THE NATURE OF STORIES: COLONIZATION AND DISINTEGRATION

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The Nature of Stories: Colonization and Disintegration in Mexican History

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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The economic history of Mexico has been accompanied by a parallel history of consequential biological events that have vastly enabled the intentions of colonization and development. These events created conditions that ruined local economies, instituted wage dependency and class disparity, destroyed the environment and forced millions of indigenous people into migration. Extreme economic asymmetry remains the status quo in Mexico, at the precise moment in history when the exponential effects of climate change and economic globalization stand to recreate this history on a vast scale. Precedent would suggest that culturally and economically, the United States is positioned more to exploit this perpetual disaster than we are to mitigate or even acknowledge it.

This thesis examines these parallel histories and argues that over time the disparity created by these events evolved from unintended consequence to engineered goal. Policies and language concerning trade, immigration, security and the environment have evolved to re-enforce and naturalize that asymmetry. I argue that laws and their contextualization constitute an authorized ideological re-telling of our national stories that criminalizes dependency and punishes dissent, and in so doing validates necessary imposition as beneficence or protection. Militarization of US immigration and border policies then serve not to mitigate against trafficking in drugs and laborers, but rather to capitalize on their illegality so as to perpetuate a message that re-validates the imposition.

Finally, I make the case for small-scale agriculture, education, food and water sovereignty and protection of natural systems in Mexico as a tactical approach to mitigating the effects of climate change via basic poverty reduction and social re-integration. The United States and Mexico could be supporting immigration, labor and border policies that help migrants to “stay home.” This concept serves as well to contradict the ideological framing of labor migration as criminal and its production as beneficent. This contradiction then offers Americans an opportunity to re-claim our own story of freedom and democracy and so negate the popular perception that climate change is a political hoax and migrants are terrorists.
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INTRODUCTION: THREE HISTORIES

Physical and biological Mexico as we know it was not discovered. It was created. The impoverished landscapes and crumbling infrastructure that define much of the country are the physical legacy of poverty and economic disparity that started with the conquest, which was in many ways a biological event enabled but not intended by humans. The Spanish nonetheless found justification in this biological event that they deemed a matter of divine providence. The environmental degradation that resulted from the biological invasion that was pestilence, latifundia (large-scale) agriculture and pastoralism, represented an initial impoverishment of peoples, without which the development of the colonial system and eventually the modern Mexican state would not have occurred. This initial impoverishment then set into motion a pattern of displacement and exploitation that has repeated itself in at least three distinct cycles throughout Mexican history; colonialism, modernization, and now globalization. In each case environmental degradation ruined the livelihoods or contributed to the economic displacement of land based peoples, who were then marginalized and forced into dependency on the cash economy. This created armies of essentially homeless “poor” people whose now abandoned land and dependent bodies became extorted commodities in lieu of taxation, conscription, slavery or starvation.

The building of empires that have brought about higher learning, the pursuit of happiness and civilization historically has depended on class disparity, exploitation of resources and control of subjugated peoples. The Aztecs built their empire on the backs of enslaved peoples and used public ritual sacrifice as a measure of social control, without which Tenochtitlan and the history of Aztec civilization may never have come about. When the Spanish arrived it was the Aztecs’ turn to take on the role of the necessarily subjugated. Labor was forced and resources were extracted. When liberal elites gained independence from Spain, power simply changed hands while the indigenous peoples of Mexico were further marginalized and displaced as a necessary part of the building of the Mexican State, eventually leading to social revolution. Afterwards, the post-war push for modernization and now neoliberal globalization are continuing the cycle as Mexico continues to export not only its resources, but its marginalized peoples as well.
This thesis considers three distinct periods of Mexican economic history—colonization, modernization and now globalization— their biological consequences and the means by which we have come to perceive them as natural. I will reference early periods in the development of Christianity and industrialization as well, to further illustrate processes whereby law inherently functions to normalize the conditions of conquest. Displacement and environmental degradation in Mexico evolved coincidently with its laws, instituting “natural disparity” as an essential aspect of its social structure. The predicted and currently unfolding effects of climate change in Mexico are the same environmental effects as those brought on by conquest and industrialization, namely erosion, deforestation and desertification. Researchers expect this to put additional stress on an already critical set of natural and cultural conditions that will create millions of additional immigrants from Mexico in coming decades. Environmental refugees are not a new phenomenon. But given the historical record, Americans are likely to conflate the migrants’ status as refugees with their social status as indigent, dependent and therefore criminal.

Emphasizing criminality in an age of terrorism portrays migrants as a national security risk and denies their value in terms of the political and financial capital they generate. It is impossible to stop cross border migration, and US immigration policy is not designed to do so. Along with chronic denial about climate change, let alone its causes, we can expect to see more militarization on our borders in the future. This will validate suppression of civil liberties in the US, and perpetuate the message that we are victims in need of protection. Given that I argue that walls and border infrastructure then reflect a policy that perpetuates this perceived criminal status to enforce and maintain economic asymmetry.

It is natural to relate to whatever environment we come into as nature, but what we experience as nature is not always necessarily natural. Nature, in context to this thesis, is what we experience as home, the array of relational elements in which we need to play out our stories. Nature reflects back on our instincts and feeds them with opportunities to develop and evolve. Natural for aboriginals might be what we think of as “nature,” a more or less undeveloped natural environment devoid of mechanized infrastructure. For commoners in industrial England it could be a brothel, a ghetto, a factory, or a farm. In colonial Mexico natural could have been a hacienda (large-scale plantation) or an ejido (small-scale
communal farm). A world of extreme economic disparity built along color lines seems natural to us today. Natural is what we take for granted. It is what we see with our eyes and feel with our bodies and manipulate with our hands and relate to for survival. It may be a healthy environment or not, but we as humans tend to cling desperately to what we experience as nature, as its roots runs deep and define for us the meaning of home.

Humans also need a story— a communal and individual mythology that allows us to relate to this nature in which we find ourselves. Story filters the chaos of random stimuli in the world around us and gives us a way to relate to each other. The stories we tell ourselves become our reality. We are what we believe, and all belief is simply story. Different cultures have different stories. Americans have the American dream, “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” where the success of individual freedom is born of hard work and personal merit – wrested from the oppression of kings, popes and aristocrats. Aboriginal stories combined tactile relationships to the world with moral and spiritual teachings, as they are inseparable. People are born with totems that relate them to their dreamtime ancestors, whose stories were recognizable in the landscapes they relate to by biology. A people’s collective story has profound and very emotional roots that can be manipulated politically to great effect as it has the psychological effect of playing with our definition of home, our way of life and our sense of righteousness, be it political or religious. It can be used to incite internal divisions within a nation and it can be used to incite wars between nations. Biological or historical, our stories in essence define what is natural to us. Challenging that story can be volatile.

This need for a story runs much deeper than what we may relate to as a simple matter of popular psychology. Stories, from a Jungian perspective, are like scripts that are framed in an archetypal patterning that amounts to what we experience as instinct. Judith Ress defines the Jungian concept of archetype as a biological entity that is subject to the laws of evolution (Ress, 2006). Like a DNA code in the collective human psyche, archetypes span generations and connect us with our ancestors not just in sentimental or conscious ways. Archetypal patterning is a living, breathing entity. Living, hearing, and perpetually re-telling our story serves as a vehicle for our instincts and life cycles. “The archetypal endowment of each of us presupposes the natural lifecycle of our species— being mothered, exploring the environment, playing in the peer group, adolescence, initiation, establishing a place in the social hierarchy,
courting, marrying, childrearing, hunting, gathering, fighting, participating in religious
rituals, assuming the social responsibilities for advanced maturity and preparation for death”
(Ress, 2006). Psychologically speaking then, myths are not created. Like dreams, creation
stories, hero legends and transformative rituals function like storylines that allow us to stand
in relation to our experience of mystery (Ress, 2006).

“Human ecology” might best describe the relationship between archetype, nature and
story. The patterning plays itself out collectively and individually over time in a given natural
environment. Through generations we evolve in interaction with that environment and so
participate in its evolution. Indigenous knowledge in that sense is not necessarily born of
contextualizing or deductive reasoning. Rather it represents an active and multigenerational
continuum born of constant interaction with nature, and an active agent of biodiversity. Our
stories steward this co-evolutionary process, and “nature,” our home, provides us with the
necessary relational elements. Given that, destroying nature represents a kind of genetic
interruption in this relational process and has the direct effect of erasing our stories. Our
own innate knowledge, passed down “naturally” almost as instinct, becomes irrelevant when
natural is mechanized and revelation is meaningless. Social disintegration is the resulting
condition, whereby we become vulnerable and desperate, not just for money, but for
something to relate to. Even a bad story, from this perspective, is better than the existential
emptiness of life without one.

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines “hijack” as “to illegally seize a vehicle
in transit and force it to go to a different destination or use it for ones own purposes” (Jewel
& Abate, 2001). The key element here is the necessary use of someone else’s vehicle, its
contents, its occupants, and its forced redirection. Relative to naturalizing subjugation,
hijacking is not just about stealing the car. It is about stealing the driver, his family and the
roads he built through his own territory- in short, it is stealing his story. This represents what
theologian Ivone Gebara defines as colonization, the worst aspect of which is the loss of
awareness of being colonized, losing confidence in one’s cultural values, and placing oneself
in the hands of the other in a submissive and uncritical manner, as if as if it were the natural
thing to do. It is crucial to note here that hijacking goes two ways. It is equally if not more
important to manipulate the story of the hijackers as well, as the bodies of soldiers must be
colonized to incite them to conquest (Foucault & Raibonow 1984; Gebara, 2005).
In the book *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jew, a History*, John Carroll provides an illustration of the process whereby power hijacks a religion and a people’s story to build a state (Carroll, 2001). He describes the evolution of Christianity from a small pagan cult to a major world religion as one that built itself by usurping a people’s history. Christian symbolism prior to the fourth century was apt to be centered on images of the dove, the sacred fish or the monogram of Jesus. The cross itself lacked religious and symbolic significance. “Constantine put the Roman execution device [the cross], now rendered with a spear, at the center not only of his conversion to Christianity, but of the Christian story itself” (Caroll, 2001). A new image of the church then developed around Constantine, the roots of which have lent to define our understanding of God and power today, whether or not we think of ourselves as Christian. Theologians had found a way to put the heretofore-ineffable mystery of Christ into words by emphasizing the *person* of Jesus as God. God now had a face, a gender, a race, and a name. Guilt over his death became the central focus of the faith, and responsibility for that death was firmly laid at the feet of those whose power Constantine sought to usurp, the Jews. The long spear which formed the figure of the cross by means of placing a transverse bar over it, now became the new battle standard for his army of conquest. But for Constantine to build an empire on the Christian story, he had to demonstrate to the pagan world that he was the steward and protector of the ancient Israelite state. “It was important to do so not as an upstart religion, but as the fulfillment of an ancient tradition of which Judaism was an undeniable part” (Carroll, 2001). The cross became a sword against a contrived enemy from within, right at the moment in history when statehood required an enemy to validate its imperial intentions. “Christianity went from being a private, apolitical movement, to a shaper of world politics” (Carroll, 2001).

