transformed and ordered the American landscape in unprecedented ways. It also entailed the taming and conquest of nature and human beings, as witnessed by the near extermination of bison and of Native Americans. These processes were replicated in many of their particulars during the English colonization of East Africa.

SOCIAL HISTORY II:
WESTWARD EXPANSION IN THE UNITED STATES

National Parks and Native Americans: A Seldom Considered Relationship

I recall visiting Great Smoky Mountain National Park in 1983, during spring break of my freshman year in college. On our way into the park my roommate and I stopped in Cherokee, North Carolina. Just outside of the shop we had stopped at was a teepee. Seated in front of it was a Native American man dressed in buckskin and a feathered headdress. A hand-painted sign invited: “Get your picture taken with a real Cherokee chief?” I noticed several more shops and stands selling turquoise jewelry and other Native American souvenirs. I was aware that most Cherokee were relocated to Oklahoma and Missouri in the 1830s because I had done a project on the Trail of Tears in sixth grade. However, the man seated in front of the teepee did not seem strange to me. I never considered that the Cherokee did not traditionally live in tepees or dress like the Indians in F-Troop (for those of you too young to remember, you can probably catch F-Troop on one of those vintage-TV satellite channels). It didn’t strike me as odd that Cherokee shops were selling Navaho jewelry. Nothing about this scene seemed at all incongruous to me.

It was not until I visited Tarangire National Park in Tanzania some ten years later that the significance of this experience became clear to me. Makayuni, the last town before the entrance to the park, is where tourists stop to buy gasoline, snacks, and souvenirs. On my first stop in Makayuni I was accosted by a group of Masai women selling beaded necklaces and copper bracelets. One gave me a handful of coins from Australia, Japan, Germany, and Canada, and asked for the equivalent in Tanzanian shillings. In the shade of a nearby tree, some men had spread carvings, drums, and other souvenirs. Most of these objects weren’t made by the Maasai, but by coastal ethnic groups. Others were just generic tourist carvings of no particular ethnic tradition. A pair of Masai warriors offered to pose for pictures with tourists for a fee.

I was aware that many of these people had been impoverished by displacement from Tarangire and were trying to make a living in any way they could, just as the Cherokee man outside of the teepee was probably descended from people who once lived in the area that is now Smoky Mountain National Park. But to the average tourist there was nothing odd about these people. It seemed reasonable that “traditional Africans” should be selling art objects on the side of the road. They were an expected part of the national park experience, but not actually a part of the national park. Likewise, the Cherokee and other Native Americans are part of the national park experience in the United States, but not allowed to live inside the parks. Just as I never gave the “real Cherokee chief” a second thought, most non-Native Americans seem to accept that Native Americans are part of the scenery, but scenery not contained in national parks.
thing that happened in the distant past not affecting current times, they are also reluctant to acknowledge that the displacement of Native Americans has anything to do with the present day, especially with regards to national parks (cf. Burnham 2000:Chapter 1; Moore 2002:Chapter 4). Most studies on national parks mention Native Americans in passing, if at all (Spence 1999). A common response from American audiences after hearing my analysis of Tanzanian national parks is something like, "Why can’t African national parks be more like national parks here in the United States?" My standard response to this question has been that Native American groups who lived in these areas were exterminated or removed to reservations and therefore no longer visible to park visitors. In Africa, large concentrations of displaced people live smack dab on the boundaries of the park causing all sorts of conflict. In America these conflicts aren’t as visible because the native populations are simply gone.

One thing that I have since learned was that my impression that Native Americans have been removed from the vicinity of national parks was mistaken. Most parks in the western part of the country share boundaries with Indian reservations, many of which are still contested. Just like the Maasai in East Africa, Native Americans living in the vicinity of parks have continually lobbied for access to natural resources enclosed within them, resources that were once part of their traditional homelands (Keller & Turek 1998; Spence 1999; Burnham 2000). In addition to being exterminated and removed, Native Americans have been made to disappear from national parks while remaining in their vicinity. This is an impressive feat, made even more impressive by the fact that they have been made to reappear in certain controlled situations, such as greeting tourists at the railroad station, performing traditional dances, acting as golf caddies, or giving educational lectures.

