip this summer, so this question was entirely welcome. Of course, money concerns are always at issue when it comes to a river trip but you just can't pass this kind of thing up.

Immediately, the excitement set in. I began to plan and think about what gear I could conceivably take on the plane with me: drybags, those rubberized, waterproof bags for gear; tent's too big to pack, will have to borrow one from someone; my small sleeping bag, will have to borrow another one; flashlights; thermal underwear for the cold desert nights; both pairs of watersocks; splashjacket, quick drying and water proof; knife; quickdry, swimming shorts; water sandals.

I called my dad back and asked who all was going on the trip: my mother and father, Rebecca and myself, three old friends of our family, John, Chris, and Rey, and Rebecca's brother Jack. I would be borrowing John's newly acquired 16 foot Maravia raft. John ran his big 18 foot gray Avon raft, a veteran of many rivers and many trips. My dad had his brown, 15 foot Sotar cataraft (cat), composed of two separate pontoons connected by a frame. Chris was in his shiny green, 15 foot Aire cat. Four boats total, two people to a boat, we had ample space for gear, food, and comfortable passengers. My mom was my dad's passenger, Rebecca was mine, Jack rode with John, and Chris and Rey shared rowing duties.

Once I got in to Pocatello, the frantic gearing, and meeting, up began. I met my dad, Chris, Rey, and a couple other river-rat friends of ours at Chris' place to load up boats, or "the rubber," the evening before we headed out. All these guys were crowded around the trailer, drinking beer, and talking as they collectively changed out the bearings in the trailer. A cursory check earlier in the day had shown them that the bearings needed to be looked at which led to a search of hardware stores on a Sunday

for the proper pieces. A small group looked on as the work was finished. We talked about the work, and the search for parts, loaded the two cats onto the trailer, finished our beers, and talked about what time to meet.

"Well, if we say we should hit the road at 9, we should be able to roll out of town around 10," someone suggested.

"Why not 7 and try to count on 9?"

We ended up on the highway at 10 am the next morning.

After six hours on the road, and meeting with John near Boise, we arrived at Rome, Oregon, the put in for the lower section of the Owyhee. Quickly, we guided our two trucks with loaded trailers down the dirt ramp to the river. Unloading the cats, frames, dryboxes, coolers, un-inflated raft, drybags, camp chairs, and other sundry equipment, I began the process of getting the boat I was borrowing set up. It was a faded olive green, 16 foot Maravia raft, probably ten years old and obviously well used, "rolled up wet and dirty," as Rey said. Two dryboxes (large, steel, water-proofed boxes for carrying various items), with strips of foam padding that act as seating for a passenger in front and the pilot behind, sit in the forward and rear thwart positions on the frame with an opening for a large 125 quart cooler behind the forward drybox. The pilot's compartment consists of a plywood sheet attached by steel chains to the frame that acts as a stable platform for the pilot to stand on. On either side of the compartment are large rocket boxes for food, rain gear, cameras, and various "at hand"

types of items. In the rear area of the boat a mesh webbing is hung by the steel d-rings on the boat and loaded with the gear that is being carried such as drybags, firepans, groovers/shitters, water jugs, propane gas cylinders, cooking stoves, sleeping cots, etc.

Now, assembling a raft can be easy and straight-forward, for instance some people, like John, have everything ready to go. When we met him in Boise we just hooked his trailer up to Chris' rig and drove along, John keeps his gear ready to go and set. Perhaps the most experienced river-rat I have ever met, John just got help from the whole group of us and we lugged his basically geared up raft from the trailer to the water and all he had to do was secure drybags and a few other items and he was prepped. I, on the other hand, had a raft I had never used with a set up that I was unfamiliar with that was completely broken down. First things first, get the rubber inflated and sort the gear out. I told Rebecca, wife and deck-hand, to grab John's pump and get to work. Piles had been made during the unloading of the trucks and trailers in front of each boat and I checked out my pile: cooler full of ice with small, random items like milk, half-and-half (river-rats love their coffee), lettuce, cheese, fruit, hard-boiled eggs; dryboxes with dutch ovens, camp stove legs, rain gear, raft repair kit, first aid kit, spare life-jacket, snacks, beers, pumps; drybags with clothes and sleeping gear; and, last of all, the frame. I helped Rebecca top off the tubes and floor of the raft, asked John where the oarlocks were, they had been removed for easier transport on the trailer, and set to work attaching them to the frame with a socket wrench and hand wrench. As I started working, John told me how he had just bought the boat a few weeks earlier,

after a trip with someone, and hadn't seen the way they set up the boat, so I had my work cut out for me. Finally, the boat was set up for the night, dinner was called, a cold frittata with fresh salad and avocado. We sat up late at the packed put in (three other groups of four to ten people geared up while we were there) drinking wine and tequila, playing mandolin, and blues harp, and talking about other trips, at other times, on other rivers.

It was a cold morning: dew covered everything, demanding that our gear be dry before we pack it. Our camp got dried off and loaded up after a cold breakfast of coffee, pastries, and oranges. Water jugs were filled, raft tubes topped off, the delicate balance of gear loading and securing completed with the usual sweat and swearing. My mom gathers the group together around a piece of driftwood, we all place our hands on it, and she quietly asks that we have a safe trip and good time. She takes the stick and throws it into the current. Then, that first, sweet swing onto the river occurs.

I coil the stern line and loop it through itself on the flipline, which encircles the raft to assist in righting a boat if it flips, push the boat out into the deeper part of river and clamber on board while making sure to rinse the bankside mud from my sandals. We float down the open water pushing forward into the current to make time for our slightly slow start. Conversation between Rebecca and I drifts from the fantastic metamorphic landscape around us to our position on the BLM map to the occasional sightings of wildlife like redwing blackbirds, muskrats, finches, toads, and catfish. We pass slowly through the calm farmland section of the river before entering the Wild and

Scenic Owyhee Canyon. Large volcanic and chalk cliffs flank the entrance to the canyon and portend the contrasting land formations that define this landscape. Throughout the trip, the geologic history of the world confronted us: basalt layered upon chalk upon brown earth, with sheer, sometimes thousand foot cliff-faces: red-rhyolite and basalt towering over the river.

Just a small set of rapids, class 2 and 3 for the first day on the water. We floated for about 12 miles over the course of 3 hours and tied up at a small, narrow camp that, nonetheless, offered us a great downstream view and a nice kitchen area. When I tie up at camp the first thing to attend to is unloading the gear. Carrying equipment is generally a collective effort with different pieces spread out over all the boats, John, for instance had a loaded kitchen box on his boat that needed to go to camp while I was carrying the fire-pan, a required piece of equipment that makes Leave-No-Trace easy by keeping all the used charcoal ashes and any left-overs from a fire in a sealed container. Kitchen gear gets first priority so that the cooks for the night can do what they need to do, Rey and Chris made spicy, chile Colorado and ground beef with corn tortillas and beans on the side. My attention then turned to the groover, another piece of required equipment. Rafters are required on these rivers to follow Leave-No-Trace practices, which include the mandate to "pack it in and pack it out." This is accomplished in part by the groover, which most often consists of a bucket with a sealed lid and a light toilet seat, but this time was a fancy new groover with a pressure sealed plug, interior container, and integrated seat with a heavy seat cover. The whole rig was made of thick

plastic with two straps securing the seat and the interior chamber with mesh handles on the four sides for easy carrying and packing. For the last couple trips, I have been on the groover duty, carrying on my boat and setting up/tearing down the unpopular shitter, as I first heard it called. As I carried the now light but soon to be heavy container up to the riverfront property it was to occupy for the night, I thought about the trip on the Middle Fork of the Salmon that I had done a few years earlier. Some of the new folks on the trip had asked why we called it the groover and someone told them how, when rafting was becoming popular in the 60's and 70's, ammo cans and rocket boxes were, and continue to be, the standard dryboxes for river-rats rather than the purpose built dryboxes we use now. This extended to the groover. However, when people first started they didn't bring seats for rocket box, so when they used it they ended up with grooves along their backsides. This was news to me, I had always just accepted the name without question, but it did remind me of early trips from when I was a child and looking with doubt at the rocket box with the heavy duty garbage bag lining it and the flimsy seat, awkwardly perched atop.

After dinner, we watched as Jack fished for catfish from the high bank. Stories about trips and runs through the legendary falls at Lava and Crystal on the Grand Canyon cycled about, giant waves that swamp the largest of rafts, forcing the pilot to abandon their futile pulling and pushing, duck down and hang on to the footbar, just to stay in the boat. Fists, both figurative and literal were shaken, at the CCC for diverting the Portneuf River in Pocatello, Idaho into a cement canal. Someone notices movement

on the opposite bank. On a small sandbar, inside some willows, a giant river otter trots around. It seems to be looking for something and we all focused our attention on it. We watched it for probably five minutes asking what it could be doing, remarking on the way that the presence of an otter, frogs, an abundance of birds, and catfish in the river demonstrated the health of the eco-system. We watched as the animal, the size of a medium to large dog, entered the river and swam about the bank, disappearing into the rich, silty water.

The second camp in Chalk Basin was large, sandy with stands of thick willows. We played seemingly endless games of that standard river game, horseshoes. A back and forth of challenges and boasts, cheers at the double ringers and groans at the near misses, accompanied the game. We were interrupted only by a group of hikers from another camp, who happened to be with the Outdoor Program at Idaho State University and friends of some of the people on the trip. We all talked and caught up on some things, especially the large amount of people on the river, unusual for this little known stream. Fresh caught fried catfish served as an impromptu appetizer to dinner with its vat of wild rice, salad, juicy lamb chops, and strawberry rhubarb cobbler fresh from the dutch oven prepared by John and Jack.