If the specific epochal elements are stripped away, this history illustrates a process that repeats itself. In essence, taking the mystery out of the story and personifying its characters has the effect of pre-contextualizing its message and deprives people of their own experience of its meaning. That experience of mystery represents freethinking in political terms, in which case an “official” re-interpretation must replace that sense of wonder with a punitively tinged right or wrong way to experience it. The story now teaches you to associate yourself with righteousness and to fear your own revelation. Empire building is not a basic Christian tenet. Constantine was not motivated by spiritual revelation inspired by the words
of Jesus, but by his own personal vision of conquest. The Jews had to be vilified for an empire to be built on their legacy. The story of that legacy and the meaning of Christian teachings were secondary to their being used as elements of what philosopher Michael Foucault calls “power relations” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). Both of these traditions were used against each other to create a state that cared for neither but nonetheless co-opted the trappings of both to legitimize itself.

Foucault, talking about the development of industrial capitalism, refers to a “political economy of the body.” He writes that the body becomes docile when its needs become elements in a political calculus. Extorted needs become commoditized bodies, in which case “knowledge” has to be produced to naturalize the elements of these power relations. “Power produces knowledge” according to Foucault, “in which case they directly imply one another” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). Foucault argues then that law is not about prevention or elimination of crime, but about reinforcing a story that reflects the priorities of those who are in a position to carry out the “definition of offenses” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). In other words, authority hijacks your story as the context, parameters and values associated with what you think you know have been predetermined for you to validate that power.

Latin American feminist theologians offer a deeper analysis of the function of reason relative to power relations. Ivone Gebara (Gebara, 2005) writes that rationality itself signifies a separation from our roots- a cerebral reordering of our relations with nature produced and imposed by those who “know.” She regards reason as an expression of “masculine rationalism,” which is non-neutral, power based, dependent on duality and synonymous with patriarchy. It serves to sanctify, validate and enforce a worldview that depends on colonized bodies. Knowledge in this context has to be right and rational about a logic that enables intentions (Gebara, 2005).

Today our national security apparatus erects border walls that criminalize hunger as a security threat. The logic of unregulated free trade creates financial institutions that are too big to fail. The war on drugs supplies guns to narcotics traffickers. Reasonable is about the “logic of cheap labor, whereby productivity is raised and profits maintained without a concomitant rise in wages” (Escobar, 1995). Economic rationalism rationalizes an unfettered, unregulated, “free” market as “natural” and self-regulating if left to its own devices. By virtue of that nature then, “economics is the only truly objective, value-free social science;”
in which case the first free value is that of self-interest (Korten, 1995). Milton Friedman and his disciples at the Chicago School of Economics held this force of economic nature to be “a sacred, non-debatable hypothesis” (Klein, 2007). According to this ideology, the laws of supply, demand, inflation and unemployment are fixed and unchanging (Klein, 2007). Economics, above all other sciences, has become natural firmament, brought to us by “experts.”

Creating dependency through social disintegration has been a building block of development since the European conquest. Leslie Gill contends that creating social disintegration via state sponsored terrorism has been a goal of the kind of counterinsurgency taught at the former US Army School of the Americas (now Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation). It cultivates dispossessed members of impoverished societies and elevates their personal status via association with power. Police states by nature require an atmosphere of official impunity for these “yes men” to function. They operate with impunity, which generates disorder because it ruptures social support networks and creates pervasive fear, which undermines the ability of peasants to stem the violence that is directed against them. This makes it difficult for people to reconstruct shattered lives, and aggravates suspicion within communities. In short this represents a type of divide and conquer, a new social disorder necessary for the expansion of free market capitalism (Gill, 2004).

This thesis is structured in three chapters. The first chapter considers the environmental effects of pastoralism in the Central Valley of Mexico during the colonial period and the role it played in the development of the hacienda system. It provides a parallel study of the enclosure acts in England prior to the industrial revolution to illustrate two entirely opposing justifications that were used coincidently to accommodate the same ends. Chapter two starts with the Mexican Revolution and proceeds through the postwar modernization drive, the debt crisis and NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement). The infamous betrayal of the Revolution led to an agricultural modernization campaign that deliberately industrialized agriculture, creating disparity and perpetual dependency. The final chapter will examine how this historical relationship between development, environmental destruction and social disintegration is playing out in the current era of climate change, terrorism, free trade and forced migration. I advocate social re-integration via support for small-scale local agriculture and reforestation as a means of
enabling migrants to stay home. However, given the history of development, industrialized nations have more to gain by exploiting and perpetuating the negative effects of climate change then they would from trying to mitigate it. I then present policies on trade and immigration as political theater whereby authority criminalizes the victims of displacement and inflates threats on national security to suppress dissent. The thematic arc of this thesis is to show historically the ways that development creates social and environmental disintegration and then exploits subsequent dependency. Authority facilitates this exploitation by persistently redefining the personal and collective stories of a nations people to naturalize the disparity that allows wealth and power to concentrate.
CHAPTER 1

COLONIZATION

AN INDIGENOUS DISCLAIMER

One of the myths about America before the conquest is that it was a new world that was discovered by men like Columbus and Cortez, and that the negative aspects of its history stem principally from European colonization. The fact is, it was not a new world, and the mythology should be accounted for. Aztec rulers, like Constantine who was centuries and worlds away, hijacked their own story when they turned Huitzilopochtli from a mythic hummingbird spirit that delivered the Aztecs from the wilderness into a god of war who demanded the blood tribute of his own people at least as much as those of their enemies. The Aztec rulers, in addition to their very impressive cultural achievements, understood political machination in service of greed, subjugation and domination.

Shawn William Miller challenges the myth of the noble savage in this context by illustrating the extent to which excessive consumption and disparity defined Mesoamerican culture (Miller, 2007). The Aztecs had a highly stratified social system, and material consumption was the distinction of a nobility that saw itself as entitled to all of creation. The Aztec elite formed a leisure class that did not produce, in which case in tribute they demanded not only luxury goods directly extracted from nature, but also staples like food, firewood and building materials. Montezuma served 1,000 feasts a day to his noble family and friends. They wore ceremonial hummingbird garments that may have accounted for the 100,000 dead birds found in one storage room. The Gods required shelter, sometimes on a monumental scale. The plaster alone that was used to construct Mesoamerican pyramids consumed immense quantities of firewood for its manufacture. The Aztecs took so much in tribute that the considerable excess was exchanged at market along with non-tribute goods. Sixty thousand Aztecs a day shopped at the market at Tlateloco that out did anything Europe had to offer. One could purchase anything from firewood to mattresses to cake, and then sit down at an outdoor café for a meal. Shopping itself became a cultural pastime, with the market reportedly being very close to heaven for some Aztec women (Miller, 2007).
Lest we presume in terms of conquest that nature may not have had its ambitions as well, it may be anthropocentric to not account for the enterprises of microbes, which may have been the real drivers of the conquest. “Without denying the power of guns or the advantages of steel, or the undeniable sadism of the conquistadors, in the end it was nature, not the inhumane, but the non-human, that effected most of the creative and destructive processes that refashioned the new world” (Miller, 2007). The biological effects of conquest were so severe as to argue that perhaps the Spanish were forced to rationalize a more brutal role than the one they came with. From the colony’s beginnings, the Spaniards had counted on native labor and tribute, but the deaths of millions of Indians endangered their prospects. “Settlers, Crown agents and clergymen had to compete fiercely for the shrinking numbers of Indian workers and their dwindling supply of tribute” (Kandell, 1998). “Maybe in nineteenth century North America the only good Indian was a dead Indian. For sixteenth century Iberians, a good Indian was a living Indian, one who paid his tribute loyally and offered her body demurely”(Miller, 2007). For as much as the demise of the Indigenous populations opened the ground for European settlement, the world would have been better off if the Iberians had gotten what they wanted: millions of new subjects, not a landscape dotted with mass graves. There would have been more commodities to trade, more people to market them to, a more complete Columbian exchange of useful foods, materials and ideas- and no need for the deadly African slave trade. “Without germs, without an American holocaust, the entire human species, Indian, African, European and Asian, would have been better off” (Miller, 2007).

Pestilence and conquest in many ways produced a reprieve from human imposition. Miller writes that in no other period does human population, or the lack of thereof, explain nature’s transformed reality. The total population of Mesoamerica in 1650 was 10 percent of what it had been in 1492. With much of the landscape silent of human voices, natural resources that had been mined, logged, dammed and hunted for millennia, under constant indigenous pressure, had a chance to regenerate. This regeneration was the source of what Miller calls the “pristine myth.” “For those who came a century after the conquest, the New World was a greener, wilder place than it had been” (Miller, 2007).

Given that, the following account of the ungulate invasion of the sixteenth Century should not be regarded as comprehensive in ecological or political terms. It was an early and
relatively isolated event that is pertinent in that it illustrates a pattern of development and power relations.

**GRANADA**

Granada fell to the Spanish reconquista in 1492, the same year Columbus “discovered” the Americas. At that time Spain had been under Moorish rule for seven centuries. Political consolidation in Spain combined with papal fears of Ottoman advances finally provided Spain with the ability to overcome Muslim rule. The generation of Spaniards that accomplished this was a nobility that had re-conquered that which had been taken by infidels. Robert Kandell (1998) describes the attitude expressed by that generation of Spaniards who then saw themselves as entitled to the spoils of conquest as a legitimate reward for spreading Christianity. At the same time they had developed a cultural distaste for the industries that marked Muslim culture. Irrigation and intensive farming produced plentiful harvests, while Moorish textiles, handicrafts and metallurgy were superior to that of the Spaniards, who disdained handcraft as suitable only to the enemies of God. These warriors saw their position as a mark of divine gratitude for military prowess while manual labor was seen as proper punishment for allegiance to a false faith (Kandell, 1998).