The creation of “pleasing prospects,” erases people from the landscape, be they English peasants, Native Americans, or Maasai herders. In order for this illusion to be effective, however, this process of erasure must erase itself: wildernesses have always been wildernesses, and never anything else. This can be seen in pamphlets from American national parks, which refer to Native Americans as their “first visitors,” implying that parks have always been uninhabited. In fact, the creation of “pleasing prospects” here in the United States has been a hotly contested process. Just as in East Africa, conflicts over American parks have occasionally been violent, to the extent that the U.S. Army was called in to keep Native Americans out of Yellowstone in the late 19th century. The creation of parks in America took the European idea of the “pleasing prospect” and enshrined it in officially designated wildernesses protected by state authorities. As such, American parks have “served as models for preservationist efforts, and native dispossession, all over the world” (Spence 1999:5).

*Manifest Destiny, the Transformation of the American Landscape, and the Displacement and Containment of Native Americans*

In his book *Progress and Privilege*, William Tucker (1982) argues that wilderness is the product of Western industrial societies. “The image of nature as unspoiled, unspoiled wilderness where we can go to ‘learn the lessons of ecology’ is both the product of a complex technological society and an escape from it” (p. 145). The Western construction of wilderness, which separates people from nature, can only
happen in a society with the technology and resources necessary to impose this vision by forcefully separating people from nature and continually enforcing that separation. In recalling the creation of Indian reservations and national parks in the American West, Lakota holy man Black Elk described this process thusly (1932):

Once we were happy in our own country and we were seldom hungry, for then the two-leggeds and the four-leggeds lived together like relatives, and there was plenty for them and for us. But the Wasichus [Anglo-Americans] came, and they have made little islands for us and other little islands for the four-leggeds, and always these islands are becoming smaller, for around them surges the gnawing flood of the Wasichu; and it is dirty with lies and greed. (p. 7–8).

This “gnawing flood of the Wasichu” translates to progress, development, and economic growth, processes that contemporary conservationists view as a threat to nature and wildlife. As Tucker points out, wilderness areas in the United States have become a refuge from this “gnawing flood,” but ironically they were also made possible by it. This is a fundamental problem that conservationists are unable to address even today. Perhaps the biggest problem facing conservation in the United States today is the historical attitude of Americans that the natural resources of the continent are unlimited. This attitude continues to inform national policies, such as the unwillingness to mandate gas-mileage restrictions on cars and the desire to find unlimited resources in places like the Arctic Wildlife Refuge. The ironic relationship between the seemingly incompatible American ideals of economic growth and wilderness preservation can be seen in the marketing of gas-guzzling SUVs, which are portrayed as the ultimate vehicle to use when one wants to have a real wilderness experience.

The notion of North America as a continent of unlimited resources can be traced to the first impressions of Europeans who landed on the eastern seaboard in the 17th century. By the time of enclosure, most of the best game and timber resources had disappeared from the crowded islands of Great Britain. Coming from this depleted landscape the forests of New England appeared as a treasure trove of timber and game, and the coastal waters and rivers appeared teeming with fish (Cronon 1983:21–25). What early settlers failed to recognize was that this perceived abundance actually had limits, that it was seasonal, and that it only existed in a few favored locales. Furthermore, it was the product of local resource management systems, such as controlled burning and seasonal migration. European resource management, which revolved around demarcated farms and settled villages, transformed local resource management and the landscape of New England. By the early 19th century there was little game or timber left in the northeastern United States. Looking over the landscape in 1855, writer-conservationist Henry David Thoreau referred to it as an “emasculated landscape” (ibid:4).

This did not dampen the idea that America was a land of unlimited resources. It was a big country and there always seemed to be somewhere else to go. The Louisiana Purchase, the war with Mexico, and the withdrawal of the English from the Oregon Territory opened up the United States for coast-to-coast expansion by 1850. A new ideology accompanied this process of expansion and conquest. In 1845, newspaper editor John O’Sullivan coined the term *manifest destiny*, the idea that
The view from the Native American side was somewhat different. The spread of Anglo settlements from east to west, graphically depicted in the Saturday-morning TV classic “Elbow Room”\(^1\) was constantly butting up against their territories.\(^2\) This recurring situation, euphemistically known as the “Indian Problem,” resulted in the Cherokee removal in 1838 and 1839. It also led to military conflicts such as the Black Hawk wars in Illinois in 1832 and the Seminole wars in Florida from 1834 to 1842. These types of “problems” in the east led to the wholesale removal of Native Americans to an officially designated “Indian Territory,” just as the landless poor who became a “problem” for enclosure in England were removed to Australia. Indian Territory originally applied to all lands north of the Missouri state border, and west of the Mississippi where the government had established a “permanent Indian frontier.” Eventually, however, it was restricted to what was to become the state of Oklahoma, and ultimately small parcels of scattered reservations (Spence 1999:15).