After dinner, once the sun went down, Rebecca and I walked up the dry creek bed to the cliff-face. The chalky stone had rivulets of mud dried along its surface, the evidence of the process of erosion as it slowly wears down the soft material. Thick fins of earth sit along the base of the cliff, with steep slides of volcanic sand that crumbles at

the footstep, contrast with the large lumps of volcanic stone that strew various areas. Having been ejected from the lava flows on the opposite side of the canyon, the large igneous stones serve as evidence for the violence of the volcanic activity that shaped, and continues to shape, the landscape. We talk about the strangeness of the formations all around and the beauty of it. What at first appears to be a patch of white stone high on the cliff, actually resolves itself into a window through the cliff-face, we walk up a slide to the level of the first bench, perhaps fifty feet up the cliff, and watch the sky through it for several minutes. Slowly, we make our way back to the camp, the constant sound of the flowing river, our thermals, air-inflated sleeping pads, and sleeping bags.

The class 3- rapid, known as Long Sweetwater, is one of those rapids that is just pure fun. The flow we had, about 3200 cfs (cubic feet per second), gave us a generous amount of water in the river that kept us moving and made for large regular wave trains with minimal rock hazards and no real hydraulic holes. The rapid just makes sense and it is easy to see how someone gave it that name, it lasts for an extended stretch, maybe a quarter mile and it is a clean run. The amount of water in a river really determines its character and provides for great changes in the way rapids and other hazards should be approached. Long Sweetwater for instance, provides a fun ride at the optimum level we had whereas at lower water, 2000 cfs and below, it becomes more technical with pourovers and large rocks to avoid. Looking at high water, over 5000 cfs, the rapid would be washed out, not much more than riffles and small waves betraying its passage. Rapids can fluctuate on a river trip as the water level rises or sinks, creating a situation where a

party may take off of a river that looks completely different from the one they put on. The steady flow and clear weather we ended up with created predictable and solid rapids that challenged us and provided great rides. From the large pile of basalt that marks the center of the river in the class 3 Bulls-eye to the large slab on river right in class 3 Whistlingbird that creates a separate and dangerously small channel above the drop, the rapids serve as way-points of excitement, anticipation, and danger on the river, marking our progress as surely as the transitions between distinct geologic regions show us our progress down the canyon. The biggest rapid on this stretch of the Owyhee is Montgomery, a class 4 drop flanked by large boulders and followed by a large eddy and a camp on river right. We approached the rapid with an audience at hand, a couple people from the group in the camp had walked up to the boulders at the head of the rapid, and I told Rebecca to buckle her life-vest and clip the camera down. I stood up and watched, as John approached and ran through the rapid, reading it for myself and seeing the steep initial drop, probably 6-7 feet, which led to a huge hole left of center. The entrance was wide and open but that hole took up most of the left side of the river and a large, irregular wave train followed the hole along the right side with a wide turn below and continuing waves. I watched John's big raft slide past the hole and push along the big waves, it seemed to me that he went closer than was necessary to the right side, missing some of those big, fun waves crashing off below the hole. I set my line for myself and entered the rapid, easily missing the big hole and riding along its side, with the intent of catching the big waves without chancing the big, circulating hydraulic. I realized, then, why John had gone so far to the right, a smaller hole was just below the

large one, right in the center of the channel. I pushed forward to try and skim around it but the flow was too strong to make the move so late into the line. Abandoning the push, I performed a quick turn to the left by dropping my oar-blades into the current and pushing and pulling in opposite directions which allowed the raft to pirouette around the hole, skimming it and bouncing off of the drop into the wave train. We ran the rest of the rapid backwards with a sense of satisfaction.

We switched passengers for a couple of hours and Jack rode with me through Green Dragon Canyon, marveling at the massive thousand foot red volcanic walls, standing sheer to the river, caves at the riverside begging for exploration. We spotted a large eagle's nest high on the canyon walls and we talked about how as children we didn't appreciate these types of experiences. Jack has been an outdoors enthusiast all his life, hunting, fishing, camping, but this was his first river trip. He told me that he had never seen anything like this before in his life.

Mountain mahogany now appears with the occasional juniper tree standing out in reckless defiance to the willows coating the stream banks. Our camp was on a long beach above Jackson Hole camp, where, after an excellent enchilada pie dinner from the dutch oven prepared by my parents, I had heard there were petroglyphs, images carved or shipped into stone by humans, on the bank above Jackson Hole. I was excited and three of us walked along the bank, past the chatty foursome in the camp and up onto the bench above the beach. A loose grove of mountain mahogany persisted on the small flat that was scattered with large chunks of basalt. Trails of soft, brown sand wound

through the trees and rocks, leading us around the boulders. I immediately spotted an image, strikingly clear in the contrast between the dark stone and the lighter colored, grooved imprint with its regular shapes, dots, and lines. The air seemed to quiet, the insects and the river to be muted as we walked around this place, excitedly examining the images that the Paiute and Shoshone people had meticulously carved and rubbed into the material. I felt like I understood why they chose to make such lasting marks here, in this special place. The awareness of history always marks these trips, petroglyphs and pictographs are quite common, among other signs of human habitation and interaction like mines, ranches, and bridges, along rivers. The history of U.S. expansion, and the all too familiar story of subjugation and appropriation that defines it, seems always present and is poignantly enhanced by reminders such as these petroglyphs. This awareness and the way it marks the experience of these places is an important thing that impressed me at this grove of trees and stones but it also reminded me of the commonality and connections of experience. The apparently serpentine figures that marked the stone and the hashmarks seemed interpretable to me leading to questions about the purpose, but also to the knowledge that people have persisted here and found balance just as we find ourselves trying to accomplish. The drive to make marks, to recreate the images we see in our lives, the moments of love, profoundness, and terror that humans experience in this shared existence was present in this place. I saw an image of a heron or a crane, with its head up looking at the sun and the river flowing at its feet. At first glance, I called it "chickens in space." The next day on the

water, Rebecca and I saw a Great Blue Heron, standing on a boulder at the river's side, with its head titled up and back, staring up a wash.

We had met a group at the put in and lent them a pump, talking with them several times as we passed each other on the river. The take out was about four miles downriver, so they were taking their time getting on the water. We stopped at their camp, seeing that they were packing up and asked if we could take the spot after they headed out to which they happily agreed. The day was long and slow. We had hit the water early and gone less than ten miles through some fun, quick rapids, leaving the canyon proper. We sat around, drinking and chatting under the sun shade, marked up at the corners with people's signatures, drawings, and words from previous trips which we each add our own words to. A leisurely lunch of sandwich wraps, chips, fruit, and cookies perpetuates the pattern of the trip. The older men gather at the boats, as per usual, talking and smoking while others go for hikes, read, or nap. The knowledge that this is the last day on the river intensifies the experience and tinges it with a kind of wistfulness. We have a mess of left over food for dinner: pork chops, diced and fried with bell peppers, onions, mild Serrano chiles, and more salad, followed by dutch oven brownies. After dinner, the stash of Bull Durham is tapped and hand rolled cigarettes are shared by the group, passed around with the cheap tequila, in a communal, celebratory, smoke and drink. We watch the stars and talk about the river and the rapids we ran. My dad quietly reminds me that we are a group and that we need to watch out for each other, gently chiding me for floating mostly alone and out of sight

during the day, parental concern bleeding through his voice. We light a small fire, the first of the trip, and arrange ourselves around it. People slowly, in ones and twos, peel off for their sleeping bags. Rebecca and I sit up late, as the fire burns to hot coals, and watch as the moon rises over the ridge.

As we floated the last few miles to the take out, regret, but also an eagerness for the next trip, fills the silences. The clear skies had finally broken and dark, rain clouds were moving in. We pulled up to the side of the dirt ramp, other groups were finishing their de-rigging, and began the controlled, yet haphazard and frenetic, de-rigging process. Unloading the cargo section and making piles as the trucks and trailers are moved into position, the usual sweating and swearing begins. Oars are stacked in trailers, straps are piled in buckets and jokingly argued over, frames disassembled, and the less experienced in the group are put to the job of deflating the rubber, which consists of opening valves and using the body to push the air out. As the trucks and trailers get loaded, the rain begins to drizzle down after five clear and sunny days. The decidedly scrappy-looking lunch items are set out on a picnic table, people switch out of wet swimming gear into clean clothes reserved for the drive home, and we eat a last lunch as a group. The drive home seems long and dreary as the rain falls. We drop John off at his truck in Boise, shake hands, and give well wishes.

Finally, everyone is dropped off at their respective homes and the group is mostly dispersed. The usual last phases of de-rigging occur the next afternoon, when my dad and I unload the truck at his storage unit, joined by Rey and Chris to unload my

dad's cat from the trailer. Some jokes are tossed around, admiration for the new steel Willey drift boat in the storage unit go back and forth. We jokingly ask my dad why he didn't take it instead of his cat. The last phase of the trip ends and we all go on back to work and regular beds, flushing toilets and NPR.

The experience narrated above tells the story of a particular river trip, but also serves as an apt example of how a typical private river trip happens. These trips take the group members out of their typical world and into a different set of contexts where many of the barriers individuals face in their everyday lives are torn down. Though it is a separate world of experience, the way that these types experiences reflect, and inflect, our lives on a daily basis is very strong. The type of embodied engagement with the landscape and its specific features that paddling entails, has a direct effect upon the way that river-rats perceive their relationship to the natural environment, necessitating a scientific comprehension blended with aesthetic, historical, and political understandings that thread their way through our entire lives.

