

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Radical Centrism: The Bakatcha Bandit, Emook, and the Hope of the Riparian

Abstract approved:

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In 1965 Malcolm X said that "we are living in a time of extremism. People in power have misused it now there has to be a change, and a better world has to be built, and the only way it's going to be built is with extreme methods. And I, for one, will join in with anyone--don't care what color you are--as long as you want to change this miserable condition." In 2016 Naomi Klein published *This Changes Everything* which claimed that the only way to avoid imminent climate destruction was the end of global capitalism. What these two radical, potentially extremist, thinkers show is the connection between systemic liberal oppression and climate exploitation. These are, in essence, the two forces which the protagonists of *The Sea Lion* and *Sailor Song* are fighting against: gendered oppression by a monstrous invader and the capitalist commodification of unsettled lands. Emook and Ike, in *The Sea Lion* and *Sailor Song*, subvert the systematized logics that the colonizer manipulates for exploitation and in doing so save their communities from destruction. I connect this pattern to the natural example of riparian zones, one of the earth's 15 unique biomes. The riparian is unique in that it exists at the confluence of two diametrically opposed

forces: land and water. At this juncture, it ameliorates the effects of things like flooding and pollution that could be destructive to both ecosystems. In this way and others, Emook and Ike can be seen as deploying a natural metaphor for anti-colonialization in a way that challenges how we read nature in literature.

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Radical Centrism: The Bakatcha Bandit, Emook, and the Hope of the Riparian

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Evan Scruton, Author

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	15
Ike Sallas: The Riparian (Anti-)Hero	
Chapter 2.....	31
Penis <del>Envy</del> Compersion: Emook's Affirmation of Non-binaristic Identity	
Works Cited.....	47

# Radical Centrism: The Bakatcha Bandit, Emook, and the Hope of the Riparian

## Introduction

### Radical Centrism?

At first blush, people often tend to respond to the phrase *radical centrism* as if it were an oxymoron. Centrism, obscured to mean moderation, seems like the antithesis of radicality. However, if you begin with Marx's definition of radical, that which "grasps at the root of the matter," it becomes more clear how centrism could be radical. Marx claimed that, "for man, the root is man himself." This analysis of *Sailor Song* and *The Sea Lion*, on the other hand, will consider conflicts which have binaristic opposition as their root. Emook and Ike, in *The Sea Lion* and *Sailor Song*, demonstrate the efficacy of a non-oppositional, common strategy which subverts the systematized logics that the colonizers in their stories manipulate for exploitation. This strategy, in both cases, requires the characters to locate themselves at the point of conflict, but in a non-oppositional way--and in the case of binaristic opposition this site is logically at the center of the conflict, between the two opposing dyads. By refusing to partake in the conflicts created by binaristic distinction--by refusing to abide the dualism which serves to reproduce suffering and disparity--Emook and Ike end up emerging heroic as saviors of their respective communities. In both cases, the characters forego the opportunities they had to increase their own power and privilege, and instead they evade direct conflict in order to erode exploitative and violent hierarchies. In both cases, this is done by lingering in the inter-space between two oppositionally-opposed binaristic identities. I connect this pattern to the natural example of riparian zones, one of the earth's 15 unique biomes<sup>1</sup>. Difficult to define due to their high level of variance, riparian zones are often described indirectly, as the zone where a terrestrial and aquatic

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<sup>1</sup> This number varies slightly in different classification models.

biome meet<sup>2</sup>. Sharing various combinations of the characteristics of both of these environments, the riparian is significant because it serves as a filter to protect these two zones from each other. For instance, riparian zones slow the drainage of runoff to rivers to prevent overflow following downpours, prevents floods from washing away the land, and adds stability and health to surrounding areas. Additionally, in some areas the shade provided by the plants in the riparian biome are important for maintaining a water temperature necessary for certain fish species to survive (Clare). Unfortunately, the removal of these biomes has resulted in abrupt, generally damaging effects which shouldn't overshadow the fact that the un-managed re-introduction of them has been shown to be highly ecologically restorative (Ratti). But in the places where the environment may have lost the benefits of the riparian, Kesey's later works demonstrate personalities that perform similar functions. These personalities can be understood as riparian for their ability to step between two strictly bifurcated categories and perform an ameliorative resistance to dualism. In this way and others, Eموok and Ike can be seen as deploying a natural metaphor for anti-colonialization in a way that challenges how we read nature in literature. This enmeshing of the natural characteristics and human ones is critical for getting to the root of the "problem of man's relation to nature" according to Alan Watts' 1958 *Nature, Man and Woman*.

(xi) More specifically, this phenomena can inform a more complete method of reading that recognizes the interrelationship between humans and nature. Watts claims that "our actions are almost invariably directed by a philosophy of ends and values, and to the extent that this is unconscious it is liable to be bad philosophy with disastrous consequences" (xii). That is to say

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<sup>2</sup> The DOD's Defense Technical Institute describes the riparian as such: "Riparian zones occur throughout the United States as long strips of vegetation adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and other inland aquatic systems that affect or are affected by the presence of water. This vegetation contributes to unique ecosystems that perform a large variety of ecological functions. Unfortunately, considerable variation is associated with riparian terminology, similar to problems associated with wetlands terminology."



that actions toward nature without a conscious awareness of the "ends and values" could be corrected by a philosophy that encourages a riparian-style hybridization of the supposedly dualistic categories of "human" and "nature." It is this type of riparian-ism which Ike and Emook provide models for.