Kandell writes that the expulsion of Spain’s Jews in the same era was motivated by a similar contempt, but this time for the business of finance and credit and the monarchy’s desire to rid the country of both Muslims and Jews. Not surprisingly these expulsions constituted a loss of human capital, as the financial and commercial skills the Spanish lost made them vulnerable to foreigners whose interests were not necessarily those of Spain (Kandell, 1998).

The following generation of aspiring Spaniards- Cortez and those who conquered New Spain- were born too late to have participated in the reconquista and thus failed to enrich themselves with its spoils. This new generation had been denied its entitlements and was seeking to parlay its military skills into fortune and higher social status. They were heavily influenced by the romanticism of the day, and saw adventurism in the New World as a way to realize the “wonders and riches” it promised (Kandell, 1998).

In short, they were the spoiled sons of aristocrats who saw themselves as entitled to something they had been deprived of not only by the infidels but by their own history, in
which case Spanish law itself was something they felt entitled to alter or ignore at will in order to enhance their own personal interests, and not necessarily those of the crown. This occurred coincident with the development of capitalism, with high profits enabled by long distance markets brought into contact by middlemen. This imposition of economic dominance worked with a biological encounter in which the dominating regimen met with virtually no resistance from its new world host. The indigenous had no “legal” or cultural capacity to beat the Spanish at their own game anymore than natural systems were able to respond to the introduction of external agents against which they had no defense (Kandell, 1998).

**Sheep**

Elinor Melville’s *A Plague of Sheep* is an in-depth study of the fundamental ecological changes that were the result of ungulate invasion, or the introduction of hoofed animals, namely sheep, into the central valley of Mexico early in the sixteenth century. The study involves the biological changes brought about by grazing sheep and shows how that fundamentally enabled the development of the colonies. Melville’s biological research serves to illustrate the convergence of human and natural opportunism that was the conquest. It illustrates a point in colonial history whereby the disregard of Spanish law became an aspect of Mexico’s development. It also bears a resemblance to modern means whereby the logic of free trade twists the laws of commerce and land tenure while defining the resources of others as free.

Grass, under Spanish law, was considered to be an uncultivated natural resource and therefore part of the commons. In simple terms, land that was not in use for agriculture could be used as common pasture. However that did not equate to uncontrolled access however, as the actions of herders in Spain were regulated by laws overseeing the relations between pastoralism and agriculture - and by the fact that often the animal owners were also agriculturalists. Melville writes that in Spain “the functioning of an equitable system of stubble grazing depended on a community of interests and expectations, and knowledge not only of the legal system, but also of the behavior of animals” (Melville, 2004). In the case of New Spain, the situation was quite different. The indigenous knew nothing of pastoralism, grazing animals, or of their legal status as conquered peoples under colonial law, in which
case claims by the colonial pastoralists often abrogated whatever legal rights they may have had to cultivate their land without disturbance. Pastoralism therefore developed in spite of indigenous land use or tenure rights. “The formal transference of land from the indigenous to the Spanish systems of land tenure followed in the wake of the conversion of land use to grazing…. the transformation of the environment, specifically erosion and desiccation, fixed this shift” (Melville, 2004). The results were disastrous: crops were destroyed, pueblos were abandoned and large areas of the Central Valley were so degraded that the land became fit for little else besides more sheep grazing (Melville, 2004).

Melville describes four stages of ungulate invasion, that serve to illustrate the relationship between pastoral animal populations and the social and environmental degradation that took place during the span of the sixteenth Century in Central Mexico.

Stage one is referred to as “the increase,” in which the animals had more food than they needed to eat and ensure their reproduction. Initially introduced in low numbers, the sheep remained in more densely populated agricultural areas in which case the damage they caused was disproportionate to their actual population. Many of the problems that occurred then during the second quarter of the sixteenth century involved social disruptions with the indigenous. The development of squatters rights, boundary disputes, crop damage, and violent confrontations made it clear that the animals were not welcome. To the extent that the Spanish concerned themselves with laws of the commons as far as the indigenous were concerned, by mid-century cattle and horses were outlawed, but sheep, being smaller, were not, in which case competition for forage was reduced and the sheep population irrupted. The total number of animals jumped from...421,200 in the late 1550’s to an estimated 2 million in 1565. This represented a turning point for indigenous agriculture in that sheep now predominated in terms of population and access to land (Melville, 2004).

Stage two is called “the overshoot,” in which the available food supply was reduced by the grazing of the previous generation, which forced a dispersal of herds in search of more food. Hordes of sheep flooded the landscape. By the end of the 1570’s, the region’s vegetation had been reduced in height and density. In some areas only bare soil remained. Hills were deforested and grazed upon by thousands of animals and indigenous agricultural lands were reduced in size. “Nevertheless they still provided the bulk of agricultural produce, not only for their own subsistence but also for tribute and trade; the Spaniards took very little...
interest in developing agriculture until they were forced to do so by the dramatic depopulation of Indian communities in the 1576-81 epidemic” (Melville, 2004).

Stage Three is called “the crash.” In simple terms this refers to what happened when a dense population of animals ran out of food. By the end of the century the region’s fauna shifted toward cactuses and other dry zone species. Indigenous pueblos and pastoral grazing lands converted to a secondary growth of [sparsely populated] mesquites, thorns and thistles.” By 1600 flock sizes had been greatly reduced to a fraction of their former size (Melville, 2004).

Stage four represents “equilibrium,” whereby balance was achieved between an introduced population and its food supply. The decline in animal populations slowed down by the early seventeenth century and flocks seem to have achieved an accommodation with a much reduced and transformed vegetative cover” (Melville, 2004). By the turn of the century, the region had become a desert dominated by mesquite. Massive erosion and deforestation rendered much the land unusable for agriculture and usable only for more grazing (Melville, 2004).

Like pestilence, this changed landscape was unintentional, but as an event, it was an integral part of the conquest itself. By the middle of the sixteenth century, degraded landscapes had displaced thousands of impoverished indigenous peoples. “Between 1580 and 1620, domination of regional production shifted from large numbers of land owners with small holdings to small numbers of landowners with large tracts” (Melville, 2004). Paradoxically, land became more attractive as a means to obtain wealth as its productive capacity declined. More area was required, so pastoralists moved to acquire more land as its value as a commodity increased (Melville, 2004).

Armies of now landless “poor” people were available to work for pay on land which had been their own. By 1620, the process of rapid environmental change and the accompanying demographic collapse in the indigenous population was played out. Labor and resources simply became commodities in a relatively stable colonial system. The hacienda system represented a capacity in humans to exploit reduced environmental resources, and would not have come about without this original impoverishment of indigenous peoples, brought on by the massive ecological shift that had destroyed their environment (Melville, 2004).
The hacienda sets the model for this mode of development in Mexico. The history of latifundia agriculture in colonial Mexico illustrates the manner in which this system first created and then depended on impoverished peoples who were dependent on the system. Galeano writes that the plantation was structured so as to make it effectively a sieve for the draining off of natural wealth (Galeano, 1973).

The Latifundio as we know it has been sufficiently mechanized to multiply the labor surplus, and thus enjoys an ample reserve of cheap hands. It no longer depends on…slaves…it merely needs to pay ridiculously low or in kind wages, or to obtain nothing in return for a laborer’s use of a minute piece of land. It feeds upon the proliferation of minifundios….resulting from its own expansion, and upon the constant internal migration of a legion of workers who, driven by hunger, move around to the rhythm of successive harvests (Galeano, 1973).

**ENCLOSURE**

A comparative reference to the history of industrialization in England is relevant here, as it illustrates a parallel pattern of displacement and land redistribution to that which occurred in New Spain, where the indigenous population was pre industrial and there was no formally recognized tradition of land tenure to overcome. In his 1927 book entitled *The Servile State*, author Hillaire Belloc provides a perspective on the use of the enclosures acts as a means of concentrating wealth that is later reflected in David Korten’s 1995 book *When Corporations Rule the World*. Starting in the thirteenth century, England went through successive waves of “common” land enclosures. Land that was officially tended privately or by the church was previously accessible as common arable or pastoral land for use by the peasantry. By the early sixteenth century “the lands and the accumulated wealth of the monasteries were taken out of the hands of their old possessors – but they passed, as fact, not into the hands of the Crown but into the hands of an already wealthy section of the community who, after the change was complete, became the governing power of England” (Belloc, 1927). This process eventually culminated in the parliamentary enclosure acts of the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries. “Then landed interests chose to speed up the process through the introduction of legislation that made enclosure a requirement” (Korten, 1995). “At least a fifth of the wealth of the country had been transferred to the great landowners,
and...this transference tipped the scales over entirely in their favor against the peasantry” (Belloc, 1927). This privatization of land gave incentive to industrialize, as the potential for profits and concentration of wealth became realized. As the textile industry grew, land became more valuable to land owners for what it could bring from wool production than from traditional means that previously had enabled the sustenance of local agrarian communities.

Centuries of relatively sustainable communal land tenure practices were swept aside by a mentality that saw land and people as commodities rather than economic and sovereign entities in a sustainable continuum. Efficiency of production took precedent over sufficiency for sustenance. Both Korten and Belloc use this history to illustrate the development of the deliberate use of social disintegration to induce necessary conditions to facilitate an economic agenda. “Separating people from their traditional means of livelihood and breaking down the bonds of security provided by community and family creates a dependence on the jobs and products that industry produces” (Korten, 1995). Peasants were forced out onto the road and into the cities and factories as they were forced out of local agrarian economies to labor in the cash economy.

The small landowners had largely disappeared. The corporate life and mutual obligations, which had supported him and confirmed him in his property, had been broken into pieces, by no economic development, by the deliberate action of the rich. He was ignorant because his schools had been taken from him and the universities closed to him. He was the more ignorant because the common life, which once nourished his social sense and the co-operative arrangements, which had once been his defense, had disappeared. (Belloc, 1927)

The relationship between the state and owning classes also saw a significant turning of the tables at that time.