With training as a folklorist, I recognize the folk group features of the people that I raft with and the larger paddling community as a whole. With the presence of such rituals as the offering to the river gods, names for specific tools like the groover, the told and re-told narratives of specific trips and rivers and rapids in general, the experiences that bond specific trips, and the overall community, create a strong network of shared

knowledge, perception, and relationships. Experienced paddlers, from canoers to kayakers to rafters, take the adaptation that river-running requires and extend it to the way that they interact with the rest of the world and provides a great degree of the identity that these individuals claim for themselves.

Chapter 3:

Survey of Folklore and Other Related Scholarship

Introduction

Folklore studies generally identifies the traditions, customs, language, and rituals of various groups of people identified by ethnicity, occupation, religious affiliation, and other social and cultural relationships that help the individual members of these groups to share and identify a sense of belonging within those specific contexts. Though there are some exceptions, folklorists have generally not engaged with groups that are bonded and connected by recreational behavior and activities, especially those occurring in wilderness environments. Some folklore studies have addressed these types of activities such as Mary Hufford's (1988) study of foxhunting practices in New Jersey, Jacqueline Thursby's (2004) study of the ritual of hunting and feasting in Idaho and Utah, and Simon Bronner's (2005) work on traditions and rituals in deer hunting camps and the deep play of organized pigeon shoots in Pennsylvania. Each of these studies focused on the hunting and fishing practices that are perceived as recreation rather than outdoor activities that are solely recreational in nature such as whitewater paddling or mountain climbing. A similar area that has been well documented within folklore studies is the occupational nature of fishing such as Patrick Mullens' (1969) work with coastal fishermen in Texas, Jen Lunds' (1995) study of fishing on the Ohio River, and Timothy Cochrane's (1987) case study of Isle Royale inhabitant's fishing practices and perceptions of the landscape they live, and work, in. Again, though the

folkloric relationships within hunting, fishing, and feasting as outdoor activities have been studied, there has been a noticeable lack of research into the folklore of recreational activities and a large degree of attention focused on, what could be called the predatory, outdoor activities such as hunting and fishing.

The various perspectives that these folklore scholars bring to bear on the relationship, as it is perceived at the level of folk interpretation, between human beings and the natural environment is useful and enlightening for a study of whitewater rafting, or more broadly paddling, groups. However, the difference between the goals and contexts of the activities is quite extreme: in hunting and fishing the action is directed towards catching and/or killing living animals which, in Bronner's terms, creates "certain domains for playfully dramatizing manliness" (40) and provides a ritualized space in which the hunt figures in to the social relationships within the hunting camp; in river trips, however, the emphasis is directed towards the physical engagement with the water and the thrill and satisfaction that is gained from running rapids and engaging the social situation of camp life. Similar types of social interaction occur in the camps, and ritual activities are observed in the social space of camp on river trips as there are in hunting camps, but the context of the interaction between the human community and the natural environment is quite different.

Folklore studies and the outdoors

Clifford Geertz (1972) worked with the concept of deep play, as a ritualized and highly symbolic activity in which status and social relationships are negotiated through activities, in his seminal study of Balinese cockfights. This concept helped him to understand the motivations and importance of the cockfights as arenas within which the members of the community gain, lose, and reaffirm their social status. This concept is an important one in Bronner's study of the folk rituals of hunting and hunting camps in Pennsylvania:

Overarching these questions that commanded my attention is the interpretation of the cultural experience of hunting. It is significant matter, I contend, because of the perspective it gives of all-male groups and the way human-animal relations, particularly in ritual combat, provide symbolic expressions of social and psychological processes, including the reaffirmation of manliness. (14)

The concern with the all-male nature of the hunting camps that Bronner worked in was important for developing his sense of how the rituals of eating certain parts of a fresh kill, smearing blood from a fresh kill, and cutting shirttails for missed shots created and continued the sense of community and masculine identity in the camps. Considering hunting, and the activities and areas associated with it, as arenas within which deep play occurs, provides Bronner with an apt tool for examining how the experience of wildness and wilderness was operating for the people in the camps. This perspective on the whole picture of whitewater river trips lends a useful way to think about the social interactions in river camps, the stories that are told, the jobs one must one do, the rituals performed, and the role of the landscape in those interactions.

The rituals associated with a group provide useful windows through which folklorists are able to interpret and make sense of the activities that folk groups engage in. Mullen's study of folk magic rituals and belief among Texas coastal fishermen provides a useful method for examining the psychological functions of folk rituals beyond community bonding. Mullen works with Malinowski's concept of ritual-anxiety theory to explain the way in which rituals such as the blessing of the fleet or hammering a coin to the deck of the boat operate to relieve the stress and tension created by the hazards that the fishermen faced in their daily business, "The underlying psychological function arises from the basic situation of coastal fishermen: they face unusual physical dangers, natural hazards, and psychological frustrations in carrying out their occupation. This situation of uncertainty and danger produces a psychological state of anxiety," (216). The rituals that these fishermen relied upon to help them deal with and mitigate the dangers they faced from the natural environment were less about the perception that the rituals actually performed an observable function and more about the way the rituals socially alleviated anxieties about the situation. This method of analysis for the functionality of rituals is useful for an interpretation of rituals associated with outdoor recreation, like whitewater river trips, which face the river-rat with similar types of challenges and a similar type of engagement with the natural landscape and forces of nature like the sea, a lake, or a river and are psychologically mitigated by folk traditions and rituals.

Connections between folk group identity and the environments that they live, and participate, in are important for identifying the perceptual encounter with the natural world and how that relationship is negotiated through community identification. Timothy Cochrane (1987) offers a useful exploration of the way that folk identity interacts with the natural environment, borrowing from cultural geography certain notions of space and rootedness, in his work with the communities on Isle Royale on Lake Superior:

More than a backdrop or some objective reality to which the folklore referred, the island was a dynamic and experiential part of fishermen's lives. The island was an active part of folk performance, influencing story outcomes, pervading customs, and motivating material culture competence. Place as experienced and reformulated in expressive culture is a critical contextual factor in fishermen's folklore forms. Place influenced folklore and folklore influenced the experience of place. I began to see that place and folklore were mutually interacting and that understanding this interaction was a key to understanding fishermen's folklife. (2)

With place and landscape as a central element of how folklore acts in relation to the geographic and social context, with this notion of how folk forms and identity are shaped by the environments they occur in, the wilderness context becomes one in which a particular type of relationship with the environment occurs. Identification of self and community within specific geographic locations is a fundamental perspective of folklore but placing a more comprehensive lens on the geographic context of folk group interaction and development is required for the study of recreational groups.

Whitewater river paddling, and other types of outdoor sports/activities like surfing or mountain climbing, carries a direct interaction between the human and the

environment as a defining feature of the folk character of the group. This type of interaction, at the recreational level rather than the economic or habitation levels, has been examined by Jacqueline Thursby (2004) within the tradition of feasting associated with hunting in southern Idaho and northern Utah. The context of the reintroduction of wolves to the area, expressions of connections to the environment from individuals, and the community events of game feasts are sites of folk group interaction in Thursby's discussion and are contextualized by observed changes over the years and a continuation of the folk ways in the face of those changes:

When we look at hunting, game feasts, and what patterns of social relations are being expressed, it is clear that there are both community and private groups who continue this practice. The meanings are multilayered and myriad. Families, like the Thompson group of Utah and Idaho, camp in trailers for several days each autumn and take along friends, children, dogs, four-wheelers, and a mess tent. They hunt for deer, and if they find one, that is fine. And, if they do not, that is fine also. (117)

The community, both more broadly and privately, event of coming together over an outdoor experience, of interacting with the natural environment in an embodied, engaged way, asserts a continuity of experience through the type of space within which these types of activities happen. The identification of rivers as central to the folk group of paddlers connects people through a common type of experience, interaction with, and perception of their individual and communal relationship with the natural world.

These folklore scholars provide excellent lenses for interpreting folk groups and assist in demonstrating the folk group qualities of river-rat communities. However, the perspective that is offered for the recreational context of the outdoor interaction is

limited to social events such as feasts and sport or occupational contexts such as hunting and fishing. While fishing does occur as a side activity during whitewater paddling, the focus is on the challenges of the rapids and the river and the experience of being in a wilderness or outdoor environment. The enjoyment of the river, and the group interaction over and through it, becomes an important lens for how the context of the natural environment is understood and perceived by white-water paddlers. The development of a context for further understanding of how these types of relationships with the natural world coincides with the interdisciplinary heritage of folklore.

Related cultural geography and religious studies on the landscape and the outdoors

Using a broad lens and engaging with other disciplines is seen with the scholars above such as Cochrane and is an important element of folklore studies. The usefulness of these types of interpretations is evident when considering the folklore of white-water paddlers. Scholars such as Soren Larsen (2008), Yi-Fu Tuan (2003), and Ade Peace (2001) have highlighted the importance of geographic spaces and places in the identification of self and community and the formation of protests and social action within communities on behalf of specific natural environments and locations. These types of relationships, and identifications, with the environment are useful for further contextualization of the formation of folk beliefs within paddling communities. Larsen, in a study of rural environmental protest in a community in British Columbia, draws on Charon and Harper for the notion of symbolic interaction to provide an interpretation of how the natural world forms the human community and sense of self:

Symbolic cohesiveness means that individuals operating within certain reference groups tend to develop collective understandings of place based on the ways they routinely interact with each other and their environs. Although a sense of place is a highly intimate phenomenon that resides at the core of human experience, the routines of social interaction mean that personal environmental experience often is interpreted within the intersubjective frameworks of the reference group. (175)

This perception of the centrality of interaction with the environment to the formation of identity, action, and perception in a social and communal context, provides an important insight into paddling folk groups. Noting that the generation of a connection to the landscape is shaped by the types of interaction that the individual and the community engage in shows that the consideration of paddling folk groups through the site of embodied, direct interaction with the river and its surroundings creates strong bonds and beliefs.