### **Framing *Sailor Song*: Point and Counterpoint in Kesey's Earlier Works**

In 2001 Lindsay Wolff Logsdon noted the critical role of Western-genre tropes in Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. These tropes were lost in the novel's translation to film, a film which garnered more critical success and fame than Kesey's own novel. Kesey's proclivity for the Western is most obvious in the 1994 novel he co-authored with long-time friend and former Prankster Ken Babbs, *Last Go Round*, but the genre's tropes can be found playing significant roles throughout his *oeuvre*. More specifically, the Western's motifs tend to hold a stark line between good and bad, with the two coming into exaggerated conflict in which one usually dies and one rides off into the sunset--literally or metaphorically. With some minor variations, this plot arc can be seen in *Cuckoo's Nest*, although it's McMurphy's Indian sidekick Chief Brombden who runs off toward the horizon in the end, not the protagonist McMurphy. This variation makes sense, though, when considering the fact that valiant cowboys in Western's typically follow their own, unique moral code that is generally incompatible with civilization's rules. Chief Brombden's role as first-person narrator allows the reader to understand the novel's events through the framing of the Chief's personal moral code, so it shouldn't be surprising when he is seen leaving civilization's confines behind at the story's end.

However, since the film is viewed from the 3rd person, the distinctions offered by the Chief's narration are lost, making it less obvious who the good- and bad-guys are. A synopsis of the movie that doesn't take into account the connotations of the novel might sound like this: An

unruly, neurotic womanizer disrupts an orderly psychiatric inpatient unit and encourages patients to escape before attempting to murder the head nurse. After all, there is--in the criticism of *Cuckoo's Nest*--a considerable lack of consideration for the fact that the narrator who characterizes the hospital staff as villainous has been diagnosed with a mental illness that keeps him trapped on the ward and exhibits overwhelming signs of psychosis. Yet the Chief's distinctions between good and evil go more-or-less unquestioned in criticism of the text. While this overwhelming lack of consideration may make a strong, implicit narratological argument about the prudence or sagacity of taking for granted the narrator's definitions of good and bad (especially, or at least, when it comes to the suffering of said narrator), the 1975 film's third-person-point-of-view filming would require a universalized bifurcation between these two categories rather than a personal one. Because of this, the rigid boundaries provided by the Chief's narration are eroded by the filmic depiction due to the fact that an audience, seeing the fact that most of the patients clearly need a high level of care and supervision, is encouraged to doubt the villainization of the Nurse and, likewise, the valorization of McMurphy.

This difference in effect is critical when considering Kesey's early novels which are dominated by symbols and representations which have typically been treated as classifiably good or bad without blurring the distinction<sup>3</sup>, though they may cross from one side to the other in the book's progression. More notable, though, than the fact that the objects in Kesey's plots were so identifiably good or bad, is the intense conflicts between these objects.<sup>4</sup> His books, as did his life, became well-noted for a kind of extravagant conflict. His novels pitted titanic forces against one

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<sup>3</sup> For example: John W. Hunt's "Flying the Cuckoo's Nest: Kesey's Narrator as Norm," Bruce E. Wallis's "Christ in the Cuckoo's Nest: or, the Gospel According to Ken Kesey," and Richard D. Maxwell's "The Abdication of Masculinity in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*."

<sup>4</sup> For example, William Carl Baurecht's, *Romantic Deviance and the Messianic Impulse in American Masculinity : Case Studies of Moby-Dick, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, and Sometimes a Great Notion*, Elizabeth McMahan's "The Big Nurse as Ratchet: Sexism in Kesey's *Cuckoo's Nest*," and Raymond M. Olderman's "The Grail Knight Arrives: Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*."

another and ended in some gargantuan defeat, a trait that readers came to expect from him.<sup>5</sup> This was the case in 1992 when *Sailor Song* was published to mostly disappointed reviews, but this proclivity for gargantuan conflict seemed to be in question as early as 1980 when he published *The Day After Superman Died*. The story opens on Devlin Deboree, a former Prankster settled into a quiet family farm in Southern Oregon, reeling from the news that his friend Houlihan has died and searching in his office for his pair of rose-colored glasses. Through the course of the story, the narrator Deboree recalls the always-exuberant, frenetic Houlihan (based closely on Neal Cassady) of the early-sixties San Francisco scene who is portrayed as a real-life version of *Cuckoo's Nest's* R.P. McMurphy. More specifically, Deboree remembers the "historic encounter" between Houlihan [Cassady] and Lars Dolf, a character based on Zen Buddhist Philip Whalen (DB 83). The meeting between the two was supposedly the only time Deboree had seen Houlihan's "inimitable" break-neck-speed "chatter" halted by any force (DB 85, 84). Musing on how Houlihan was affected by Dolf's powerful Zen stillness as well as Houlihan's inexplicable death on the train tracks in Mexico's highlands, Deboree wonders if "it had *all* been a trick, that [Houlihan] had never known purpose, that for all the sound and fury, those grand flights, those tootings, had all, always, at bottom, been only rebop, only the rattle of insects in the dry places of Eliot, signifying nothing" (DB (87)). As John Weir notes in "Everybody knows, nobody cares, or: Neal Cassady's penis" if Cassady wasn't a "model" for McMurphy, "[a]t the very least, he is the recurring motif." Given this connection between Cassady and McMurphy, Deboree's doubts about Houlihan are, by proxy, doubts about McMurphy, who--replete with Messianic symbolism--tends to be treated as the martyred hero of *Cuckoo's Nest*.