In the place of a powerful crown disposing of revenues far greater than that of any subject, you had a crown at wits end for money, and dominated by subjects some of whom were its equals in wealth, and who could, especially through the actions of Parliament [which they now controlled], do what they willed with the government. (Belloc, 1927)

There is much dispute as to the actual impacts of enclosures on displacement, and also as to the eventual “consequences of rural population growth on those commons” in the absence of enclosures (Armstrong, 1981). As in modern-day Mexico, many of the “displaced victims” were actually in favor of any kind of a ticket they could find out of subsistence farming.
Robert Hughes articulates conditions in industrial England that produced what was effectively the forced migration of an entire criminal class through transportation. Technical improvements in ironworking along with a steady supply of indigenous coal gave England a competitive advantage over the rest of Europe in terms of its industrial capacity. Textile manufacturing in particular was a very lucrative industry that took advantage of these improvements, arguably at the expense of the commoners. Land was acquired through enclosure acts and was then used extensively for grazing sheep. Legions of new “paupers” became criminalized as their rural livelihoods disintegrated.

The experience of this new criminal class generated its own dialect and culture, which developed the craft of crime by which it survived as a matter of necessity. The perception of this class as criminal provided the popular imaginative backdrop for Sherlock Holmes novels, as the mob was seen, with good reason, to be dangerous. “It was fuel for the same revolutionary fire that had destroyed the monarchy on the other side of the channel” (Hughes, 1986).

Starting in 1717, convicts were sent to the American colonies to labor on plantations, as the Indians there could not be enslaved. English jailers profited from selling these unfortunate colonists to shipping contractors who then sold them or the rights to their labor to plantation owners for a period of conscription. But the Revolution put an end to that practice, as the new American republic was not interested in collecting the “crowns offal.” In actuality, the burgeoning African slave trade had rendered the use of convict labor into economic irrelevance. Eventually English prisons began to overflow, and by the nineteenth century so many of these displaced commoners resorted to crime that the British government began transporting them to Australia (Hughes, 1986).

“Although hard core criminals did not drift into respectability, the respectable drifted into crime” (Hughes, 1986). About 80 percent of all transportation was for petty thefts of things like clothing or domestic farm animals, while only 3 percent of convictions were for violent crimes. The real design of the transportation system had less to do with corrective measures than with literally removing an entire class of people from British society and shipping it to a place where it would stay, providing labor for the Australian penal colony (Hughes, 1986).
The majority of the infamous criminals who founded Australia were sent there (often to die in very harsh conditions) for the crime of stealing a loaf of bread or a handful of silverware in hopes of getting a single meal. Hughes, in his own words, echoes Foucault’s thesis when he refers to English criminal law as without a doubt “savagely repressive” toward commoners, again confirming that “law reflects the interests and ideology of those who frame it” (Hughes, 1986). The sentence of working in the English textile factories of the day saw them as no less culpable for their destitution. “So appalling were the conditions in British factories…viler than prisons…that workers in the early nineteenth Century were probably worse off than the slaves on American plantations” (Korten, 1995).

The industrial revolution is commonly cited as an era of vast improvements in living standards. At the peak of the Victorian era, mortality was down and fertility was up. The population had doubled. Medicine had improved. Living standards had improved. References to advances in science, culture, entertainment, travel and opportunity abound in the quick reference channels of popular internet source information. Indeed in demographic terms this was all true when one looks at the “real” history books. It is telling though, that these same popular sources reference words like ghetto, prostitution, child labor, child prostitution, poverty, debtors prison, contagious disease and “London fog” which was not fog at all but the heavy residue of airborne coal dust, nonetheless identified at the time as something “natural.”

The revolution that was regarded as an historical landmark in the development of prosperity was infamously brutal to the poor. “Economists estimate that between 1750 and 1850, Britain’s per capita income roughly doubled, but the quality of life for the majority of people steadily declined” (Korten, 1995). So at once in the popular imagination the era is associated with a certain disparity between prosperity and destitution. But there is a disconnect in this stream of association, because upon reflection, this disparity seems “natural,” as we do not question it. The age of reason saw nothing unnatural when it saw the displaced as paupers, unmarried women as whores, and coal dust as fog.

**CONCLUSION**

The histories of displacement in colonial Mexico and industrial England involve different roots with similar results in some respects. Both countries had elites re-writing their
own rules around the meaning of “the commons” in an inverse manner to one another in order to overrule an established form of land use. England passed laws requiring the enclosure of the commons as a measure of privatizing it. Colonial Mexico exploited the lack of enclosure and defined all grass as common, effectively disregarding what should legally have been enclosed agrarian land for the indigenous. Both countries justified the exploitation at the expense of their own constitutional and moral integrity. In fact, logic was produced in both cases that was designed not so much to force displacement as it was to deny injustice in the moral and legal eyes of those countries.

Of particular significance in regards to the Enclosure acts is that the internal displacement process occurred deliberately under that nation’s laws, in which case forced migration occurred through incarceration and transportation. In Mexico environmental degradation created conditions by default which enabled the accumulation of large tracts of land. The forced migration of indigenous peoples in that case occurred in lieu of starvation, enslavement or habitat loss. These developments gave birth to the hacienda system, and laid the foundation for the economy of New Spain, the structure of which simply changed hands with independence. By the turn of the twentieth Century that structure of disparity became so intolerable that it lead to revolution.
CHAPTER 2

MODERNIZATION

REVOLUTION

“In 1910, eight hundred odd latifundistas, many of them foreigners, owned almost all of the national territory” (Galeano, 1973). Twelve million out of 15 million people were dependent on rural wages and paying astronomical prices for food staples at the hacienda store. With workers tied by inherited debts or legal contract, slavery was the de facto labor system in much of Mexico. Eduardo Galeano refers to American journalist John Kenneth Turner when he wrote upon visiting Mexico in 1910, that after four decades of dictatorship under Porfirio Diaz, the country had been reduced to political dependency and had virtually transformed itself into a slave colony of the United States. “The Americanization of Mexico of which Wall St. boasts” wrote Turner, “was being accomplished with a vengeance” (Galeano, 1973).

Diaz fell and in 1911 Zapata proclaimed the Plan de Ayala, proposing that property of enemies of the revolution be nationalized, latifundia lands be returned to their legal owners, and that a third of the remaining hacienda lands be expropriated and redistributed. Adolfo Gilly refers to Zapata’s contention that one could not humanize capitalism by simply stripping it of its oppressive features. From his point of view, as an economic system, it simply did not serve the interests of the population (Gilly, 1983).

In the state of Morelos, the Zapatistas created an egalitarian society that did not reflect a typically Marxist, post-industrial utopian idea of rural democracy. But the Morelos commune did not spring simply from the peasantry either, as it also consisted of an existing urban proletariat that had had the experience of wage labor and industrial organization. The structure of this combined peasant/proletariat insurrection lay in traditional village organization, and that is what makes the Mexican Revolution truly unique in history, in that these roots did not just evolve as a form of struggle and resistance. As such, for as much as the Revolution was betrayed, and to the extent that the conquest in many ways continues, the
Plan de Ayala remains a deeply rooted aspect of Mexican identity that expressed itself in anti-capitalist laws that were written into the Mexican Constitution (Gilly, 1983).

By 1920, the worst violence of the Mexican Revolution had come to an end. Within a decade, most of the players involved in that revolt had been wiped out, assassinated or marginalized. Gilly writes that northern capitalists betrayed the revolution with a plan for development based on a centralized state (Gilly, 1983). The war that lasted ten years was fundamentally an indigenous revolt over land rights, which in spite of its success, never attained independence of the state and its bourgeois tendencies. In some respects the Indians who fought that war were not interested in running a country anymore than the liberals who took over the spoils were interested in maintaining ejidos. Eduardo Galeano quotes Mexican economist Fernando Carmona when he wrote of the Revolution’s betrayal that “The million dead in the revolutionary war years had paid blood tribute to a Huitzilopochtli more cruel and insatiable than the one the Aztecs worshipped: the capitalist development of Mexico under conditions imposed by subordination to imperialism” (Galeano, 1973).

**CHEMICALS**

The Green Revolution was another period of Mexican history that illustrates the cycle of displacement and expropriation due to development. Up until the great depression Mexico had been set up to export its mineral and agricultural resources at the expense of the internal development of human capital, public infrastructure or industrial capacity to manufacture commodities. Angus Wright discusses the brief opportunity that the revolution had to thrive under Cardenas, who favored small-scale infrastructure and indigenous rights (Wright, 2005). The depression, which deprived Mexico of its export market, put a damper on the politics of attracting foreign investment. Cardenas, who was president of Mexico at the time, built his presidency around the strength of his personal appeal and the popularity he garnered from support of the 1917 constitution. “He expropriated about 49 million acres of land and created thousands of ejidos to receive and distribute the land among members” (Wright, 2005). This spurred an agrarian reform movement that was not popular with Mexican elites, but nonetheless the real pressures against the Cardenas reform program came from his appropriation of foreign oil companies in 1938 (Wright, 2005).
He may have faced more opposition from the US than he did, but for the fact that the world was about to go to war and the US was for the moment not interested playing the evil imperialist if it meant losing the support of Latin America behind its war efforts. Eventually though the expropriations galvanized the hostility of US business interests and their Mexican allies to Cardenas. “If the logic of the Cardenas program was carried further, private capital might have little to say about the future of the country and very limited opportunity for profitable expansion” (Wright, 2005). In the end conservative views prevailed with the election of Avila Camacho as president in 1940, whose agenda favored the interests of private agricultural properties as a means of forging “industrial greatness” in Mexico (Wright, 2005).

The Mexican government gave little inconvenience to large landowners who had survived the Cardenas era, and in some cases such landowners received massive subsidies from the new irrigation projects…emphasis would be placed on production gains, not on social change or equity. Agriculture would be seen not as a legitimate way of life for the Mexican majority but primarily as an instrument of industrialization (Wright, 2005).

There are many ways of discussing the history and economics of the Green Revolution. But for purposes of this thesis, it is important to look at it as a biological event, not unlike the ungulate invasion of the sixteenth Century, except with agrochemicals doing the job of sheep. Like sheep, their use was not restricted by any natural or clearly defined legal constraint. Their presence was as an adjunct to agricultural commerce and, like sheep, fundamentally changed regional ecology and indigenous livelihoods.