Religious studies scholars, such as Bron Taylor (2007) with surfing, Samuel Snyder (2007) with fly-fishing, and A. Whitney Sanford (2007) with whitewater kayaking, have introduced the term, Aquatic Nature Religions, to refer to religious or spiritual beliefs that are centered around specific aquatic contexts. These scholars situate the formation of beliefs in the context of recreational activities where the individual engages directly with an aquatic environment and the way that the embodied interaction shapes and defines the beliefs and perceptions of the practitioner's connection to the environment and the ways in which they perceive their role in an often global context:

I argue that a significant part of the evolving global, surfing world can be understood as a new religious movement in which sensual experiences constitute its sacred center. These experiences, and the subcultures in which people reflect upon them, foster understandings of nature as powerful, transformative, healing, and even sacred. Such perceptions, in turn, often lead to environmental ethics and action in which Mother Nature, and especially its manifestation as Mother Ocean, is considered to be worthy of reverent care. (Taylor, "Surfing into", 925)

Taylor's assertion of an identification of connection with Nature as a whole through a specific sacred space, in this case the ocean, provides a way to understand how important these types of outdoor activities can prove to be in the formation of self-identity and in the context of a community of individuals connected by that activity. Use of this perspective for an examination of the folk culture of whitewater paddling, popularly considered to be a sport or recreational activity, allows for a more nuanced consideration of the importance that the activity, and the context of the river, has for the people involved and their senses of self and community in relation to their ecological and geographic contexts.

Conclusion

Taking the perspectives offered by cultural geographers and religious studies scholars and combining them with folklore studies involved with the relationship between human communities and the environmental contexts in which they live, work, or recreate, helps to provide a clear lens for the study of whitewater paddling folk culture. The direct engagement with the landscape and the river serves as the focal point of the paddling experience, the center around which the community forms, and

this type of physical, direct interaction occurs in those spaces and areas of the world that Mary Hufford (1999) might call "cracks" and these are spaces within which identity and belief is shaped. The vernacular and folk religious aspects of paddling folklore are an important consideration, especially in light of the notion of Aquatic Nature Religions, and they are defined by the rituals, practices, and ideologies that accompany them among river-rats. For paddlers, notions of connection to Nature and the sacredness in the natural environment would be rooted, naturally, in the central feature of the folk group, the river. The formation of those perceptions are not only exemplified by the practices and rituals of the group but organized by them and situated around the relationship between human beings and Nature.

Chapter 4:

Vernacular Spirituality among River-rats

Rituals among river-rats, and paddling communities writ large, range from individual charms to offerings to baptisms to specific activities such as jumping from particular bridges to the giving of symbols for certain events. These rituals form expressions of the folk culture of these groups and provide important windows in to the overall context of the paddling experience. The stories that are told about boats that were flipped in Big Mallard Rapid on the Main Salmon River and wrapped on rocks in Sulphur Slide Rapid on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, reflect and demonstrate the community identity that is evident among paddlers and river-rats. These types of stories, other anecdotes, and practices such as giving nicknames based on nautical rank like "Admiral Crusty", create bonds between the members of specific trips and groups and provide continuity within the larger river-rat folk group at the same time that they often provide useful information to people about mistakes, features, and practices on the river that can mean the difference between a clean run and a flipped boat, or a solid group dynamic and a volatile, tension filled river trip. Finding a sense of balance when running the river is directly related to and informed by the dynamics between the individuals in the party and this is enhanced among river-rats by ritual expression of group solidarity and interaction with the river, a prime example of which is gifting a red handkerchief to someone for their first flipped boat. This ritual creates recognition of the direct and dangerous event that just took place in the paddler's life and serves as a

marker for other river-rats of the person's experience. These rituals, story-telling events, passage of knowledge, and communal sharing of responsibilities serve markers and examples of the rich folk life and beliefs of river-rats. In this chapter, I chose to focus on two specific rituals which emphasize the discourses of connection to the environment, group solidarity, and a sense of the sacred in the natural world. These rituals, the offering to the river gods and the baptism into the religion of the river gods, not only serve as apt examples of folk rituals among river-rats but are important for the discussion of vernacular spirituality based on paddling experiences.

Paddlers, white-water enthusiasts, river-runners, river-rats: all of these terms are relevant and accurate in describing the people in American society who go out onto wild rivers in various small, human-powered craft such as kayaks, canoes, rafts, dories, etc. I myself use any of these terms when I describe my own experiences and my own passion for the activity, but for the sake of consistency in this thesis, I will be using the terms river-rat and paddler. As a distinct cultural group within United States society, river-rats are a self-contained and passionate group of people that make not just a habit of white-water paddling but a religious and ethical system out of the experience that emphasizes identification with the natural environment and a sense of responsibility to care for it. There are many traditions and rituals that are associated with whitewater paddling, and its experience, which range from not wearing a watch (in order to symbolize the essentially complete break with modern society that river trips entail), to the tradition of new trip members jumping off of a particular pack bridge over a certain river, to the

offering to the river gods which is presented at the outset of a trip. These cultural products of the river-rat community are methods by which we are able to define ourselves as river-rats and as part of this distinct community. The particular aspects of river-rat culture that I will be examining in this chapter, the offering and the baptism, can be seen as not just traditions of the culture but as forms of magical interference, rites of passage, and as rituals that provide important evidence of the formation of religious and/or spiritual belief among paddlers. These rituals assist in developing a sense of the community as it exists for particular groups as individual units and the larger culture of paddling as a whole. The specific rituals that are discussed here are meant to be representative of particular trends in how direct, physical engagement with the landscape, in all of its varied forms, is conceptualized and understood by those people who participate in activities like paddling.

A Vernacular Spiritual Lens

Examining the cultural aspects of paddling, and especially my own experience with it, has led me to see a connection between physical, embodied engagement with the natural world and the development of both spiritual and aesthetic perception.

Religious scholars such as Catherine Albanese, Bron Taylor, and A. Whitney Sanford have all explored the context and development of what have been termed nature religions, and even aquatic nature religions, where the central organizing feature of the belief is a direct connection to the natural environment. In the introduction to a focus issue of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Bron Taylor (2007) gives an

overview of the literature on nature religion, the role of water, and provides a useful summary of a new perspective:

Some scholars have analyzed the diverse and intimate relations between water and religion. As summarized by Rudhardt (2005), water is often central to religious cosmogony, can be understood as a manifestation of the divine or governed by divine being or beings, it may be associated with sexuality or otherwise perceived to be involved with the generation of life, or with healing, purification, or sacralization. Water may also be considered a source of wisdom or mysterious, cathartic power, or conversely, a force in opposition to divine purposes and in need of subjugation...

The new religious practices and experiences that I am labeling Aquatic Nature Religion certainly have continuities with some of the traditional ways in which water has been intertwined with religious belief and practice. These continuities include the ways, within American cultural history, that some people considered nature to be sacred and worthy of reverent care. Yet, there also appear to be some religiously innovative dimensions to the practices of surfing, fly fishing, and kayaking, when people construe these practices as spiritual or religious. (864)

The way in which Taylor, and the others in this special issue, connects religious or spiritual understanding to a direct interaction with water provides clear support for analyzing the practices and beliefs of river-rats as expressions of spiritual activity. It seems, though, that what Taylor calls the "innovative dimensions" of aquatic nature religions cannot accurately account for the informality of these types of beliefs.

Using folk and vernacular religious understandings of river-rat rituals and practices provides the necessary lens to understand how the natural environment, and an embodied interaction with it, leads to the generation of new, informal ways of creating meaning and understanding:

Folk religion is "the folk-cultural dimension of religion," or "the religious dimension of folk-culture." This can include active/creative as well as passive/survivalist elements, it also certainly can suggest the element of tension which exists between folk and official levels of religion in the complex society. Therefore we can phrase this practical definition in another way: Folk religion is the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion. (Yoder, 1974, 14)

The way in which folklore can provide for both dynamic and static elements allows a way to understand how specific communities can create these new beliefs through both the models provided by traditional religious systems and through their own, individual observations and opinions. Leonard Primiano (1995) provides a necessary critique of this definition when proposing the term vernacular religion:

When folklorists discuss "folk religion," or "religious folklore" in the context of a "religious folk group," they imply that religion somewhere exists as a pure element which is in some way transformed, even contaminated, by its exposure to human communities. This tendency is emblematic of how folklorists have consistently devalued "folk religion" by assigning it unofficial religious status. (39)

Primiano's effort to address the new and innovative ways that individuals as members of specific communities create new ways of believing without relying on a distinct separation between "real religion" and "folk religion" creates a strong justification for my interpretation of river-rat belief and practice. The emphasis that is placed on individual experience within a group context is a central element of this perspective and seems to provide for the type of dynamic creativity that is apparent in my experiences and which Taylor's definition has difficulty accounting for:

The process of religious belief refers to the complex linkage of acquisition and formation of beliefs which is always accomplished by the conscious and

unconscious negotiations of and between believers. This process acknowledges the presence of bidirectional influences of environments upon individuals and of individuals upon environments in the process of believing. Within the human context, manifold factors influence the individual believer, such as physical and psychological predispositions, the natural environment, family, community affiliations, religious institutions, the socialization process, tradition, education and literacy, communication media, as well as political and economic conditions. All these elements interact with the individual mind to form what Don Yoder has called "a unified organic system of belief" (1974:13; 1990:80). This unified system of possibly disparate feelings and ideas also forms a context of its own. This context is the content of religious belief resulting from the continuity of creative self-understanding, self-interpretation, and negotiation by the believing individual. (44)

This perspective provides the necessary contextualization of the notion of aquatic nature religions to understand how individual creativity and experience factors into the formation of belief systems and ways of understanding based around interaction with the natural environment.