*The Further Inquiry* (1990) may have seen "Kesey exonerat[e] 'Cowboy Neal,'" but not

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<sup>5</sup> Some, like Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's "Books of The Times; On Final Frontier, Nature Hits Back," were simply disappointed while others, like Christopher Bray's "BOOK REVIEW / In defence of America's soul: Sailor song by Ken Kesey: Black Swan pounds 6.99," were much more pointedly critical.

before 1986's *Demon Box* would further push the thematic questions posed by *The Day After Superman Died* (Kirkus Reviews). Published to mixed reviews,<sup>6</sup> *Demon Box*, the book which Kesey insisted was a novel, appears more like a collection of stories and essays.<sup>7</sup> Overtly, the unifying aspect of the novel is the centrality of Devlin Deboree throughout, albeit at different historical moments and from different narratorial points of view. Piecing together clues from various stories, a reader finds that Deboree was a once-famous cultural icon of the 60s who, at one time on the lam in Mexico has now settled into a quiet life with his family on a farm near a mountain in Southern Oregon. He has become disgruntled with popular social movements--a fact that doesn't prevent young crusts from making the disappointing pilgrimage to his red barn-house to find the once-great author and cult icon. The close parallels between these aspects of Deboree's character and Kesey himself lead many to view the collection as autobiographical. Moreover, the work is unified by the chapters' confluence around a core set of shared themes. As mentioned, one of these central themes was a doubt in the extravagant oppositionality that characterized Kesey's novels in the early sixties as well as the counterculture for which Kesey became a leading figure. His celebrity status had been solidified when he and the Pranksters memorably set out aboard *Further* in 1964, with Cassady at the wheel and a vat of psychedelic-laced juice on-board. While "The Day After Superman Died" presents Deboree in a moment of severe doubt, a counterpoint is offered in one of the final chapters, "Now We Know How Many Holes It Takes To Fill The Albert Hall." Whereas "The Day After Superman Dies" climaxes in a crisis of faith in one of the 60s' most famous icons, its counterpoint valorizes an even more iconic 60s mainstay: John Lennon.

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<sup>6</sup> In the *Times*, for instance, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt writes "that for a while you think that Ken Kesey [ . . . ] has found his voice again."

<sup>7</sup> This interpretation of the book is bolstered by the fact that many of the novel's chapters--such as "The Day After Superman Died"--had been published as stand-alone works previous to *Demon Box's* publication.

Like "The Day After Superman Dies," "Now We Know How Many Holes It Takes To Fill The Albert Hall" is a retrospective. Instead of being set in 1968 when Cassady died, it is set years later with the DeBoree reflecting on a particular event from "the waning days of 1968" (DB 304). That event was a Christmas party at Apple Studios, London in 1968 to which the Hells Angels were invited by George Harrison. But the events of that day are mostly skimmed over, for, as the narrator tells us, enough writing "both pro-Yank and anti" has been done about the time the Angels tried to mix with the posh London elite. Instead, the focal point of the memory is John's intervention into the conflict that nearly erupted between the two groups. After Old Bert punches a record executive to the floor for calling the Angels "[l]eeches and mumpers," the "room suddenly polarized" with the "Englishmen" on one side and the "Yanks" on the other (DB 309). It was at that point, with the "two forces about to clash, that John came" into the room and prevented the conflict "like Moses holding back the waters" (DB 309). When considered against Kesey's earlier, markedly-more conflict-ridden works<sup>8</sup>, such an anticlimactic resolution to the memory is unusual. More surprising, John's impact is described as extraordinarily "bright and clear and courageous," which is also unusual considering that it was typically Kesey's most bellicose characters that were considered to be courageous (DB 310).

Kesey's move toward dissolution rather than escalation of conflict would be explored more deeply and at greater length in his 1992 novel *Sailor Song*. By this time the forces at play had grown to a magnitude that would overshadow anything considered in his earlier work. *Cuckoo's Nest* focused on the struggle between the emasculating, dehumanizing machinations of the Combine and the debatably insane folks outside of its control, and *Sometimes a Great Notion* featured a conflict of the same ilk between top-down, mid-century organized labor and the

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<sup>8</sup> Even earlier chapters of *Demon Box* focused on the hypermasculine spectacle of the Angels, who would even get in fights with animals on the DeBoree's farm.

radically individualistic, strike-busting Stamper family. *Sailor Song*, however, pits late-capitalist globalization against an opponent at the cosmic level. While the earlier novels exalted heroes for their courageous and arguably successful resistance to those controlling, monolithic forces, salvation in *Sailor Song* comes striking down from heaven, independent of human intervention or influence. Instead, *Sailor Song's* hero, Ike Sallas, notably avoids the conflict that repeatedly tries to draw him into some confrontational action. It's this behavior that, in the end, results in Ike's valiant position at the novel's resolution: after three days lost at sea following a global climate calamity, Ike sails ashore in a raft bearing hundreds of rescued animals. Fulfilling his work as a Noah-symbol, he embraces his female counterpart Alice, ready to repopulate the earth. The two go together to the still-functioning encampment previously inhabited by immigrant and poor community members, which has risen from its unprivileged position following the calamity.