Wright illustrates the particular way that the biological event that occurred during the green revolution primarily affected traditional indigenous agriculture. The entire system of industrial monocropping necessitated the use of pesticides, fertilizers and irrigation. In addition to the biological effects of introducing toxins into the environment, it was destructive to traditional forms of indigenous agriculture. Clearing large tracts of land to grow as much of one crop as possible along with the use of agrochemicals affected regional biodiversity in that it depleted natural systems that had been integrated into indigenous agricultural techniques. The techniques themselves represent a form of human ecology that evolved over thousands of years of interacting with plants in widely varying circumstances. Traditional agriculture relied on a variety of domesticated crops with wild plants growing in
and outside of the fields, while seeds were selected to guarantee wide genetic diversity within each crop (Wright, 2005).

Each crop was planted in association with other crops in carefully planned schedules and physical patterns to make the most of limited space and available moisture, control outbreaks, encourage beneficial insects, fungi and weeds, and maintain soil fertility. The combination of plants cultivated provided for a well-balanced diet (Wright, 2005).

Human Ecology in this instance relates to co-evolved knowledge of plants that could not be replaced with empirical data that we relate to as knowledge. But it is important to remember that the interaction goes both ways. Destroying nature in this instance takes the elements of our story away. So destroying biodiversity with monocropping also destroys the natural lineage of our participation in it. Narrowing the genetic base was one way that peasant technologies of security and stability could be eliminated (Wright, 2005). The green revolution in Mexico was a campaign whereby the government borrowed heavily from foreign investors in an effort to modernize agriculture in Mexico and it had the direct effect of displacing millions of peasants and small farmers. Traditional forms of agriculture were abandoned in favor of more modern labor-displacing agricultural techniques that sought maximum production of certain commercial crops that depend on heavy machinery, chemicals, and pesticides. More land was taken up and fewer people were required to work it. The government focused on developing exports and paying down debt by squeezing money out of agriculture, forestry, and construction and putting it into the manufacturing sector by guaranteeing low wages and cheap affordable food. But that made small-scale agriculture untenable. Indigenous peoples could not afford to grow their own food, and were then further impoverished by virtue of now having to buy it, which forced more and more of them to abandon their land and migrate in search of work. In the 1960’s, more than 2 million hectares of rain fed farmland was abandoned, much of which had provided the bulk of the food staples for the cities (Wright, 2005).

In the following decade, another 4 to 6 million hectares would be abandoned, and much that was not abandoned was worked for the highest possible short-term gain to try and stay on the land for a few more years. Wealthier farmers shifted away when they could from basic food production to export products sold in richer economies…By the early 1970’s, Mexico again became a major importer of basic foodstuffs while simultaneously the quality of much of Mexico’s traditional agricultural land suffered the deterioration inevitable from farmers who could not
control conservation measures. Migration to the cities and the United States escalated. (Wright, 2005)

**DEBT**

Much could be written about the history and economics of import substitution in Mexico and Latin America. For purposes of this thesis it is important to consider this history in light of the extent to which it reinforced Mexico’s economic dependency on foreign markets, which is the very thing it was designed to mitigate. Industrial modernization in agriculture or manufacturing required that Mexico borrow heavily to pay for foreign technology and industrial hardware, much of it from the United States. This borrowing intensified during the 1970’s and ultimately led to the debt crisis of 1982, the resolution of which arguably put Mexico on an irreversible path of dependency now in the era of free trade and globalization. The Green Revolution, which occurred during the era of Import Substitution Industrialization, has been outlined here as a biological event that in many ways contributed to economic dependency. For as much as the Mexican Miracle and ISI succeeded in enabling self-sufficiency and made Mexico a credit worthy place, it also made the country available for another round of necessary impoverishment in service of development. The 1982 debt crisis lead directly to economic restructuring in Mexico that paved the way for NAFTA, which arguably has tied Mexico’s hands in terms of mitigating against the social and economic effects of a new ensuing industrially produced biological event: climate change.

“Up until the 1930’s Latin America’s [and Mexico’s] economy depended on exporting raw materials to the industrialized world in order to earn hard currency with which to buy manufactured products” (Green, 1995). To the extent that their economies had been trained on exporting raw materials abroad, relatively little investment had been provided to produce infrastructure for internal manufacturing. European and American markets for Mexican exports dried up with the great depression. “As [the region’s] export markets disappeared, the economy was starved of hard currency and had to drastically curtail imports” (Skidmore and Smith, 1992), in which case Latin America saw its way out through developing internal manufacturing and classic “big government” economic protections through “import quotas, tariffs, currency manipulations, agricultural subsidies, basic food subsidies, and infrastructure projects” (Green, 1995).
For as much as these initiatives are regarded to have failed in the long run, the so-called Mexican Miracle did, at least for a while, did result in sustained and impressive economic growth, improvements in education, industrial capacity and overall standards of living, which eventually made Mexico credit worthy again when the world’s banks were flush with petro dollars. This success invited eventual failure though. Subsidizing industry and excessive protections made for corruption and cheap overpriced goods for an internal market that lacked the kind of middle class purchasing power that was needed to support manufacturing. Modernizing industry and agriculture also made Mexico heavily dependent on foreign technology and hardware and therefore loans to support their import. So for as much as self-sufficiency may have been the driving force behind these initiatives, they were ultimately betrayed by economic dependency (Wright, 2005).

Throughout the 1970s foreign banks were pushing petro dollars on Mexico that availed itself of this money based on its projected oil revenues. When the price of oil plummeted in the late 1970s, the banks called in their loans. Mexico’s purchasing power declined sharply as interest rates went up, and once again prices for its exports fell. This well-documented debt crisis paved the way for IMF loans and structural adjustment programs that steered Mexico away from its potential “miracle” and forced it to prioritize on paying back its debts (Ugarchete, 1999; Warnock, 1995).

By the end of that “lost decade,” President Carlos Salinas de Gortari and his band of US-educated technocrats had laid the groundwork for yet an other financial crisis, one with arguably far greater implications for the country’s economic, cultural and ecological prospects. In an all out effort to attract foreign investment, Salinas artificially over evaluated the peso, all the while basking in the lime light of Wall Street. Eventually Zedillo was forced to devalue the peso, which sent shock waves through the international community and led the IMF to another massive bailout of the Mexican economy (Cypher, 1995). For as much as all of this debt was crippling the country, to the extent that economic dependency benefitted the elite classes of Mexico, these conditions were made “permanent” by Salinas when he reversed fundamental articles of the Mexican constitution that guaranteed access to land for the indigenous and support for small scale agricultural projects that would use that land. This was seen by some as having paved the way for NAFTA, which arguably has put Mexico into a position of permanent dependency on foreign markets (Bacon, 2008; Chomsky, 2010;
Feldstein, and Feldstein, 1992). While this has made a small number of industrialists and bankers rich, NAFTA, for various reasons, has arguably contributed to the impoverishment and displacement of millions of the kinds of rural peoples who then wind up colonizing cities and jumping the US border.

**CONCLUSION**

The Mexican Revolution occurred in the early twentieth Century during an era of popular resistance to the disparities of laissez-faire capitalism. The truly unique legacy of the Mexican Revolution though is that its roots were not typically proletariat in the Marxist sense, but born of indigenous communality. In that sense it was not ideologically imposed or incited from the outside. Rather it was more of an organic irruption from within, fought by people who were not versed in the discourses of Marxist revolution. That revolution established a strong national identity, which, in spite of its eventual betrayal, remains a story that must be reckoned with to the extent that the Mexican State has legitimized itself on that legacy. These indigenous roots carry a unique significance relative to modern day struggles for sustainability that have naturally united the interests of environmental protection and the rights of indigenous peoples.

The Green Revolution modernized Mexican agriculture and enabled the production of foods on an industrial scale unmatched by traditional techniques. But it also signified a new era of displacement, only this time the results were more calculated, as debt was used as a deliberate means of creating dependency on a national level. NAFTA as well, has made that dependency permanent and naturalized it by virtue of its promise to bring prosperity to a population of people who would otherwise have no way out of their “poverty.” The fact of disparity being an aspect of development itself is denied in this story of “free trade.”

The discourse of modernization itself is a kind of mantra that enables what Arturo Escobar would define as self-validating “vision” (Escobar, 1995). It could be said that American technicians at the time were convinced that they acted with the best of intentions in the interests of development which was agreed upon to be the way out of poverty for the world’s poor. In a parallel history to that of the industrial revolution in England, this validates Foucault’s thesis about the symbiosis of knowledge and power. The discourse generates its own reality which blinds itself to the social disparities created by development,
in which case the very nature of the discourse implies a detachment from reality that denies that the vision has an agenda. Escobar writes that the vision of modernization became a rationalization for the institution of social disintegration as a deliberate aspect of development. “The aim is not simply to discipline individuals but to transform the conditions under which they live into a productive, normalized social environment; in short, to create modernity” (Escobar, 1995).

“The fact that for most people conditions did not improve but only grew worse over time did not… [matter]. Reality had been colonized by the development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it…” (Escobar, 1995). Wright illustrates how this vision nonetheless became overtly politicized. “The green revolution was designed in a very specific political context and carried out by technicians whose self-justifications had only the slightest relevance to the real purposes of the project. It was carried out in order to defeat a very popular political movement with a different conception of the improvement of human life” (Wright, 2005).
CHAPTER 3

SANCTIFICATION

CLIMATE

The third cycle of economic and biological events to be considered here bares a damning and consistent element of decentralization. The current culture of global commerce thrives on the image of a world that is a single, decentralized, borderless, essentially virtual free trade zone. Industrialized nations are not so much responsible for directly producing emissions then as they are culpable in facilitating the interests of these decentralized financial entities whose profits thrive with them. While carbon emissions geographically tend to occur relative to industrialization, its effect is climactic and pervasive. This dual decentralization of causes and effects makes it extremely difficult to even conceive of effective mitigation.