By the late 19th century, the force of commercial expansion had become so prevalent that Native Americans were restricted to areas thought to have little economic value. The containment of the Native Americans was effected by the enclosing of land for farms and ranches, as well as by the near extermination of the bison herds on which they depended for their subsistence. This process has and continues to cause no end of consternation for the Native American groups that it displaced and dispossessed, but it also caused consternation among a small but influential group of eastern elites who saw commercial expansion as a threat to the natural beauty of the west. These elites, who contrasted the pristine wildness of the west to the “emasculated” landscapes of the east, spearheaded the national park movement in the United States. Thus, the American West was segregated into islands of Indian reservations and islands of national parks, surrounded by the “gnawing flood” of progress and economic growth.

**Manifest Destiny and the Wilderness Ideal**

The original call for the creation of national parks in the United States is commonly attributed to an eastern lawyer named George Catlin, who abandoned law to be a landscape painter. Traveling up the Missouri River in the early 1830s, Catlin was impressed by the scenic beauty of the Great Basin and its Native American inhabitants. He also feared that this landscape and its people would be irrevocably transformed by the westward expansion. He therefore proposed “some great protecting policy of government” to preserve large expanses of land in all “its pristine beauty and wildness . . . where the world could see for ages to come, the native Indian in his

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\(^1\)You can hear songs and view videos of “Elbow Room” at http://www.school-house-rock.com/Elbo.html.

\(^2\)For an alternative cartoon view see *A Brief History of the United States*—http://bowlingforcolumbine.com/media/clips/index.php.
classic attire, galloping his horse... amid the fleeting herds of elk and buffaloes.”
This vast protected area would become a “nation’s park” (Spence 1999:10—italics in original).

Unlike European landscape painters of this era, Catlin included local people in his work. His vision of a “nations park” also included “noble savages.” In fact, during the mid-19th century, the idea of Native Americans and wilderness was synonymous in the Anglo-American imagination, as witnessed by period landscape paintings and popular novels by writers such as James Fenimore Cooper, not to mention the epic poem Song of Hiawatha by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. These ideas were greatly flawed, since these wildernesses were actually anthropogenic landscapes. Likewise, the mounted hunters of the Great Basin were not “classic” Indians, but the product of recent innovations by groups displaced from the East.

These ideas stand in contrast to the notions of uninhabited wilderness that dominated the American conservation movement by the end of the 19th century, when romantic ideals of Native Americans were being replaced with the notion that they were a threat to civilization and wilderness. By this time Yellowstone and Yosemite National Parks had already been established, and Glacier National Park was soon to follow. The rhetoric surrounding efforts to keep local people out of these newly established parks echoed the assertions of aristocratic classes on the other side of the ocean, whose ideas were beginning to influence the elites in the eastern United States who played an essential role in the national park movement.

Like the English peasants displaced from country estates, and later Africans displaced from national parks, Native Americans were portrayed as lacking appreciation for natural beauty and being completely bereft of conservation values. In 1879, sport hunters and settlers in Colorado were complaining to the commissioner of Indian affairs, that native hunters were “wanton[ly] destroying game” and engaging in burning practices that needlessly destroyed large tracts of valuable timber (Spence 1999:62). In 1886, Captain Moses Harris, who had been placed in charge of keeping native hunters out of Yellowstone, charged that they “work[ed] more destruction in during a summer’s hunt than all of the [non-Indian hunters] put together (ibid:63). Such a claim seems ludicrous considering that white hunters had recently poached American bison to near extinction, but, as Brockington and others have so clearly demonstrated, conservation rhetoric does not always match the reality of the situation.

Another type of argument for keeping Native Americans out of national parks referred more to the aesthetic of nature than their alleged ecologically destructive practices. John Muir, the man responsible for the creation of Yosemite National Park and founder of the Sierra Club, frankly argued that Yosemite Indians did not belong in Yosemite National Park because they ruined the pristine beauty of the landscape. He argued that the Yosemite “seemed sadly unlike nature’s neat well-dressed animals,” further noting that “from no point of view that I have found are such debased fellow beings a whit more natural than the glaring tailored tourists we saw that frightened the birds and the squirrels” (1987:58–59). The bottom line for Muir was that nature was meant to be enjoyed as a “pleasing prospect,” without the intruding unpleasantness of “filthy” Indians, since in his opinion “nothing truly wild is dirty” (ibid).