But, when considering *Sailor Song*, the setting of the apocalypse is more important than the calamity itself. After all, despite thinly- or even un-veiled historical references, Kesey chose to devise a unique setting for his novel which the reformed (or retired) eco-terrorist Sallas would choose as his home once he left his Bakatcha Bandit days behind for the quieter, working-class offerings of an Alaskan fishing town. And in this fact, he didn't hold back when it came to painting a dark picture: the future Kesey describes is suffering from inexplicable environmental phenomena, along with the to-be-expected rises in temperatures, the disappearance of *real* (as opposed to chemically-formulated) alcohol, and worst of all--the eradication of marijuana thanks to the side-effect of a global UN initiative. And when it comes to Kuinak, the novel's central setting, "[t]he North Pacific," the author tells us, "is where an in-depth examination [. . .] ought to begin" (SS 569). The novel's appendix, from which this quotation is drawn, summarizes the physical environment of the novel's fictional town--giving especial attention to the non-human

organisms that form the multiply-interconnected food chains of the area. Beginning with the microorganisms in the deep ocean below the continental shelf, the appendix steps next into the abyssal environment which is followed by the neritic and littoral environments before "[m]oving from the seashore into the land" to discuss different terrestrial and winged animals of the area, as well as the soil and various native plants (SS 571). The appendix's structure and narrative flow derive from the mutual dependencies that each of these links in the "life-chain" share: if a link were to be removed the narrative would become irreparably disjointed. The Neritic Environment can no more immediately succeed the Oceanic in the text than the Oceanic could provide vital nutrients to the Neritic without relying on a healthy Abyssal Environment. As the section insistently reminds the reader, "[t]he balance is delicate" (SS 570). So delicate, in fact, that the (again, fictional) earthquake and concomitant tsunami of 1994 wiped out what used to be an "abundance of clams" by washing huge amounts of silt into the Littoral Environment, clogging "the suckers' suckers" (SS 570). But despite being relatively <sup>9</sup>vulnerable to natural phenomenon, we learn that Kuinak's "peculiar location" has left it "comparatively unaffected by the Trident Rupture" (SS 569). While the Trident Rupture, like Kuinak, is a name of Kesey's invention, the matter-of-fact mentioning of it in the appendix without any explanation or description evokes the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill<sup>10</sup>. This deduction is moreover supported by his references to the damaged fishing communities, given the fact that in 1991--the year before *Sailor Song* was published--the Chugach Alaska Corporation filed for Chapter 11 protections, citing the spill's

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<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that, while this could be true of a coastal Alaskan fishing *communauté*, many traditional Alaskan fishing villages don't enjoy that privilege. For, while geography and currents may have kept oil from the "Trident Rupture" out of certain fish habitats, many Alaskan fishing communities are being lost to rising sea levels directly caused by the industry and consumption connected to that rupture (Goode). The more broadly-reaching effects of greenhouse gases (which the novel collectively refers to as "the Effect") are still very much highlighted in *Sailor Song*.

<sup>10</sup> Kesey has a history of using fictional names without making any noticeable attempt to obscure the intended referent: in *Demon Box*, for instance, Devlin Deboree, Dobbs, and Houlihan, are so obviously stand-ins for Kesey, Ken Babbs, and Neal Cassady that one almost wonders why he changed the names at all.

detrimental effects on the area's herring population. Moreover, the abandoned fishing village of Kaguyak shares a number of striking resemblances to the novel's description of Kuinak: they both lie in the shadow of a steep-sided mountain; both are "tucked away" in the "elephant's mouth up under the curving trunk of the Aleutians" (SS 56). Kaguyak is one of the communities represented by the Alaska Native corporation--the umbrella organization which the Chugach Alaska Corporation belonged to. What's more, Kaguyak was wiped out by an earthquake-driven tsunami in 1964, as Kuinak was in 1994. However, unlike the historical Kaguyak, the fictional Kuinak *does* rebuild after the tsunami and, in the 21st century's third decade in which the story takes place, remains a successful fishing community.

According to the novel, by this point in time global temperatures have risen significantly, while Kuinak's "temperatures are still much like always" (SS 59) even while they are still rising, the town has only reached a record-high 99, whereas on the same day Washington, DC reached a high of 109, "and all the cherry trees died" (SS 59). While Kuinak is susceptible to global climate trends, it is also exceptional for remaining in a hospitable range. This is not to say, though, that Kuinak is free of any of the mal-effects of a changing environment--in fact, in the early chapters of the book we learn that animals around Kuinak are acting strangely, supposedly due to a phenomenon called 'the Effect' (SS 34). In this new climate fueling stations are forced, for example, to place screens over their hoses to keep mice from crawling in after the gas and drowning, and fisherman regularly have to blow the mice out of their engines before being able to start them at the beginning of a day. Yet in spite of these changes, and the ever shrinking fishing quotas the town's companies are limited to, it remains healthy and growing, attracting new residents from as far as Mazatlan and St. Croix. It even remains cold enough to keep its southern transplants buried under piles of blankets year-round (?).