The physical effects of climate change in Mexico, combined with the continued effects of globalization and free market policies, point toward an exacerbation of existing patterns of response. By 2070, Mexico is projected to produce millions of extra refugees as a result of climate change. Most of these refugees will come from the poor, rural, indigenous regions as they always have. Their only option will be the same as it has been- to migrate in search of work. This migration will take them to large urban centers, to seasonal agricultural work within Mexico, or to cross the border illegally to the US. Their status as refugees is likely to be secondary to their status as indigent or criminal given the current political climate in the United States.

The actual science of climate change is intensely complicated and often still speculative. One of the few constants in understanding and predicting the effects of climate change is the lack of consistency in its behavior. Region to region, and across the spectrum, the particular effects of climate change can only be determined on a micro ecosystem basis with many variables with very different indicators. There are certainly broad patterns of effect that will be discernible between countries and continents. A general rising in the earth’s temperature is expected to combine with rising sea levels brought on by the melt down of the world’s glaciers and the polar ice caps, which according to the IPCC, could be
all but gone by 2100 (Intergovernmental Panels on Climate Change [IPCC], 2001). Deforestation and erosion are the fundamental effects of rising temperatures in most parts of the world. These effects will have an exponential effect on one another, and in broader terms will have an exponential effect on global warming. Deforestation, mostly from land use change, is the leading contributor to greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. Subsequent erosion will cause more stress to forest environments, cause flooding and create a dustbowl effect, where by topsoil is literally blown away with the wind as there is no root structure. Airborne dust traps heat and will serve as a vector for an entirely new regime of pathogens that will be migrating with climactic changes and introducing themselves to new and vulnerable human and crop populations. The end result of these combined effects in most areas of the developing world will be a condition of desertification, much like what was experienced with the ungulate invasion of Mesoamerica during the Spanish colonial era. The disappearance of native root structures and topsoil will again invite the proliferation of invasive grasses. Once this process sets in, erosion becomes perpetual and the desertification spreads, depleting fertile farmlands, causing extinction, diminishing biodiversity and adding to the overall heat sink effect (IPCC, 2001).

The areas where the effects of this “natural phenomena” will be hardest felt will be in the poor formerly colonized agrarian based areas of the world, mostly in the southern Hemisphere (Jones, La Fleur, & Purvis, 2009). In part because these places still represent decentralized indigenous land or water based subsistence economies, they will be particularly vulnerable to loss of human habitat. To the extent that these places are in so-called developing nations, they will have less capacity to adapt to or mitigate against the effects of this loss of habitat, which will further weaken their position relative to so called developed nations. In addition, the degree of environmental degradation that will occur will leave these regions more vulnerable to more extreme weather events that are projected in the future. One single event like Katrina or Mitch can have devastating effects on a poor country that can take decades to recover from.

The projected effects of climate change in Mexico and Central America point at rising temperatures and rising sea levels. Less precipitation, land use change and unsustainable agricultural practices results in more desertification, which in turn renders land useless for supporting human habitation or commerce. “In much of Latin America, up to 75
percent of the population still depends on subsistence agriculture, and *a sharp increase in is expected over the next fifty years*” (Gosine, 1996).

Researchers led by Michael Oppenheimer of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University estimate that if farming methods have not been adapted to cope with global warming, crop yields in Mexico would fall by 39 to 48 percent. Land management activities in Mexico add to greenhouse gas emissions because of deforestation and land clearing. (AFP, 2010)

The CEC reports that in 2002, land use change accounted for 14 percent of its total greenhouse gas emissions. “Some studies project widespread increases in extreme precipitation with greater risks of not only flooding, but drought. In Mexico studies indicate that almost 97 percent of the country is susceptible to a moderate or high degree of desertification and reduction in precipitation as a result of climate change” (CEC, 2008).

“Worsening economic conditions, spiraling social tensions and growing political instability, declining agricultural yields, growing desertification, increased flooding in coastal areas and worsening water shortages, will drive greater numbers to make the dangerous journey to the United States in the long term, according to the American Security Project, a bipartisan nonprofit research group focused on national security threats” (Waterman, 2010).

"Depending on the warming scenarios used and adaptation levels assumed... climate change is estimated to induce... an additional 5.5 to 6.7 million...Mexicans to migrate as a result of declining agricultural productivity alone by 2080” (AFP, 2010).

More than half of the population of the Caribbean lives within 1.5 km of the beach. Rising sea levels alone will displace the majority of the population in island nations like Haiti and the Dominican Republic (Nyong, 2009). A slight rise in temperature and acidity in the Gulf of Mexico has the scientific community projecting a complete collapse of its reefs, which would have a catastrophic effect on overall gulf ecology. Destruction of mangrove habitat, particularly along the Yucatan coast, is caused by encroaching development and the effects of indigenous peoples moving into more and more environmentally sensitive areas, after being displaced by industrial development. The destruction of the grasslands and swamps of the Mississippi delta is well documented and represents a similar threat to the other side of the Gulf. These coastal buffer zones not only protect inland communities from storm surges, they also function as estuaries for the gulf’s fisheries, upon which entire regional culture and economies in the US and Mexico depend.
Mexico is already experiencing the negative effects of climate change. In 2007, 80 percent of the state of Tabasco was flooded, costing Mexico $5 billion. Mountains and coastlines are more vulnerable to hurricanes due to deforestation and destruction of mangrove habitat. Floods threaten major river deltas, and rising sea levels endanger the gulf coast. Calderon himself has stated that climate change will cost Mexico more than 6 percent of its GNP, which is many times more than we are investing in the fight against climate change. (Fox, 2002)

Places like the Lacandon jungle will be getting wetter and hotter, with more erratic patterns of precipitation. The interior of Mexico itself will be getting hotter and drier. Northern Mexico has already suffered under the weight of an eight year long drought that has heavily increased its dependence on non-indigenous water supplies and imported staples, without which it would not have the water to grow in sufficient quantities to be economically viable.

Actually preventing climate change at this point is daunting from a scientific point of view. While there is virtually no argument within the scientific community as to the veracity of what is happening, the actual science of how each and every location in the world will be effected is very complicated and reliant on many hard to quantify variables. That said, the extreme degree of international cooperation that would be necessary to have any effect at all on mitigating the effects of climate make the science part simple. While developed nations, led by the United States, are still in official denial as to the veracity of the phenomena itself, we have passed the point where we will be able to reverse the changes that are facing us. Adaptation is likely to be the only hope for developing nations such as Mexico. Changes in agricultural production, technological improvements in resource management, and changes in small-scale economic support structures are all ways that micro communities will be able to survive.

The problem with mitigating on a global scale is that the effect is everywhere, yet the causes are not. The greenhouse effect is the product of a build-up of carbon due to deforestation, petroleum based industrialization and reliance on internal combustion, the commerce of which emanates from the so-called developed world. While the effects of climate change will hit developing nations harder, getting the industrial north to change its industrial habits will require sacrifice and cooperation, which are anathema to the nature of the highly competitive global economy. Carbon trading is a potential solution to climate change, but its management is immensely complex and its effectiveness rendered useless
without total cooperation of all participants. With the United States currently doing everything that it can at global climate summits to obstruct the process, license is given by default to rapidly industrializing nations like India and China to avoid costly sacrifices that will have no effect, especially when the real culprits at the table are benefitting from the political and economic fruits of denial.

**STAYING HOME**

The concept of staying home contradicts the entire logic of free trade. It suggests that home is a place worth staying in, and challenges the story that migrants are all from bad third world regions. It also calls into question the entire phenomena of out-migration from Mexico. “The right to leave becomes a compulsion when its symmetrical guarantee- the right to stay- does not exist. The right to stay implies the existence of the material and spiritual conditions necessary to make staying an option, not a curse. This right is absent when there is no security, liberties, jobs, dignified income, or hopeful future” (Bartra, 2008). “Economic globalization deepens the dependency of localities on detached global institutions that concentrate power, colonize local resources, and have little stake in local success or failure” (Korten, 1995). A global system composed of localized economies can accomplish what a single globalized economy cannot- sustain “locally rooted self-reliant economies …with…the political economic and cultural spaces within which people are able to find their own paths to the future that are consistent with their own distinct aspirations, history, culture and eco-systems” (Korten, 1995).

Staying home is about having your own story. It implies social re-integration. Staying home and making life in Mexico viable means turning the tides on the current priority of maintaining Mexico as a third world export economy. It suggests investment in support for small-scale decentralized agriculture and commerce. It suggests sustainability over profit and points at mitigating the effects of climate change via constitutional rights for indigenous peoples. It sees human rights as an environmental issue.

One of the myths of modernity says that organic or traditional agricultural practices cannot produce the volume of food needed to feed the planet. This assumes that hunger is a matter of population density. Peter Rosset, director of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, writes that there is no direct correlation between the prevalence of
hunger in a given country and its population. The world today produces more food per inhabitant than ever before. The real problems are poverty and inequality. Many people can’t afford to buy food that is available and no longer have access to land upon which to grow it themselves (Rosset, 1999).

In further contradiction to that myth, Wright contends that small farms are much more productive than large farms if total output is considered rather than yield from a single crop. Much of the literature comparing the productivity of modern techniques to traditional ones assumes monoculture (Wright, 2005). Wright states that researchers compared corn productivity in a triculture field to corn productivity in a monoculture field. When beans and squash are counted in triculture clearly outproduced chemical dependent monoculture (Wright, 2005).

Research suggests that in general, yields from ecological agriculture can be broadly comparable to conventional yields in developed countries…where on average, organic systems produce 92 percent of the yield produced by conventional agriculture. In developing countries however, organic systems produce 80 percent more than conventional farms. Combined with an array of resource conserving technologies, these practices not only increase yields, but also reduce adverse effects on the environment and contributed to climate change mitigation through carbon sequestration. (Ching, 2008)

Organizing the Mixteca of Oaxaca around how to deal in carbon credits and speak the language of finance while allowing them to harvest and re-plant their own ejido forests is a shot at mitigating the effects of deforestation. It creates jobs at home and stems a culture of out-migration. It takes the middleman out and supports indigenous exports of locally made products. It allows women and families to restructure their communities with a vested interest in sustaining them. Recent empirical comparisons of different types of forest ownership indicate that in communally owned forests, both carbon sequestration and livelihoods benefits can best be achieved if certain measurements are taken. These include increasing the area of the forests under community control, giving greater autonomy to local communities in managing their forests and compensating them to reduce forest use. In Mexico and estimated 70 percent of the forests are communally owned either by ejidos or by indigenous communities (Jenkins, 2009).