My own experience urges me, however, to put forward my own critique, somewhat semantic as it may be, of this general framework which is informed by Primiano's overall critique of the study of folk religion. The term religion seems to imply a structure and often creates the image of a monolithic belief system. I prefer to use spirituality to refer to the kinds of beliefs under discussion because the term does not entirely rely upon the contexts of what are understood to be "official" religions.

Vernacular religion provides for the existence of nature-based belief that is created at the individual level within communities, but these beliefs seem to require an additional reference point that the notion of a dynamic, vernacular spirituality can create. By combining a religious studies perspective with folk and vernacular religion lenses, the

types of beliefs and practices that I have found in my river running experiences clearly indicate a level of spiritual belief that is formed and reflected by the specific site of interaction between the human, whether individual or community, and the natural environment.

A. Whitney Sanford (2007) presents a precedent for the study of paddling as a specific site of the development of a vernacular spirituality in which paddling generates understanding, "In whitewater kayaking, ritual is the performance, the lived practice in the water, and the physical negotiation of the frightening and the powerful that has largely been erased from our religious lives. And it is precisely in negotiating this juncture that paddling becomes a religious performance and binds the paddler to the sacred as manifest in the natural world" (889). This perspective is directly connected to the embodied interaction that paddling represents and the individual development of beliefs that river-rat rituals and practices display. Sanford emphasizes the personal experience at the individual level and places some criticism on paddlers who do not engage in a lived, "performed environmental ethic", despite "claims of profound experiences on the river" (890). Sanford points toward the communal experience of paddling, where the danger that is inherent typically requires a group of at least two or more paddlers, and the other group experiences, "Group activities after paddling, post river beers, and storytelling, for example, reinforce both membership in the group and the excitement of the activity" (890). He also observes a separation between social, environmental practice and experienced, spiritual belief and perception:

It is possible then to leave this experience at the take-out (and I admit that this statement is broad), mentally filed as wilderness or outdoor experience, such that it places no demand on one's daily life, and therein lies the disjuncture between rhetoric and practice. The emphasis on the individual in mainstream North American religious experience does not provide a framework for considering the experience within a rubric of community responsibility. (891)

The subsequent connection that Sanford makes between conservation, or restoration practice, and the need for a further inculcation of this type of ideal in paddling communities seems to be built into the actual rituals and beliefs that are on display among river-rats and the examples provide evidence of the ways that practice factors into belief and vice versa:

Many paddlers belong to groups such as American Whitewater, a whitewater advocacy group that promotes river access and conservation. American Whitewater functions as an umbrella organization for regional paddling clubs as well as commercial organizations such as Nantahala Outdoor Center (NOC). Many paddlers participate in river health and conservation programs through their local clubs, often with funding from American Whitewater. Activities such as "river clean-up days" are similar to restoration ecology in that they both reinforce the communal nature of the sport and reiterate responsibility to the group and the rivers on which they paddle. (891)

The legal and communal enforcement of a Leave-No-Trace practice within wilderness areas provides an additional demonstration of the ways in which engagement with the natural environment develops a holistic perspective with ecological and social concerns influencing the enforcement of responsible conduct and action regarding those interactions within the communities. The implication of responsible practices is that they are rooted in the respect, care, and informed minds of individuals within communities and the vernacular beliefs and interpretations that guide their decisions.

Concerning the functions and purposes of the two rituals of the offering and the baptism, it is possible to view both as forms of magic and expressions of a spiritual ideal that is a central feature of river running and river-rat culture. It is useful to apply various methodologies for interpreting culture, ritual, folk belief, magic, and religious experience to generate a perspective on river-rat culture which demonstrates that there is a defined culture associated with river running and that at least some of the rituals and traditions which are observable among river-rats are forms of folk magic and spiritual experience even when the river-rats themselves do not explicitly view these cultural artifacts as such. The significance of nature for paddlers is supported by my own experiences and the emphasis that is placed on water is especially clear through the specificity of the site of interaction with the natural environment. By using a lens of vernacular spirituality to understand the spiritual aspects of river-rat rituals, the dynamic, informal, creative generation of meaning-making among outdoor recreationalists can be more fully understood and the implications of an applied engagement with the natural environment can, perhaps, be taken into account among communities of practice on a broader scale.

Magic, Belief, Practices

The two traditions that I will be addressing here are the offering to the river gods and the baptism into the religion of the river gods. Both of these traditions are ones that my own segment of the river-rat community, in the state of Idaho, observe and are limited to certain geographic and temporal areas in which they can take place. In regard to the offering to the river gods, this is a tradition that must be observed the morning of

the first day on the water. This is a tradition that essentially makes an offering in order to assure a safe and fun trip for the party. The morning of the first day on the water the group is called together after a suitable piece of wood, preferably but not necessarily driftwood, is found by the trip leader. The group gathers in a circle and each member places a hand on the stick, the trip leader then speaks an informal prayer to the effect of "Let's all have a safe trip, get along together, and have a good time," which is imperative for a trip to both function well and be enjoyable. After the prayer, the trip leader grasps the stick and hurls it out into the current which, according to the tradition, takes the offering downstream to be received by the river gods. My experience has not revealed to me whether or not this type of tradition is observed by other river-rats. However, this tradition is part of my own repertoire and other members of my particular community almost certainly learned it through other river-runners during their early days of rafting. Undoubtedly, some other groups make this type of offering, or a similar one, in order to have some kind of assurance that their trip will be both safe and fruitful.

The second tradition that I am addressing explicitly calls itself the baptism into the religion of the river gods. One of my early trips on the Main Salmon River included a stop at the Magpie Beach campsite which is one of the most beautiful campsites on the river and has a variety of plant life that is usually not found in this part of Idaho. Magpie Creek, which lies next to the camp and gives it its name, is a relatively large creek with very clear water. A dam has been constructed in this creek which forms a pool that is approximately 2-3 feet deep. On this particular trip, we went as a group to this small

pool where two of the oldest and most experienced river-rats on the trip declared that we were going to have a baptism into the religion of the river gods for those who had not experienced it yet. This process was simple but interestingly powerful as these two older men dipped me under the surface of the water, which is extremely cold, and then pulled me up. One part of this ritual that has always seemed central to me is the fact that this can only be performed by people who have been baptized in this fashion; before that day I could not initiate anyone into this practice but now I am fully capable of bringing someone else into this religion. There are no explicit benefits to be gained from this ritual other than the aforementioned privilege of baptizing others and a feeling of solidarity with the group that is otherwise somewhat absent. As with the offering, I am not aware if all groups, indeed if any others, practice this tradition but I do know that it came to me from two older men who have been running rivers for 30 - 40 years.

Both of these traditions are used to reinforce group solidarity and to ensure a good group dynamic in order for the trip to be safe and enjoyable for everyone involved. This is both an explicit and an implicit function of these rituals in that the offering literally asks for a safe and fun trip and the baptism serves to bind the group together in a much tighter fashion than would otherwise be possible. An interesting facet of these traditions is the active and creative reshaping of traditional types of religious activities that is occurring. The dynamic nature of these rituals and the ways in which they combine traditional religious motifs and discourses demonstrates the vernacular nature

of their conception at the same time that they also indicate the important ways that they are not directly referencing one set of beliefs over and above another. The idea of a prayer combined with the invocation of the river gods, as an undefined yet recognizable reference point, maintains the religious context of the prayer ritual and forms a unique combination of practices and beliefs that seems to define the river-rat as a cultural group in and of itself. This unique combination provides a glimpse into the way that paddlers seem to be constructing a new and different way of perceiving and understanding the world around them. While I doubt that anyone who practices either of these traditions actually believes that they are communicating with the river gods, or that the river gods actually exist, this kind of tradition is important and necessary in order for the group to function.

These traditional rituals are part of the experience of river rafting and make use of both natural materials and specific objects and places. If there is a stop at Magpie Creek, there will be a baptism performed as long as the necessary requirements are met, namely the presence of at least one person who has been previously baptized. If a trip is setting out, there will be an offering performed so that there can be assurance of a safe trip and a cohesive group. These rituals are integral parts of the experience of river-rafting, I have been able to observe them within groups that are part of the geographical area of Idaho of which I am part. I have also floated rivers with people from Oregon who have participated in these rituals and have openly accepted them without reserve. This indicates that there can be a reasonable level of assurance that

even if these particular rituals are not definite aspects of their particular community there is acceptance of the meaning and purpose behind them. These meanings and purposes form the central focus of this chapter and key parts of the assertion that there is magical ritual and spiritual experience associated with river rafting and the practice of it.