Kuonin's relative normalcy is a surprising choice to couple with the novel's setting 30-40 years in the future. One apparent and commonly used feature of a futuristic setting is that it allows an author to warn about a dire apocalypse or paint a dystopic future for humanity while it's still early enough to change course. In *Sailor Song*, however, we are given a picture in which things seem business-as-normal, even though there's good evidence that the neoliberal machine at fault for many of the frightening global phenomena hasn't been slowed or redirected in any meaningful way: the UN's mandatory "worldwide AIDS vaccination" had the (ostensibly) unintended effect of robbing men of their libidos, for example (SS 11). Vonnegut's and LeGuin's works are notable exemplars of using the sci-fi genre to warn about impending human-made environmental disasters. But there may be a good reason why Kesey would break from this mold and instead focus on a future setting in which human-nature relationships were still fairly comfortable. For one, apocalyptic prophesying is flawed both logically and according to historical precedent. As Stephen D. O'Leary shows in "Apocalyptic Argument and the Anticipation of Catastrophe: The Prediction of Risk and the Risks of Prediction," these prophecies tend "to rely heavily on sign arguments as the means of" restoring a feeling of order to anomic scenarios (294). While the logic of sign arguments is often dubious, O'Leary also points out that "anomic experiences are (at best) fallible signs of the end of all things, since they are omnipresent in human history and hence have little predictive value" (294). Not only is this predictive model highly flawed, but in "Revealing and Reframing Apocalyptic Tragedy in Global Warming Discourse," Christina R. Foust and William O'Shannon Murphy address the problematic "implications of apocalyptic framing" (151). Addressing the disparity between the number of Americans who believe global warming to be a real and serious problem (*ie*, those who see the prophecies as a restoration of order to anomie) and the phenomena's low-level

priority, the study examines the ways in which the rhetoric itself may be contributing to the low prioritization of global warming. One of its key findings is that apocalyptic framing can be so overwhelming that audiences feel powerless to change course and therefore perpetuate the detrimental patterns.

The question of order or anomie wouldn't be a new one for Kesey to address. One of the major plot points in *Sometimes a Great Notion* is Joby's death in a lumberjacking accident, in which he is pinned underwater and dies when he can't stop laughing to receive air. Because of this and similar instances, some critics have read *Notion* as an essentially existentialist Black Comedy. However, there is evidence that Kesey's crafting of the novel was with the intention of casting aside or moving beyond a cynical form of existentialism.<sup>11</sup> Such a project has a valuable effect on human empowerment, according to Foust and Murhpy's work. The authors show how the framing of global warming in apocalyptic rhetoric implies that the impending catastrophe is "outside the purview of human agency," (152) leading citizens "straight from denial to despair" (Gore, qtd. in Foust & Murphy 152). With this information in mind it begins to become clear why Kesey would choose to avoid such rhetoric. While *Sailor Song* does end in a catastrophic set of events, it's important to note that it's short of apocalypse. And, it's significant to note, it's an entirely natural and unavoidable cataclysm, and one which "sets things back in order," (?) implying that, while there certainly are forces "outside the purview of human agency," perhaps they're more benevolent than they are often treated (Foust and Murphy 152).

### **The Riparian: Environment and Identity**

What the cosmic events do show, though, is what can happen when, unprotected, you encounter a violent force. This is the case for humankind when confronted by an unexpected

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<sup>11</sup> M. Gilbert Porter's "The Ringing of Hank's Bell: Standing Tall in Wakonda" in *The Art of Grit: Ken Kesey's Fiction*, explores this notion, along with manuscript-notes from Kesey's drafts of *Sometimes a Great Notion*.

celestial phenomenon, but it's also the case for the people of Kuinak who suffer great loss when they are unprotected from the colonialist corporation SeaCorp who arrives to exploit their traditional environment. The same could be said of the fact that, in Kuinak, the "suckers' suckers" got clogged when they got buried under the silt carried out by the tsunami. The towering wave (the series of tsunamis that struck Kaguyak in 1964 ranged between 30 and 50 feet high [Grantham]) were powerful enough to rip out the riparian zones along the coast as it "brought down eight inches of new silt" (570). These zones performed a unique, critical environmental role and without them the fishing industry in Kuinak was suffering. *Sailor Song*, though, focuses on how Ike performs a similar riparian function when SeaCorp arrives in Kuinak. Similar performances can be seen emerging before *Sailor Song*, though.