Michael Jenkins writes about a program run by Miguel Angel Castillo, head of the Laboratory of Geographical and statistical information of Ecosur in Chiapas, which is educating local people about how to manage these forests sustainably.
Scolel Te uses the sale of carbon credits on the voluntary carbon market to fund agroforestry efforts that reduces greenhouse gas emissions while advancing much needed sustainable development. Since its launch in 1994 the project has expanded to Oaxaca State and is now a viable business, involving more than 400 different farmers from 30 different communities and a range of ecosystems. The project…finds buyers who want to buy carbon credits for reasons other than compliance and connects them with farmers who want to sell carbon credits generated by innovative land use practices on their land. (Jenkins, 2009)

These people live in poor communities in areas that are nonetheless biologically rich. Working with them involves educating them and so invites high administrative costs. But the secret to the programs success is very basic. Instead of giving the responsibility to outsiders, the project emphasizes community participation (Jenkins, 2009).

In as much as that means sustainable harvesting and re-planting practices, it also means small business support systems that are enabling better living standards at home. This also keeps them from migrating to the border to live in a colonia. Again, the human rights of these people becomes a handle on mitigating deforestation and what otherwise could be forced migration. The question then is how much support is a program like this going to get from the Mexican government and how much will free trade policies hinder it?

In many cases emissions reductions can be obtained while pursuing other economic development objectives. Climate change mitigation should be a byproduct of actions the region would be interested in pursuing anyway in order to promote sustainable growth and reduce poverty, regardless of climate change. Examples would be to increase energy efficiency, reduce deforestation and improve public transportation, deploying renewable energy sources, developing low cost and sustainable biofuels, increasing agricultural activity, and improving waste management. (De la Torre, Fajnzylber and Purvis, 2009)

The idea that protecting human rights and mitigating poverty could be synonymous with an approach to preventing climate change illustrates the inter-relatedness between environmental degradation and social disintegration as I have explored it in this thesis. The histories of displacement discussed above, imply environmental destruction as a deliberate means of violating the life and property of human beings. If subsequent poverty and hunger then can be seen as a form of “biological class warfare” (Gibler, 2009), then the economic agenda behind the creation of need and its commoditization is easy to understand, especially in light of the human and natural resources it makes available for plunder.

All of the above-mentioned approaches to mitigating climate change provide a handle for understanding the issues at hand and represent potential for action. But the fact that they
are not likely to receive much validation or support outside of the academic and civic communities that steward them validates the history of related exploitation as I have portrayed it in this thesis. Given that, it is likely that little or nothing will be done to any effect in that there is far more cultural momentum behind the denial of these issues than there is behind acknowledging them. To the extent that our stories have been hijacked to naturalize the status quo, acknowledging the social impacts of climate change is volatile, because it commands a deconstruction of those stories. We are not just ignoring climate change. We are capitalizing on denying it as if it were a protection against apostasy.

PERFORMANCES

United States border policies have always been ambivalent. The first patrol of the border was performed by federal law enforcement officials called Chinese inspectors to apprehend Chinese immigrants who were forging pathways through the Sonoran desert to make their way into the United States after the Chinese Exclusion act was passed in 1882 (Andreas, 2009).

Patrick Ettinger documents how the history of what is now the Border Patrol began as a deliberate measure to arbitrarily control a targeted economic group along racial lines. Beginning in the 1840s, the closure of the African slave trade in the European colonies gave way to the “coolie trade,” which brought cheap Chinese labor to the Americas. Many free or semi-free laborers also came to California, drawn by opportunities in construction, gold prospecting, and eventually, the trans-continental railroad. “By 1870 Chinese workers constituted between 20 and 25 percent of the [California] state’s wage earning population” (Ettinger, 2009). With the completion of the railroad in 1869, many of these laborers got singled out as an undesirable threat to the American economy. Once the rail line was opened, the commercial establishment of San Francisco suddenly faced more intense competition from Eastern manufactures, and turned to Chinese labor to cut production costs. In a form familiar to what we have seen with Mexican labor when it becomes unwanted, the Chinese became the subjects of racial slurs and general contempt, were cast as subhuman and then blamed by white workers for declining labor market conditions. Although relatively few Chinese lived outside of the Western United States, the anti-Chinese movement, amplified by the popular media, received significant support in the East. Both parties during the 1880
elections saw politicians putting anti-Chinese immigration planks into their platforms (Ettinger, 2009).

During this time, Mexicans were quite free to travel back and forth across the border as they always had, as it was a part of their traditional means of living. The Revolution in Mexico and employment prospects in the U.S. fueled an influx of Mexican laborers in the first decades of the twentieth Century. With the arrival of the depression though, they were singled out as violent and disease-ridden criminals and deported, this after they had been brought in en masse to fill the labor gap experienced during the war (Andreas, 2009).

Peter Andreas references this part of US border history to illustrate the political contradictions and opportunities that have presented themselves as the border has evolved (Andreas, 2009). It has always been easy to dehumanize persons of color from poor foreign countries. The border is perceived as dangerous and runs through remote areas where no one can really see what is going on. Upon closer inspection, it reveals the production and manipulation of a political message that serves to use the border to target certain racial groups that may be more or less desirable for the production of commercial and political capital. The exotic otherness of the border and the people who cross it has functioned like a blank screen onto which political interests have projected and manufactured a picture of our own national identity and relative degrees of the lack thereof for “illegal immigrants.” The difference between our political story and their economic reality reveals an apparatus that uses law enforcement to arbitrarily choose who comes in rather than definitively keep people out.

Immigration control along the border has been elevated from one of the most neglected areas of law enforcement to one of the most politically popular. The unprecedented expansion of border policing has ultimately been less about achieving the stated instrumental goal of deterring illegal border crossers and more about politically re-crafting the image of the border (Andreas 2009; italics mine) and symbolically reaffirming the states territorial authority. Although the escalation of policing has failed as a deterrent and has generated perverse and counterproductive consequences that reinforce calls for further escalation, it has been strikingly successful at projecting the appearance of a more secure and orderly border. (Andreas, 2009)

Free trade policies have helped turn Mexico into a major exporter of drugs and illegal labor to the US market. In the 1990s the Mexican state repealed constitutional rights to the land for the poor, and took away support for small scale agriculture, paving the way for
NAFTA. Mexico’s free trade and agricultural policies arguably have sent a lot of Mexican people packing for the US border (Wright, 2005). To help secure passage of NAFTA, US and Mexican leaders orchestrated a law enforcement buildup on both sides of the border that signaled a joint commitment to drug control. As hoped, Mexico’s antidrug performance helped preserve the upbeat mood in US-Mexico relations on the eve of the NAFTA vote. Salinas was apparently well aware that a positive anti-drug image was a prerequisite for passage of the agreement. (Andreas, 2009).

In other words, the image of a dangerous place against which we were being protected was the contrivance of elites in both nations. Mexico plays bandito and the US plays the sheriff in order to justify a military buildup along the border to plant a message in the public’s mind.

Perhaps ironically, it is now the advanced industrialized states that remain the most resistant to economic liberalism, building up their protective walls against two of the developing world’s leading exports; drugs and migrant labor. As the source of these high demand exports, many poor countries have taken literally the advice of western free market proponents by engaging in those economic activities that provide them with a comparative advantage and market niche. (Andreas, 2009)

The free trade agreements that promote cross-border commerce can in turn provide a convenient cover for smugglers, who increasingly conceal their illegitimate cargo within legitimate cargo. Likewise, the deregulation of financial systems to woo foreign capital can facilitate the laundering of profits from smuggling. (Andreas, 2009)

Border policy rests on its inability to enforce itself. “In other words, even though law enforcement fails to deter the business of smuggling, [and in some ways helps sustain it] it is the very persistence of smuggling and the perception of it as a growing threat, that is most critical to the persistence of law enforcement” (Andreas, 2009). In this scenario it is the practical failure of the policies that serves to reinforce them politically. Revisiting Foucault’s treatment of power and law being inherently relational, Andreas says, “smuggling is defined by and depends on the state’s exercising its authority to criminalize without the full capacity or willingness to enforce its laws” (Andreas, 2009). General criminalization with no coherent enforcement creates a zone of legal limbo that undermines democracy, obfuscates legal parameters, and elevates the role of authority. This leads to a self-fulfilling
institutionalization of law enforcement and its vision. The policy’s fundamental purpose is to criminalize migrants and drug traffickers. But beyond communicating a message of authority and resolve it has never been proven to actually deter them. In which case law enforcement itself basically becomes a politicized ritual performance, with the U.S. public being the principal audience. “Highly visible but misleading indicators of state resolve- increased arrests, drug seizures, bilateral initiatives - sustain an image of cooperation and progress and obscured the failings, flaws and negative side effects of the enforcement effort” (Andreas, 2009).

Over time the kinds of professional individuals who choose to be a part of enforcing such inherently duplicitous policies in spite of democracy are people who have no capacity to understand their role in it anymore than they are cultivated to be inclined toward it. In short this kind of policing requires and institutionalizes the kinds of yes men that historically enable despots and police states. They bear allegiance to authority to the extent that it empowers them, in which case right has less to do with law or moral or human, and more to do with conforming to authority.

This blatant and stark disparity between law and authority is known as the “rule of law” in Mexico (Gibler, 2009), and it has been an integral aspect of the Mexican national story since the conquest. The US border patrol ironically has adopted and become institutionalized within a similar grey zone of national security, without which it would lose its entire mandate- apprehension of terrorists- in a region where most of the “criminals” are economic migrants. Thus, the performance serves as well to remind Americans of their own potential national infidelity should they dare to differentiate between the two (Gibler, 2009).