In regard to the offering to the river gods, Stein and Stein talk about the types of magic and specifically refer to James Frazer's, *The Golden Bough*, which talks about a variety of subjects. This reference addresses what Frazer called the Law of Sympathy:

[W]hich states that magic depends on the apparent association or agreement between things. There are two parts to the Law of Sympathy. The first is the Law of Similarity, which states that things that are alike are the same. The second is the Law of Contagion, which states that things that were once in contact continue to be connected after the connection is severed. (143)

This is relevant to the discussion of the offering because the offering can be seen as a form of Contagious Magic. The fact that it is almost necessary that the offering be a piece of driftwood, rather than any piece of wood, shows that there was once a connection between the river itself and the wood. The use of the river gods as the recipients of the offering demonstrates the connection of the river itself and the idea of the gods as being integrally linked together: without the river there would be no river gods. This belief, and the ritual itself, does not invoke any particular gods from any particular theological belief system but simply references "the gods" as the recipients of the offering. The physicality of the river, the embodiment of a sacred ideal in the river itself, is a central part of how this interpretation and overall viewpoint operates, as

Edward Abbey says in *Desert Solitaire* (1968), "Beyond atheism, nontheism. I am not an atheist but an earthiest. Be true to the earth" (184). This does not invalidate the concept of this offering as being a form of magic because there is a specific goal and intention that is desired by making this offering despite the fact that the participants are not necessarily believers in the river gods or in the actual efficacy of the offering.

No river-rat will ever trust to the offering that is made at the outset of a trip to keep them and their passengers safe; they will always depend on their own skills and respect for the river and its power, as Mullen says in his 1969 article, "Magic operates side by side with more practical methods based on rational-empirical science and technology" (216). This apparently simple and obvious statement reveals an incredible amount about both the Texas coastal fishermen and about the rituals of whitewater rafters: both of these groups are using and depending on modern technology and scientific knowledge of that technology and the natural world in which they are immersed when participating in their practices. Both of these groups are fully aware of the fact that there is really no rational reason for conducting the rituals that are associated with their communities. Yet, both of these groups adhere tightly to these rituals. It seems to be an acknowledgement of the dangers that are inherent in these practices, dangers that Mullen says produce "a psychological state of anxiety that relates to the fishermen's magical practices" (216). This is a relevant statement because there is indeed a level of danger and apprehension that is associated with whitewater rafting. No one can face a class IV rapid with an eight-foot drop, even if they have run it

many times before, without feeling some fear and awe of the power of the river. There is an ever-present level of anxiety and worry when navigating a river and it is partially this level of excitement that always draws people back, always makes them want to run the river again, and the rituals associated with running the river are methods by which, despite our scientific knowledge and technical acumen, we attempt to alleviate some of the fear and anxiety that are inherent in whitewater rafting. This offering is always characterized by being specific to the river that a group is setting out on and the variable ways in which the improvised prayer is conducted. Mullen examines the folk beliefs of Texas coastal fishermen from a psychological perspective in which he addresses the anxieties and worries that these magical practices alleviate. This type of analysis leads to a deeper understanding of the purposes that lie behind the rituals of the offering to the river gods and the baptism into the religion of the river gods.

Mullen makes further key remarks that help to reveal the underlying purposes of such magic and religious rituals. Mullen found that the "fishermen have basically two different kinds of folk belief, magic and empirical...Magic beliefs have no rational explanation in the fishermen's minds; these are the practices that seem to be based on some mysterious element ordinarily beyond the man's control" (215). This perspective is heightened by Butler's (2007) discussion of the practice of making various offerings to gods in his article when he provides a useful characterization of the perceived agency of gods, "The Gods are in the first place unique individuals, but because they are participated by Being, they can also be conceptualized and classified" (9). By making the

river gods the recipients of the offering, rather than the river itself, river-rats are relying upon a familiar reference point that maintains the specific religious context of the rituals and allows them to be heard, understood, and function: gods listen to prayers, rivers listen to nothing.

The fact that river-rats may not explicitly think about the offering as a magical ritual or necessarily believe that there are river gods who review and accept or reject their offerings does not invalidate the idea that the offering is a magical and/or spiritual ritual. It is the fact of the offering itself that shows that there is a form of belief system that is associated with river rafting and that folk magic is part of that system. Michael Bailey makes a similar kind of observation in his 2006 article:

A remarkable aspect of magic is the degree to which many people in various social and historical contexts have engaged in acts that their culture as a whole, or at least certain cultural authorities, would categorize as magical without considering themselves to be performing magic. This seems especially true of simple spells or other common rites or superstitions that people may hold or practice without any systematic coherence. (2)

It is this kind of unconscious belief in the necessity and efficacy of the offering that makes the offering to the river gods a form of folk magic and an example of the universal desire to make an exchange of "goods" for "services" that can be observed in human communities. Mauss makes this the focus of his book, *The Gift*, when talking about the tradition of gift giving in human societies and how it seems to be a universal aspect of the human condition to make exchanges based on a system of reciprocity even when, in some cases, there is no real need or imperative for a return gift. It is a human impulse to find ways in which to give and hope to, eventually, receive based on

human relations, "It is by considering the whole entity that we could perceive what is essential, the way everything moves, the living aspect, the fleeting moment when society, or men, become sentimentally aware of themselves and of their situation in relation to others" (80), and this system can be seen operating in the ritual of making an offering to the river gods at the outset of a river trip.

When thinking about the baptism into the religion of the river gods, it is important to note, again, that there is no direct religion or specific gods that are being invoked. Just as with the offering, the river gods and their religion is more a symbol of what the river-rat wants and needs in order to fulfill the desire for a way to intervene with what Sanford refers to as "the immensity and power of the river" (882). This is a direct reference to the uncontrollable nature of the river, the complete lack of the riverrat's ability to defeat or "conquer" (883), the river as the rhetoric of mountain climbing refers to the act of summiting a mountain. Though there will be whoops, hollers, cheers, and discussions following and during rapids, the act of running a rapid or finishing a trip is typically not marked by flag-flying or any celebration of conquer; rather, river-rats embrace the exhilaration of the experience and feel grateful for the successful run. Rapids also serve to enhance the identification with the river through splashes and immersion that emphasize the physical contact and embodied interaction. The baptism is a rite of passage that ritualizes the act of whitewater rafting in a way that other methods of initiation do not. Baptizing is an act that brings a sense of community and togetherness that works in contrast with the experience of danger and excitement that

river rafting entails. By becoming part of the religion of the river gods, the river-rat gains a hold over the river that is part of what allows them to recognize its power over them and use that power to their advantage when navigating a river. Sanford says "The thin line, or liminal realm, between control and chaos accentuates the boater's awareness of the river's often terrifying power" (884). It is just this "terrifying power" that the river-rat can gain some kind of control over that the baptism brings. It is a sense of power over the river that is necessary even when rational thought and scientific knowledge informs the river-rat that they can never gain control over the river: that they are always in its power when they are on their boat.

The practice of the baptism can be viewed as an expression of the natural evolution of spiritual practice and belief that Daniel Dennett espouses in his book, *Breaking the Spell*. There is not an explicit religion or religious practice involved in river rafting but there is a sense of the spiritual that *comes out of the experience* and this is informed by the cultural memes of religion and the practice of it that Dennett speaks about. The baptism into the religion of the river gods can be seen as an evolution of the religious meme of Christian baptisms. Without that element of Western society there would be no baptism even though the meaning of it would still be conveyed in some other fashion. This type of lack of practical application and function is part of what Catherine Bell views as an integral part of ritual, "In descriptions of the noninstrumental [sic] nature of ritual activity as symbolic or expressive activity (i.e. communicative in some way), the fundamental contrast of symbolic versus instrumental underscores how

ritual activities are seen to differ from more 'practical' ones" (71). This is important because it demonstrates that ritual need not be functional to be seen as religious or spiritual because the spiritual nature of the ritual provides the function. In contrast to a christian interpretation of baptism as being purifying and washing away sin, the baptism into the religion of the river gods does not rely upon an institutional, structured belief system that requires the baptism to gain something. There is not an actual, perceived advantage that the river-rat gains from being baptized, the sense of group solidarity, however, and the reinforcement of a person's identity as a river-rat and part of this religion, part of this informal belief system, is perpetuated.

In this examination of the folk rituals of the offering to the river gods and the baptism into the religion of the river gods, I have attempted to show how river-rats adapt existing systems of exchange, spiritual belief and experience, and folk magic in order to find ways to interpret, understand, and control the natural world, specifically a wild river. These systems reflect the unique understanding of the river and its power that river-rats possess. Even with the group nature of the activity, there is a necessary individuality to the experience of river-running. A river-rat is "ultimately responsible for themselves" (Sanford, 890) and must be able to recognize that the river will always be more powerful than they are, that it has control over them. The practice of making an offering to the river gods is an expression of this recognition and a way, through magical means, to gain control over the anxiety produced by this essentially uncontrollable aspect of nature. The baptism allows the river-rat to become part of the river and part

of river-rat culture, reducing the level of their anxiety over the danger that the river poses by creating a way to believe that they are privy to the river's power. The river gods provide a unique connection and outlet for a river-runner's recognition of their complete lack of influence over the river and the natural world.

Conclusion

The evidence that I have presented here makes the case that these rituals, and this culture, can be viewed in this fashion and can be understood through its own cultural lens. It is the redefinition of spiritual experience that Dennett and Primiano espouse which is necessary to allow the wider world to understand the river-rat culture as having its own ethical and belief systems based around the interaction between humans and the river. Sanford also makes a similar case, "While such practices and experiences do not always easily fit into established categories of what constitutes religion, they do invite scholars to reconsider existing norms" (892). It is this matter of reconsidering and redefining religious, spiritual, and magic experience that will allow the ever-broadening world to accept other ways of viewing the world and its constituent parts. The baptism into the religion of the river gods and the offering to river gods can be seen elements of a culture that defines itself by being both part of and yet separate from the rest of the secular, western world. Through a combined scientific, spiritual, aesthetic, and physical engagement with the landscape, paddlers are creating new ways of believing and of understanding the world around them. It is these folk magic and

spiritual events that contain the essence of the river-rat culture and can help to direct new methods of inquiry and new ways of perceiving the world around us.