In "Now We Know," for example, John doesn't take a side against his opposition but, instead, steps between "two forces about to clash," dressed as Saint Nick (DB 309). And, unlike Moses, John prevents the held back waters from crashing together. While criticisms of the self-sanctified-John may be apt (surely no saint could have produced Plastic Ono Band) it is clear that his resolution of binaristic opposition plays an esteemed role in the story. This type of behavior is in stark contrast to that of the Stammers in *Notion*. Having at one time built their home near the banks of the Wakonda Auga, they refused to cede it to the eroding power of the river as the rest of the town had. Instead, family members tended the structure's foundation daily, hammering boards into place to stubbornly keep the house aloft where it was once held up by solid ground as a way to resist the forces of nature. The family's motto is "Never give an inch," implying their core identity is that of oppositional resistance. However, by *Sailor Song*, the protagonist Ike has become as vigorously opposed to direct opposition, seeking to avoid confrontation despite external attempts to provoke him. And, as in the case of "Now We Know," Ike's favorability at

the tale's end implies a powerful argument in favor of this manner of conduct. John's and Ike's respective connections to Moses and Noah by a deeply, lifelong Christian Kesey further support this interpretation.

Interestingly, though, Ike's riparian behavior doesn't seem to be based on Biblical exemplars so much as on one of Kesey's earlier characters: Emook, the protagonist of Kesey's 1991 children's book *The Sea Lion: A Story of the Sea Cliff People*. The text of that book is reprinted, in its entirety, in *Sailor Song* when Alice reads it to herself. The book, which goes by the name "*Shoola and the Sea Lion*" in the novel, is one well-known to Alice, Ike, and the rest of Kuinak from reading the story as children in the 90s. This meta-discourse, with the hero of one Kesey text emulating the model of another Kesey text, provides a framing message for the novel itself; namely, that as important as the characteristics being portrayed by the story's hero, it is more important to know how to recognize those characteristics and deploy them in dissimilar situations. Though extremely dissimilar characters<sup>12</sup>, both enact the same characteristics to dispel the colonialist exploitation of the Sea Lion--one the storybook character, and the other the actor/producer playing him in the film version. Given how well the environmental similarities and the emphasis on globalization's exploitation of indigenous lands and cultures in the novel lines up with our current climate, it seems a prescient time to read critically for how those issues could be addressed.

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<sup>12</sup>One is the crippled child of a "Slave Woman" and the other a world-famous celebrity activist

## **Chapter 1: Ike Sallas: The Riparian (Anti-)Hero**

### **Kuinak and Environmental Panic**

For all of Kesey's wild forays into the psychedelic stratosphere during his early writing career, it's surprising that *Sailor Song*, written 30 years after *Cuckoo's Nest* is his first true foray into the science-fiction genre. For much of the text, its science-fiction elements are obscured even, with the more-imaginative consequences of "the Effect" being dismissed by Ike as pseudo-journalism and scoot<sup>13</sup>-induced hallucinations. However, when the Earth is barraged by a full-on geomagnetic storm in the novel's climax, Ike can no longer deny the changes. As is common with science-fiction elements, the catastrophic storm is based on historical and scientific evidence, even if it is a bit hyperbolic. The most poignant historical precedent is the Carrington Event, which occurred in 1859. One of the largest geomagnetic storms in Earth's recorded history, the solar flare that hit the Earth on September 1 of that year electrified telegraph wires across Europe and North America. The storm disrupted telegraph communication, destroyed some equipment, caused telegraph paper to combust, and electrocuted several telegraph operators. Estimates show that in our current, electrified world, an event of similar magnitude could cause trillions of dollars in damages. *Sailor Song* ends with a similar type of storm but of a much greater magnitude due to a different effect. In the story, the reason for the storm is not a solar flare, but a flipping of Earth's magnetic poles that wreaks havoc on all of the planet's electronics. In this way, the book manages to project an environmental apocalypse-type event against a backdrop of global a world changed by global warming without projecting a paralyzing, disempowering message. To understand why Kuinak was the setting for this story, the narrator responds thusly:

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<sup>13</sup> Scoot is the designer drug of choice in the book. It's especially popular among the fishermen who appreciate scoot's ability to keep them awake indefinitely without any hangover.

First, you should know why Alaska. Because Alaska is the end, the finale, the Last Ditch of the Pioneer Dream. From Alaska there's no place to go. There used to be Brazil, but they cut it down to pay their Third World debt to the First and Second, who fed it to McDonald's. Over ten zillion sold. (54)

The narrator then goes on to explain that other alternatives, like China, Canada, the moon, and Mars, had each been eliminated for different reasons. Alaska, the map's end for West-ward expansion, has more shoreline than the rest of the United States combined, including the Eastern and Western Seaboards and the Gulf, the narrator informs us. It is almost exclusively in these locations--where the land interfaces with the sea--that life flourishes in Alaska, where most of the land area is untrod by virtually any mammals. In other words, it contains more riparian zones than the rest of the country combined. Kuinak, the narrator later states, is "the Last Gap" in the "Last Ditch" of Alaska, and "remain[s] remarkably untouched by the ravages of the twenty-first century," maintaining relatively traditional ways of life and relatively moderate temperatures. Thus, while the novel never hides from or denies the effects humanity has on the environment, Kuinak's relative normalcy after the storm avoids the disempowering tropes of apocalyptic, prophetic fiction. This is not to say, though, that certain characters don't offer these predictions.