This was not a scientific opinion. Like so much conservation today it was merely
the Sierra Club, the National Parks Conservation Association, and the Friends of the Earth have been consistently opposed to allowing Native Americans back in the parks (Keller & Turek 1998:178–184), just as organizations like the AWF oppose opening up African parks to their original inhabitants. What happened between 1840 and 1870 to change America’s vision of national parks so drastically? A few key factors are especially important to this study, including the influence of European ideals of nature, the involvement of eastern elites (many of whom were sport hunters), patriotism, manifest destiny, and the promises of a lucrative tourist industry.

In the years between Catlin’s visit to Nebraska and Roosevelt’s visit to Yosemite, the idea of a vast protected area for Native Americans fell to the wayside in the face of manifest destiny. Those seeking to protect Native Americans asserted that reservations could be restricted to areas of “little economic value,” where Native Americans could become “civilized” before leaving to become settled farmers or looking for work in the cities. Likewise, the rationale for creating national parks was that they were preserving the rugged beauty of the American wilderness, but that these were also areas of “little economic value.” This meant in practice that reservations and national parks frequently wound up in the same areas, and that the creation and expansion of parks frequently occurred through the “ceding” of Indian land.

The impetus for wilderness preservation in the 19th-century United States came from “easterners of a literary and artistic bent” (Nash 1982:91) who were influenced by English ideas of nature and aristocracy. Fredrick Olmstead, one of the first commissioners of Yosemite in the 1860s, required park staff to read William Gilpin’s “Picturesque Tours of the British Isles” (Crandell 1993:132). He also believed that “the power of scenery to affect men is, in a large way, proportionate to the degree of their civilization and the degree to which their tastes have been cultivated” (quoted in Nash 1982:106). Olmstead argued against the privatization of scenic lands, while simultaneously arguing that only a particular class of American could enjoy nature enough to deserve it. While he was directing this argument at white ranchers who were invading Yosemite (cf. Tucker 1982), it seemed to go without saying that Native Americans especially lacked the civilization and refinement to appreciate national parks, although a few progressive held that they might reenter them as visitors some day in the distant future (Spence 1999).

In America, this aristocratic attitude toward nature was tempered by manifest destiny, and an inferiority complex that upper class Americans had regarding their counterparts in Europe. Unlike Europe, North America lacked monuments and architecture linking the aristocratic classes to a distant and glorious past. For members of this class, “natural monuments” such as Niagara Falls, Pike’s Peak, and the geysers of Yellowstone came to represent an equally glorious connection (Burnham 2000:19). Tourism had already desecrated the “natural monument” of Niagara Falls, proponents of national parks wanted to make sure that similar outcomes did not occur in the west. In the rhetoric of manifest destiny the “natural monuments” of the west represented “America’s special covenant with the western landscape” (Spence 1999:34). These magnificent natural features had been placed in the landscape since the beginning of time, awaiting the arrival of Anglo Americans in order to realize their true splendor. Such a teleological worldview obviously precluded the possibility that these “wildernesses” were of previous importance to other groups of people, who were after all insignificant in the face of manifest destiny.
The association of national parks with patriotism and manifest destiny lent them new symbolic value that bore little relationship to the commercial value of their natural resources. A number of commercial interests quickly recognized this value and became instrumental in their creation. Early parks in the United States promised a certain type of experience to eastern elites. As “America’s playground” they became the stage for elite fantasies and a prototype for Disney and the fantasy industry. They “presented a fantasy realm where individual Americans could play out little frontier dramas, and reinvigorate their lives through contact with the essential elements of the American wilderness” (Spence 1999:87). Like East African safaris today, this was a sanitized and secure experience. There was little chance of being scalped, eaten by a grizzly bear, kicked in the head by a mule, or dying of cholera or exposure like many of the original pioneers.

Railroad companies throughout the west advocated for the creation of parks and the rights to build lines that served them. They also built luxury lodges inside the parks and advertised packaged tours, foreshadowing the luxury safaris packages enticing Westerners to East Africa today. The Northern Pacific Railroad sponsored the expedition that explored and charted Yellowstone in 1870 and lobbied to control tourist concessions within the park, influence park management, and build a railroad line inside the park (ibid:61). Although resisted by more purist conservationists, similar relationships existed between railroad companies and Glacier National Park, as well as Mesa Verde National Park. Even today, tourist concessions inside America’s national parks remain big business for private companies (see Chapter 5).