Taking the notion of vernacular religion and applying it to nature based belief creates the need for a different reference which I have termed vernacular spirituality. The dynamic and non-institutional foundation of this perspective allows for human creativity in the face of physical engagement with the natural environment in the development of systems of belief. The embodied interaction that is seen in white-water paddling necessitates a rational, scientific understanding of the natural environment at the same time that it encourages an aesthetic and spiritual connection and appreciation. It is in the combination of these discourses that individuals and communities generate meaning-making practices that defy traditional modes of interpretation and description. These are systems of belief which are highly individualistic, yet also generalizable in the sense that they are based upon the world *as it is* - on the experience of the world in what can be perceived as its natural flow. I quote from the chapter titled "Down the River" from Edward Abbey's (1968) *Desert Solitaire*:

But the love of wilderness is more than a hunger for what is always beyond reach; it is also an expression of loyalty to the earth, the earth which bore us and sustains us, the only home we shall ever know, the only paradise we ever need----if only we had the eyes to see. Original sin, the true original sin, is the blind destruction for the sake of greed of this natural paradise which lies all around us---if only we were worthy of it. (167)

Conclusion

It is obvious that my research on rafting culture and the American mindscape has only just begun. In my dissertation research I plan to extend the historical, communal, and ecological contexts that have been explored here and put them into conversation with ethnographic fieldwork among paddling communities in Missouri, Idaho, and elsewhere. Through ethnographic interviews, participant observation, and collection of folk narratives, practices, and beliefs, the approach that is represented in this thesis will be put into intensified practice. By combining multiple disciplinary approaches from anthropology, literary studies, folklore studies, cultural geography, religious studies, and performance studies, I have attempted to construct a comprehensive and critical approach for the study of whitewater paddling communities and the beliefs, practices, rituals, and mindsets that develop among them.

Obviously, in this thesis, I have only discussed a few of the aspects of this folk group that are worth exploring. Ethnographic fieldwork for my dissertation will develop all the aspects of this group that have only been hinted at here. With interviews, I will be able to ask participants for their own words in examining how they negotiate and conceptualize the human and nature complex. Tape recording story-telling sessions will allow me to document narratives, narrative patterns, folk philosophy, and how knowledge is transmitted from rafter to rafter in this group. Participant observation during group events, gatherings, and runs will allow a greater understanding of the

texture of various groups and provide evidence for the communal experience of whitewater paddling. By collecting and analyzing folk practices such as rituals, traditions, proverbs, and other vernacular features, I will be provided with cultural artifacts that provide examples of the way that knowledge is transmitted, anxieties relieved, and beliefs are supported and constructed. These ethnographic techniques and observations will provide the base for an extension of the integrated, inter-disciplinary perspective that is presented in this thesis through the use of performance and narrative studies, folk and vernacular discourses, literary and artistic production, ecological context, and historical revisionism.

The use of personal narrative and performance in the construction, analysis, and presentation, of what could be called auto-ethnographic data, provides a necessary type of embodied interaction and reception for personal narrative. The intensification of the narrative through performance allows the sense and texture of the story to be expressed and understood at a higher level. Folklorists recognize that context is central to their work and performance helps to provide that context in living, breathing color and this type of depth in the reception and analysis of the material provides the context that students of folklore require. The contextual nature of folk practices implies a need for the examination of the way that religious and/or spiritual beliefs function for, and develop in, the group. Shifting the emphasis from an oppositional perspective between institutionalized religion and vernacular belief to one which accounts for the side by side existence and inter-relatedness of the two allows the study of vernacular religious or

spiritual beliefs to grow, change, and appropriate practices and conceptions. Taking a holistic view of how these various elements of human society interact, produce, and reproduce the cultures, beliefs, and attitudes of individual communities provides a way to take modern, critical discourses about land use rights, environmental policy, and historical injustices into account in the formation of folk groups. Historical and environmental awareness are tightly bonded and the way that they factor into the modern consciousness of folk groups is an important element to consider. In this thesis, the use of these multiple approaches has reinforced the importance of studying river-rat culture for the evidence that it can provide of the development of human interaction with the natural environment and the way that it shapes, informs, and defines folk identity.

What I have attempted to do in this Master's thesis is make the argument for a holistic, inter-disciplinary perspective in the study of folklore; lay the groundwork, and build a methodology, for further ethnographic study of whitewater paddling folk groups; and support my claim that a vernacular spiritual belief can be found in the embodied experiences of whitewater paddlers. The complexities introduced by vernacular beliefs and ecological awareness combine with an ethnographic and performance presentation to demonstrate how rafting experiences and culture reflect and illuminate larger discourses on humans and nature in American history.

Works Cited

- Abbey, Edward. Desert Solitaire. New York: Touchstone, 1968. Print.
- ---. Down the River. New York: Dutton, 1982. Print.
- Bailey, Michael D. "The Meanings of Magic." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, Summer (2006): 1-23. Print.
- Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart*. Boston: Beacon, 1996. Print.
- Bell, Catherine. Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.
- Bowman, Marion. "Vernacular Religion and Nature: The 'Bible of the Folk' Tradition in Newfoundland." *Folklore* 114.3 (2003): 285-295. Web. 6 June 2011.
- Bronner, Simon J. "'This Is Why We Hunt': Social-Psychological Meanings of the Traditions and Rituals of Deer Camp." *Western Folklore* 63.1/2 (2004): 11-50. 3 July 2011.
- Butler, Edward P. "Offering to the Gods: A Neoplatonic Perspective." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, Summer (2007): 1-20. Print.
- Carver, M. Heather and Elaine Lawless. *Troubling Violence: A Performance Project*. Jackson MS: UP of Mississippi, 2009. Print.
- Cerwonka, Allaine, & Liisa Malkki. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.
- Cochrane, Timothy. "Place, People, and Folklore: An Isle Royale Case Study." *Western Folklore* 46.1 (1987): 1-20. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- Dennett, Daniel C. *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Dennis, Barbara. "Acting Up: Theater of the Oppressed as Critical Ethnography."

 International Journal of Qualitative Methods 8.2 (2009): 65-96. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101.1 (1972): 1-37. Web. 3 July 2011.
- Goldstein, Diane E. "The Secularization of Religious Ethnography and Narrative Competence in a Discourse of Faith." *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995): 23-36. Web. 10 June 2011.

- Hufford, Mary. "Working in the Cracks: Public Space, Ecological Crisis, and the Folklorist." *Journal of Folklore Research* 36.2/3 (1999): 157-167. 3 July 2011.
- Johnson, Patrick E. Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2008. Print.
- Kappinen, Matti. "Rationality, Religion and Intentional Systems Theory: From Objective Ethnography to the Critical Study of Religious Beliefs." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21.3 (2009): 274-284. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Lawless, Elaine. Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative. Columbia, MO: U of Missouri P, 2001. Print.
- Larsen, Soren C. "Place Making, Grassroots Organizing and Rural Protest: A Case Study of Anahim Lake, British Columbia." *Journal of Rural Studies* 24 (2008): 172-181. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Madison, D. Soyini. "The Dialogic Performative in Critical Ethnography." *Text* & *Performance Quarterly* 26.4 (2006): 320-324. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge, 1950. Print.
- Mullen, Patrick B. "The Function of Magic Folk Belief among Texas Coastal Fishermen." Journal of American Folklore, October 1969: 214-225. Print.
- Peace, Ade. "Anatomy of a Blockade. Towards an Ethnography of Environmental Dispute (Part 2), Rural New South Wales 1996." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 10.2 (1999): 144-162. Web. 3 Mar. 2001.
- Pollock, Della. "Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography." *Text* & *Performance Quarterly* 26.4 (2006): 325-329. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- ---. "Introduction: Remembering." *Remembering: Oral History Performance*. Ed. Della Pollock. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.
- Primiano, Leonard Norman. "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife." *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995): 37-56. Web. 26 June 2011.
- Raj, Selva J. "The Tie that Binds: Connecting Biography and Ethnography." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21.1 (2009): 73-77. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.

- Sanford, Whitney A. "Pinned on Karma Rock: Whitewater Kayaking as Religious Experience." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 875-895. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Snyder, Samuel. "New Streams of Religion: Fly Fishing as a Lived, Religion of Nature." Journal of the American Academy of Religion 75.4 (2007): 896-922. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Snyder-Young, Dani. "Beyond 'an Aesthetic of Objectivity': Performance Ethnography, Performance Texts, and Theatricality." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16.10 (2010): 883-893. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Stein, Rebecca L., and Phillip L. Stein. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. Boston: Pearson, 2005. Print.
- Taylor, Bron. "Focus Introduction: Aquatic Nature Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 863-874. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- ---. "Surfing into Spirituality and a New Aquatic Nature Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 923-951. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Thursby, Jacqueline. "Ritual Identity: Hunting and Feasting in Utah and Southeastern Idaho." Western Folklore 63.1-2 (2004): 101-121. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Trigger, David and Jane Mulcock. "Forests as Spiritually Significant Places: Nature, Culture and 'Belonging' in Australia." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 16.3 (2005): 306-320. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Tuan, Yi-fu. "On Human Geography." *Dædalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 132.2 (2003): 134-137. Web. 10 June 2011.
- Yoder, Don. "Toward a Definition of Folk Religion." *Western Folklore* 33.1 (1974): 2-15. Web. 10 June 2011.