One of these characters is the Reverend Greener. Former NFL linebacker turned religious zealot, Greener is the proprietor and high priest of the evangelical Beulahland Farm "on the shores of the *lovely* Lake Bennet" (SS 152). As befits the name "Beulahland," Greener strongly asserts that humanity is poised to be unequivocally punished for the results of their own "iniquitous brewing" and that his radical New Age Christianity--headquartered at his secluded mountaintop compound--is the only hope anyone has of being saved from the impending doom (SS164). Nestled amongst the clouds, Greener's chosen location for Beulahland is in keeping with John Bunyan's description in *The Pilgrim's Progress* of an intermediary in the travel from

Earth ("this world") to Heaven ("that which is to come"), or from destruction to salvation as Greener's apocalyptic prophesying maintains. In fact, despite Greener's quite literal Bible thumping (he keeps a copy in the bib of his overalls, which he slams his fist against to punctuate his fiery invocations) his characterization of Beulahland and the factors that make it necessary are more in line with the Englishman's text than with the Book of Isaiah. According to the *Old Testament*, the Kingdom of Judah had experienced its greatest period of prosperity under the rule of Uzziah, but following his death and the subsequent pillaging of the kingdom by the Babylonians during the reign of his son, the kingdom's prosperity ended. However, in Isaiah 62:4, Beulah is the name given to Judah to symbolize that she "shall no longer be termed Forsaken" and neither "be termed Desolate," marking the land's return to prosperity. Yet in Bunyan's text, as in Greener's prophesies, Beulah is the final territory reached before death. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Beulah is adjacent to the River of Death, and Greener repeatedly insists that--while Beulahland is man's only hope of salvation--there is nothing to be done to save the rest of the world. He argues that "[t]he weather is *not* going to straighten" to allow Nature's prosperity to return as the Book of Isaiah indicates (SS 169). The irony of Greener's choosing Bunyan's characterization over the *Old Testament's* is striking. Placing his compound on a secluded mountain-top to be closer to heaven meant being closer to the North Pole and at higher altitude, so when the storm broke his compound was among the first and hardest-hit locations.

It is only moments after this apoplectic apocalypsing that *Sailor Song's* chief hero, Ike Sallas, springs into action for the first time. Standing abreast the Reverend Greener with both men watching the horizon, Ike sucker-punches Greener in the chest using a trick that his long-ago friend Ojo Bravo had taught him. It's only afterwards that Ike realizes he's forgotten about the Bible the Reverend keeps in his overalls, but fortunately the trick is still enough to

incapacitate him long enough for Ike and his sidekick Greer to rescue the hostages they've come for. While the entire episode is rather spectacular (in the end, the crew escape down the mountainside 30 miles to Skagway on an abandoned mine car) the philosophy and strategy embodied by Greener are none too unusual as Foust's research on apocalyptic framing shows.

It's important to examine, then, the characteristics which lead to the conflict between Ike and Greener. The reason for Ike and Greer to travel to Skagway to begin with was simply to "rescue an injured friend"--Billy "the Squid" Bellisarius, the President of the Loyal Order of the Underdogs and Kuinak's resident genius (SS 131). As the two saviors learn when they reach the hospital to collect their comrade, the Squid's arrival in Skagway provided the scientific complement to Greener's religious invective. This marriage of ideas resulted in a broken coccyx for Billy before he was taken to Beulahland where Greener planned to reform him. The irony of the conflict between the two is that they are both in agreement about the impending apocalypse, only disagreeing about the details of what that apocalypse will look like. Greener repeatedly refers to the imminent "light of the Fire Next Time," the "final, terrible, horrible, inescapable fire fire fire" to which Billy replies "Ice will suffice," citing evidence both mathematical and poetic (SS 164). Yet while Ike inserts himself into the middle of the conflict between the men and their contingent philosophies, it is not as an endorsement of either side of this binary opposition, but as an intermediary between the two forces that seemed likely to end in the destruction of at least one of the involved parties. Ike's only rebuttal to Greener's prophecies is that the vegetation may have returned to the mountain once the weather balanced out if only Greener's assuredness hadn't led him to strip the landscape down to the rock to gather enough soil for his self-sustaining compound. When Greener shoots back that the weather "is *not* going to straighten" and that we're destined to "perish in our own *fire*," Ike is "glad there was no rebuttal from Billy" which might



have led to more conflict that Ike would have to resolve (SS 169). The repeated clashing of these two apocalypse fiends makes Ike uneasy and fearful that the opposition may spell trouble for all those present. Continuing in riparian fashion, Ike seeks to mitigate the damage either side can do to the other rather than adding his force to either side. In this spirit, he decommissions the Revered just barely long enough for him and his Underdog brethren to disentangle the cart before Greener's sycophants begin chasing after them. In fact, Ike's decision to leave Beulahland and its prophet intact is in direct opposition to his companions' requests to "off [Greener] before he gets unwrapped" (SS 171). But Ike opts instead to continue acting as the riparian intermediary in the middle of this religion-science dyad and hurries his followers to the handcart before any further blows can be struck by either side.