These ideas and interests coalesced in the landscape of America’s national parks in the late 19th century. As in Africa and Europe, however, these social and environmental transformations did not go unchallenged. National parks in America were (and remain) contested landscapes, just as Tarangire National Park in Tanzania has been (and remains) a contested landscape. Yellowstone literally defined “fortress conservation.” Its first headquarter building was known as Fort Yellowstone, described by park superintendent Philetus Norris as “a first-class block house 40 by 18 feet, two stories high, with an octagon turret or gun room, 9 feet in diameter and 10 feet high, all surmounted by a national flag 53 feet from the ground” (quoted in Spence 1999:57).

The fort reflected the park’s “Indian troubles,” including tourists being taken hostage by the Nez Perce, conflicts between park authorities and the Bannock, and the Sheep Eater War in nearby Idaho. These conflicts needed to be contained so that tourists could have a fantasy frontier experiences rather than real life confrontations with “hostile Indians.” This was achieved by the U.S. Calvary, which forcefully excluded native groups from Yellowstone and contained them on reservations. By 1885 a wealthy easterner named George Wingate (1886:14) was happy to proclaim that the park’s “Indian difficulty (are) cured. Indians have been forced back on their distant reservations, and the traveler will see or hear no more of them than if he was in the Adirondacks or White Mountains (wilderness retreats in Massachusetts and New Hampshire).” Interestingly, the cavalry and the parks authorities had been successful in replicating the type of “emasculated landscape” decried by Thoreau at Walden, but were able to make them seem wilder and more pristine than the lands of his native New Eno.
eastern aristocracy decided that it was time to limit hunting. Members of this group made the prevention of native hunting in the national parks a “minor cause celebre.” Support came from men like Theodore Roosevelt, a big game hunter in both the American West and East Africa. Along with George Bird Grinnell, founder of the Audubon Society and Glacier National Park, Roosevelt established the Boone and Crockett Club, to “promote an ethic of manly restraint among sportsmen” (ibid:64).

The role of wealthy sport hunters, along with other elements of European enclosure and westward expansion in the United States, reemerged in the creation of national parks in East Africa. This process revolved around elite notions of nature, and the desire to tame landscapes and people. As in the United States, the tension between economic growth and conservation became a central issue in East Africa. Finally, and most importantly, the creation of national parks in East Africa erased local people and their activities from the landscape, a process nearly universal to nature conservation and the creation of wilderness around the world.

**SOCIAL HISTORY III: THE BRITISH EMPIRE AND LANDSCAPES OF CONTROL IN EAST AFRICA**

*The Penitent Butchers and the Origins of African Conservation*

To the extent that wealthy sport hunters played a central role in defining conservation and the creation of national parks in the United States, they played an even greater role in Africa. It is no accident, therefore, that the largest and most visited national parks in Africa are found in the southern and eastern part of the continent, in countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Tanzania. These countries were heavily settled by Europeans during colonialism and still have relatively large and influential European communities. Kenya, especially, had a sizeable aristocratic population who saw big game hunting as a birthright and an important mark of their status and privilege. In fact, East Africa was explicitly marketed to this group of people by the English government and private businesses. A promotional poster for the Uganda railway, which was built to connect the Kenyan coast to the interior in the early 20th century, proclaims (Weinthal 1923):

> The highlands of British East Africa as a winter home for aristocrats has become a fashion. Sportsmen in search of big game make it a hobby. Students of natural history revel in this field of nature’s own making. Uganda railway observation cars pass through the greatest natural game preserve in the world.

In the early days of the railroad, European sport hunters shot animals from the windows of their first-class carriages and the platforms of upcountry stations. The railway also opened up the highlands for European settlement throughout the first half of the 20th century. During this period, big game hunting, natural history, and wildlife preservation were closely related activities. Edward North Buxton, one of the most prominent British conservationists in colonial Africa, dedicated his life to shooting and collecting rare animals. Theodore Roosevelt visited East Africa under the auspices of the Smithsonian Institution and the national museum, with the job of collecting specimens. Roosevelt noted the similarities between Kenya at the turn of the 20th century and Wyoming of 30 years earlier. However he remarked that