Bibliography

- Abbey, Edward. Desert Solitaire. New York: Touchstone, 1968. Print.
- ---. Down the River. New York: Dutton, 1982. Print.
- ---. The Monkey Wrench Gang. New York: Harper, 1985. Print.
- Andersen, Nathan. "Exemplars in Environmental Ethics: Taking Seriously the Lives of Thoreau, Leopold, Dillard and Abbey." *Ethics, Place & Environment* 13.1 (2010): 43-55. Web. 10 June 2011.
- Ayala, Francisco J. Darwin and Intelligent Design. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006. Print.
- Bailey, Michael D. "The Meanings of Magic." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, Summer (2006): 1-23. Print.
- Behar, Ruth. *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology that Breaks your Heart*. Boston: Beacon, 1996. Print.
- Bell, Catherine. Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. New York: Oxford UP, 1992. Print.
- Berglund, Eeva. *Knowing Nature, Knowing Science: An Ethnography of Environmental Activism*. Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1998. Print.
- Bowman, Marion. "Vernacular Religion and Nature: The 'Bible of the Folk' Tradition in Newfoundland." *Folklore* 114.3 (2003): 285-295. Web. 6 June 2011.
- Branch, Edgar M. *Mark Twain and the Starchy Boys*. Elmira, NY: Elmira College, 1992. Print.
- Bronner, Simon J. "'This Is Why We Hunt': Social-Psychological Meanings of the Traditions and Rituals of Deer Camp." *Western Folklore* 63.1/2 (2004): 11-50. 3 July 2011.
- Burde, Edgar J. "Mark Twain: The Writer as Pilot." PMLA 93.5 (1978): 878-892. Print.
- Butler, Edward P. "Offering to the Gods: A Neoplatonic Perspective." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, Summer (2007): 1-20. Print.
- Carver, M. Heather and Elaine Lawless. *Troubling Violence: A Performance Project*. Jackson MS: UP of Mississippi, 2009. Print.
- Cerwonka, Allaine, & Liisa Malkki. *Improvising Theory: Process and Temporality in Ethnographic Fieldwork*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2007. Print.

- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus, eds. Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography. Berkeley: U of California P, 1986. Print.
- Cochrane, Timothy. "Place, People, and Folklore: An Isle Royale Case Study." *Western Folklore* 46.1 (1987): 1-20. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- Cox, James M. "Life on the Mississippi Revisited." Mark Twain. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986. 153-167. Print.
- Dennett, Daniel C. *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Dennis, Barbara. "Acting Up: Theater of the Oppressed as Critical Ethnography."

 International Journal of Qualitative Methods 8.2 (2009): 65-96. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Ellis, Carolyn. *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography*. Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira, 2004. Print.
- Geertz, Clifford. "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight." *Daedalus* 101.1 (1972): 1-37. Web. 3 July 2011.
- Goldstein, Diane E. "The Secularization of Religious Ethnography and Narrative Competence in a Discourse of Faith." *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995): 23-36. Web. 10 June 2011.
- Georgiou, Doris and Phil F. Carspecken. "Critical Ethnography and Ecological Psychology: Conceptual and Empirical Explorations of a Synthesis." *Qualitative Inquiry* 8.6 (2002): 866-706. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Honko, Lauri O. "Rethinking Tradition Ecology." *Temenos: Studies in Comparative Religion Presented by Scholars in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden* 21.(1985): 55-82. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- Hufford, Mary. "Working in the Cracks: Public Space, Ecological Crisis, and the Folklorist." *Journal of Folklore Research* 36.2/3 (1999): 157-167. 3 July 2011.
- Jackson, Bruce and Edward D. Ives, eds. *The World Observed: Reflections on the Fieldwork Process*. Chicago: U of Illinois P, 1996. Print.
- Johnson, Patrick E. Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2008. Print
- Kappinen, Matti. "Rationality, Religion and Intentional Systems Theory: From Objective Ethnography to the Critical Study of Religious Beliefs." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21.3 (2009): 274-284. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.

- Kennedy, Douglas. "After Thoughts on Human Ecology." *Folklore* 78.(1967): 81-89. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- ---. "Folklore and Human Ecology." Folklore 76.(1965): 81-89. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- ---. "Further Thoughts on Human Ecology." *Folklore* 77.(1966): 81-90. Web. 13 Mar. 2011.
- Kennon, Tom. A Canoeing and Kayaking Guide to the Ozarks. Birmingham, AL: Manasha Ridge P, 2004. Print.
- Kirkby, Joan. "In Pursuit of Oblivion: In Flight From Suburbia." *Australian Literary Studies* 18.4 (1998): 1-19. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Lawless, Elaine. Women Escaping Violence: Empowerment through Narrative. Columbia, MO: U of Missouri P, 2001. Print.
- Larsen, Soren C. "Place Making, Grassroots Organizing and Rural Protest: A Case Study of Anahim Lake, British Columbia." *Journal of Rural Studies* 24 (2008): 172-181. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Leidecker, Matt. *The Middle Fork of the Salmon River: A Comprehensive Guide*. Hailey, ID: Idaho River Publications, 2008. Print.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. Tristes Tropique. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- Limerick, Patricia. *The Legacy of Conquest: the Unbroken Past of the American West*. 1st ed. New York, Norton: 1987. Print.
- ---. Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West. New York, Norton: 2000. Print.
- Madison, D. Soyini. "The Dialogic Performative in Critical Ethnography." *Text & Performance Quarterly* 26.4 (2006): 320-324. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Manning, Richard. *Rewilding the West: Restoration in a Prairie Landscape*. Berkeley, California UP: 2009. Print.
- Masayesva, Victor. *Husk of Time: The Photographs of Victor Masayesva*. Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2006. Print.
- Mauss, Marcel. *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Routledge, 1950. Print.

- McCammack, Brian. "Competence, Power, and the Nostalgic Romance of Piloting in Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*." Southern Literary Journal 38.2 (2006): 1-18. Print.
- McCarthy, Jeffery M, ed. *Contact: Mountain Climbing and Environmental Thinking*. Reno: U of Nevada P, 2008. Print.
- Minh-ha, Trinh T. Woman, Native, Other. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1989. Print.
- Mullen, Patrick B. "The Function of Magic Folk Belief among Texas Coastal Fishermen." Journal of American Folklore, October 1969: 214-225. Print.
- Myerhoff, Barbara. *Number our Days: A Triumph of Continuity and Culture Among Jewish Old People in an Urban Ghetto*. New York: Touchstone, 1978. Print.
- Peace, Ade. "Anatomy of a Blockade. Towards an Ethnography of Environmental Dispute (Part 2), Rural New South Wales 1996." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 10.2 (1999): 144-162. Web. 3 Mar. 2001.
- Pollock, Della. "Marking New Directions in Performance Ethnography." *Text & Performance Quarterly* 26.4 (2006): 325-329. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- ---. "Introduction: Remembering." *Remembering: Oral History Performance*. Ed. Della Pollock. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. Print.
- Primiano, Leonard Norman. "Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife." *Western Folklore* 54.1 (1995): 37-56. Web. 26 June 2011.
- Raj, Selva J. "The Tie that Binds: Connecting Biography and Ethnography." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 21.1 (2009): 73-77. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Sanford, Whitney A. "Pinned on Karma Rock: Whitewater Kayaking as Religious Experience." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 875-895. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Slovic, Scott. *Going Away to Think: Engagement, Retreat, and Ecocritical Responsibility*. Reno: U of Nevada P, 2008. Print.
- Smith, Thomas R. *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi before Mark Twain*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2007. Print.

- Snyder, Samuel. "New Streams of Religion: Fly Fishing as a Lived, Religion of Nature."

 Journal of the American Academy of Religion 75.4 (2007): 896-922. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Snyder-Young, Dani. "Beyond 'an Aesthetic of Objectivity': Performance Ethnography, Performance Texts, and Theatricality." *Qualitative Inquiry* 16.10 (2010): 883-893. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Stein, Rebecca L., and Phillip L. Stein. *The Anthropology of Religion, Magic, and Witchcraft*. Boston: Pearson, 2005. Print.
- Strang, Veronica. "Common Senses: Water, Sensory Experience and the Generation of Meaning." *Journal of Material Culture* 10.1 (2005): 92-120. Web. 3 Apr. 2011.
- Taussig, Michael. *The Magic of the State*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Taylor, Bron. "Focus Introduction: Aquatic Nature Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 863-874. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- ---. "Surfing into Spirituality and a New Aquatic Nature Religion." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75.4 (2007): 923-951. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Thursby, Jacqueline. "Ritual Identity: Hunting and Feasting in Utah and Southeastern Idaho." Western Folklore 63.1-2 (2004): 101-121. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Trigger, David and Jane Mulcock. "Forests as Spiritually Significant Places: Nature, Culture and 'Belonging' in Australia." *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 16.3 (2005): 306-320. Web. 6 Apr. 2011.
- Tuan, Yi-fu. "On Human Geography." *Dædalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 132.2 (2003): 134-137. Web. 10 June 2011.
- Turner, Frederick J. *The Frontier in American History*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson, 1962. Print.
- Twain, Mark. "Life on the Mississippi." Mississippi Writings New York: Literary Classics, 1982. 217-616. Print.
- Van Maanen, John. *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1988. Print.
- Wallach, Jeff. What the River Says. Hillsboro, OR: Blue Heron P, 1996. Print.

Yoder, Don. "Toward a Definition of Folk Religion." Western Folklore 33.1 (1974): 2-15. Web. 10 June 2011.