Law enforcement at this point becomes little more than adherence to the gospel. “Border policing, from this perspective, is not only the coercive hand of the state but a ceremonial practice, not only a means to an end, but an end in themselves” (Gibler, 2009). Democracy, the rule of law, and due process are elements of the performance. Andreas emphasizes the gestural nature of border control efforts as a kind of physical propaganda to the extent that their primary purpose is one of reinforcing a contextualized message. Going through long border waits (to say nothing of Homeland Security checkpoints within the United States) and knowingly being subject to constitutionally dubious questioning with no clear lines of legal demarcation has us adopting a kind of body language of subjugation to the
protector/benefactors. While genuflecting before the sacrificial altar of consent we deny our own political revelation to receive the gospel, as if we should be so guilty to be free and so grateful to be safe. The border wall itself is a physical symbol with a similar purpose. It has no discernable effect on stemming immigration. Yet it is a part of the earth now, a “natural” reminder of implied consent and insured dependency (Gibler, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The projected environmental impacts of climate change in Mexico will be similar to those that occurred under conquest and modernization. With the additional effects of rising sea levels and coastal habitat loss, millions of additional refuges will be produced in coming decades. Historical precedent seems to suggest that we are poised to exacerbate and exploit that displacement as an economic opportunity guised in the form of a national security threat. The idea of staying home contradicts the national security story and points at social and environmental re-integration via support for local sustainable agriculture and reforestation. The fact that acting to reduce poverty in rural Mexico points at mitigating the effects of climate change there reverses the logic of free trade as beneficent and migration as criminal. Militarization of the US- Mexico border functions to reinforce the national security story in the minds of Americans. It diminishes civil liberties to enable an economic agenda that necessitates disparity between the United States and Mexico and increasingly within the United States itself.

Induced disintegration started with the exploitation of degraded landscapes during the conquest. Unintentionally destroying natural systems in sixteen Century Mexico demonstrated a means whereby people could be controlled by virtue of wrecking the elements of their interdependence with nature and each other- in effect, their stories. In the twentieth Century modernization became a deliberate tool of disintegration that included planned displacement into its economic agenda. Now it is a highly engineered micro-tactic of counterinsurgency warfare and state terrorism.

Naomi Klein discusses the goal of torture as an even deeper layer of inducing social disintegration. Applying electro shock therapy was part of a practice that was likened to curing a patient of an ailment by achieving an act of self-betrayal in the victim. “The point of the exercise was in getting prisoners to do irreparable damage to that part of themselves that
believed in helping others above all else…[and] replacing it with shame and humiliation” (Klein, 2007). Our bodies get broken, our dignity stolen, and it is our fault. We are somehow guilty of wanting for ourselves when we feel empathy for others.

Prayer could be described as a voluntary gesture that engenders humility, in which case torture could be seen as the reversal of this very human act of reverence. Torture in this context would be an externally coerced gesture designed to induce humiliation. The body is forced to assume postures and endure physical states that only end when the victim successfully blames himself for the pain brought on by his own revelation. Rather than voluntarily assuming a posture of gratitude, the gesture is reversed and the subject is forced to assume a posture of sublimation. Extracting information is just a stage prop in the performance. Ones prayers may be religious or simply reverential, but nonetheless, in this scenario, compassion, imagination, community and the dignity of the body are targeted as pathogens in a diseased body politic.

Klein’s emphasis is the economic agenda behind these shock therapies. The dirty wars in her view were part of an overall economic shock experiment that was being conducted by the Chicago School of neoliberal economics in collusion with the CIA throughout Latin America, as if it were producing a test tube solution. The well-documented result was a US sponsored campaign of terror that tortured, hunted, murdered and disappeared thousands of human rights activists, the indigenous, the poor, laborers, and intellectuals (Feitlowitz, 1998). The goal of torture, as mentioned earlier, is to induce disunity by spreading fear. In short, the desired solution in the test tube was a dis-integrated society of bodies that could not depend on themselves. Various histories of the dirty wars state that the left under Pinochet in Chile or Videla in Argentina was defined as anyone whose story or experience defied authority. While they were being tortured into renouncing themselves and each other and embrace democracy, US tax dollars paid to destabilize their cultures via unconstitutional collusions between government, media and corporate entities who capitalized on portraying these countries as inherently unstable, prone to violence and therefore calling for intervention or democratization (Kornbluh, 2003).
CONCLUSION: THE AMERICAN STORY

David Korten uses the term “the sanctification of greed” to describe the ideological end product of Milton Friedman’s school of free market “science.” Its tenets are fourfold, based on the assumption that:

- People are by nature motivated primarily by greed
- The drive to acquire is the highest expression of what it means to be human
- The relentless pursuit of greed and acquisition leads to socially optimal outcomes
- It is in the best interests of human societies to encourage, honor, and reward the above values (Korten, 1995).

This sanctification relies on elements of the American Story, our national “values.”

- A number of valid ideas and insights have become twisted into an extremist ideology that raises the baser aspects of human nature to a self-justifying ideal. Although this ideology denigrates the most human values and ideals, it has become so deeply embedded within our values, institutions and popular culture that we accept it almost without question (Korten, 1995).

In the same way that Constantine used the story of Christ to justify conquest, the sanctification of greed represents the hijacking of our own American story – that of freedom, justice, and equal opportunity. The elements of this new gospel are secular and political, but their function may as well be religious in terms of the effect they have on the American psyche. The right side of this sanctification preaches greed. But the left side tells you to associate democracy with shame. Constantine turned the cross into a sword. The gospel of greed is currently being used to hijack the pursuit of happiness. The religion of free trade produces the gospel of unregulated economics, blocks access to our own political revelation, and so claims the American story of the “free enterprising individual.” Any American then who still conceives of “free thinking” as a more American pursuit of happiness than adherence to the precepts of a pre-contextualized gospel of necessary entitlement to excess becomes apostate and potentially criminalized. The authentic story of American democracy, fed by revelation enabled by freedom of speech, becomes, in Galeano’s words “a crime against national security” (Geleano, 1973).

Hijacking the story of your own people to incite them to conquest is the bigger half of a hijack. In Foucault’s terminology, the “bodies of soldiers” have to be colonized first
(Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). The American people are now the soldiers to the extent that the sanctification of greed represents a produced knowledge designed to manufacture the necessary consent of our bodies. Criminalizing entire countries justifies intervention or counterinsurgency to safeguard our freedoms as defined by our story. Safeguarding those same freedoms on and within our borders validates a suspension of civil liberties and the institution of official impunity, the fundamental effect of which is to relinquish those very liberties. Not unlike Argentina in the 1970’s, defying this national security state then enables authority to arbitrarily contextualize dissent as treachery. And not unlike Chile after General Pinochet’s overthrow of Allende, this intervention to save them from themselves used the story of freedom to terrorize a nation into dependency in service of an economic agenda. Our consent enables the exploitation and perpetual re-creation of an impoverished third world. Today it enables the colonization of our own story of free enterprise in service of an extractive economic agenda that would concentrate our collective monetary and political wealth into the hands of a few.

The current state of affairs around climate change and immigration does nothing to suggest that we are not repeating a pattern. Only this time the stakes are global and our resources finite. While writing this thesis in the summer of 2011, the headlines in the United States showcased a steady stream of extreme climate events. Triple digit heat across the country. Record flooding of the Mississippi River Delta. Numerous category five tornados in the south. Drought and fire in the Southwest. Hurricane Irene caused massive flooding in the Northeast where such events have never occurred. Yet climate change denial is even more ascendant in the U.S. congress. Republicans are advocating to close the Environmental Protection Agency altogether (Broder, 2011). The frontrunner for nomination as the Republican candidate for the presidency of the United States is openly mocking climate science as if it were a hoax on the part of the academic community (Broder, Confessore, & Calmes, 2011).

The United States continues to be regarded by most of the world as the major obstacle to the success of any kind of meaningful international climate accord. The official gospel of denial is far more powerful politically than leading on the issues. Climate change and immigration are politically so unpopular in the United States that the Obama administration has deemed them too toxic to touch and therefore off the table. The Obama administration’s
Secure Communities program is deporting more migrants than ever before by virtue of their expanded capacity to define them as criminal. Financial markets are volatile amidst predictions of another shock like the one that accompanied the 2008 burst of the housing bubble. The current recession represents a shock that Naomi Klein might recognize as an economic restructuring of the American middle class in terms of the global marketplace. Support for education, health care, the environment and unions are mocked as socialist. Economic disparity in the United States is worse now than it was before the great depression. Professional opportunities have declined sharply. Americans are naturalizing law as the domain of authority, synonymous with a particular worldview, and not the product of a participatory democracy. All of the sustainability oriented policy and immigration reform we could muster now would be like a picket fence in front of a freight train, even if we were not in official cultural and legal denial as to the existence of that train. Little illusion will be cast here to gloss this over, and little more than that is available.

Given Ress’s Jungian treatment of story and its biological means of relating us to nature, “meaning and purposefulness are not the prerogatives of the mind. Rather, they operate in the whole of living nature” (Ress, 2006). In this context, Korten suggests that we inherit through our birth a responsibility far beyond our survival, in which case “simply avoiding extinction will not suffice as a reason to draw us to the difficult changes we must make” (Korten, 1995). For as much as our stories have been hijacked, our need for a story will never go away, and neither will nature, in spite of whatever calamity we have set for ourselves in the coming generations. Natural systems seek balance. History would suggest that once there is nothing left to extract, conservatives will run out of things to conserve, liberals will have nothing left to save, power will have no state to hijack and the opportunity for creativity will prevail, albeit with no small degree of calamity. If the left side of sanctified greed is shame in American revelation, then as Americans we can decide to reclaim our own story. I refuse to accept that humanity is naturally violent or that conquest for better or worse is simply how civilization must advance itself. If that is the case then we surely are killing ourselves to save ourselves in which case our days are numbered. But if meaning itself truly is an organic aspect of the greater natural systems that beget humanity, as long as there is humanity, that meaning will perpetually try to express itself.
This thesis has presented histories of conquest and theories of subjugation. It references various discourses, suggests solutions, and opines that we are poised to repeat history at a time when what we need the most is not the repetition of HIS story but the re-conjuring of OUR story. At the end of the day that conjuring does not produce an intellectual commodity. But it does enable a renewed political revelation, not born of “knowledge,” that is as available as its archetypal roots are deep in our evolution on earth. Korten writes that discovering a new story that gives us a reason to live is crucial to our survival. Wresting the American Story (and the planet) from the twisted contours of sanctified greed is a good start. Experiencing our own revelation of “freedom” takes the story back from those “aristocrats of mercy” (Escobar, 1995) who would have us believe that there is no story outside of that which is theirs to bestow or deny. Otherwise, to use Korten’s words, as the current story has it, we really were given the miracle of life so that we could destroy the fruits of millions of years of evolution on this unique planet (Korten, 1995).
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