Ike believed that the vegetation would have returned once the right balance was regained and he refused to inflict any more damage than was necessary for protection. But Greener's evangelism had another dimension that made the clash between the two especially poignant in demonstrating Ike's riparian nature: his mesmerizing gaze. When Ike and Greer sneak into the compound, they are warned not to "let Him [Greener] eyeball you" because "it does something awful" (SS160). When Ike does finally look into Greener's eyes, what he sees reminds him of "a scene that was somehow similar" (SS 166). The scene is one from decades before when Ike first met Ojo Bravo, long before Ojo taught Ike "the various pachuco sucker swings" that Ike would later use to escape Greener (SS 166). But on this day, Ojo's trick was to get a cockfighting chicken to stay still, and the rules of the bet he had made expressly forbid violence. Instead, Ojo laid the chicken flat on the ground with a piece of string in front of it, straightened the string "to get them to get in their little *minds* the *concept* . . . of the straight line," then exposed the end of the string to "let them see that there is an *end* to it," leaving the rooster transfixed, immobilized

(SS 167). This state of hypnotized semi-paralysis is known as "tonic immobility" and it's a response several animals have when faced with a threat<sup>14</sup>. And, while religious texts certainly offer rich fodder for anyone trying to pull the same trick on humans, Ike realizes that Greener "didn't really even need Christ" to make his trick work so long as he could convince his listeners of the impending "absolute end" (SS 168). In other words, Greener's religious message was only the means, while the apocalyptic rhetoric was the method. Ultimately, he was obsessed with a violent, final destruction. This demonstrates just how similar Billy's coldly calculated scientific prophecy and Greener's fiery religious vitriol are in their effect. The only thing keeping the two from destroying one another--like a river destroying itself by eroding its banks--is the riparian Ike.

While Ike's moment of heroism in escaping Greener is brief, it is arguably the highest point of action in the novel, and it is certainly Ike's most classically heroic act. He fails to be moved to action by the series of grievances that follows his return to Kuinak from Skagway--even when his beloved long-time dog is run over by the novel's nastiest villain, Nikolas Levertov, behind the wheel of his imported Steelume limousine. Since the incident with Greener falls well before the halfway point of the novel, there's an extended lull of unpunctuated plot that builds a great deal of tension and anticipation that is never satisfyingly resolved. While Ike and Levertov continue to be counterposed as hero and arch-villain as the evidence of Nikolas' crimes of vengeance piles up, there is never a showdown of any kind between the two to resolve the tension. I have several times heard Huck Finn criticized for placing the climactic scene in which Huck defiantly states he'll "go to Hell" rather than turn in Jim too early and dragging on too long with the episodic River Chapters afterwards. The same criticism could be leveled at *Sailor Song*,

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<sup>14</sup> I did this trick with my pet rabbit for years before someone pointed out to me that every time I did it she thought she was dead.

which never again approaches the action or excitement of the frenzied escape on the switchbacking rails down the mountain. I, however, have always found the structure of Huck Finn fulfilling because it demonstrates how easily someone can regress to their old ways in spite of any exceptional resolutions. While the traditional shorter plot resolution may be more pleasing for readers, it masks the fact that there continue to be moments of trial and temptation after the making of a moral decision. Huck's repeated failure to live according to his newfound morals illuminates this trouble. In the case of *Sailor Song*, the progressively exposed maliciousness of SeaCorp's project in Kuinak and the mounting evidence of Levertov's villainy provide the gamut of emotional temptations which Ike repeatedly refuses to confront.

### **Radical Opposition: Lessons and Warnings**

Ike doesn't actively invest in the feuds swirling around him, but the novel does provide some glimpses of what may have awaited him had he chosen to engage. We can consider the fates of Billy the Squid and the Reverend Greener, the two interlocutors whose disagreement continues to flare even after Billy's escape. Greener's impact has much less to do with the specifics of his message than with his ability to immobilize his converts by manipulating them into fixating on an apocalyptic *telos*. Yet when the poles flip and the planet is racked by an EMP of galactic proportions, the people are disappointingly left alive. The Reverend, presumably disappointed by the lack of fire, flies to Kuinak "accompanied by three handmaidens" to look for Billy, only to be disappointed when he finds him already dead <citation>. At the same time he learns that there is soon to be an "opening at the pulpit" because Father Pribilof's health is failing. But when he flies out to the church to see about filling the vacancy, he is rebuffed by the unlikeliest of characters--Shoola (SS 553). Shoola, typically acquiescent and non-confrontational, simply informs Greener that the Father is "okey-dokey" when he attempts to

"[muscle] in as priest" (SS 564). This is all it takes to send Greener flying away. While we don't learn what exactly happened in Beulahland or where Greener is going when he leaves Kuinak,<sup>15</sup> this incident with Shoola gives some indication of the late state of Greener's controlling power: whereas before "the Event" Greener simply had to make eye contact with someone to convince them of the impending End, his forceful strategy was clearly unsustainable, and now he's unable even to sway an adolescent to see the impending death of an octogenarian, bed-ridden priest. Billy's fate is even more bluntly laid out, since his death is arguably a direct result of his argument with Greener. On the ship ride home from Skagway (the Otter that Ike and Greer flew in on was hacked to bits by Greener's worshipers), Billy, nursing his tailbone on the boat's deck, obsessively pores over mathematical and scientific texts that either prove his account of the world's end or contradict it. The contradictory ones he surreptitiously throws overboard to cleanse the world of a bit of misinformation. Even after the crew eventually returns to Kuinak, Billy continues his obsessive feud with his far-away nemesis rather than returning to life-as-usual. Following a town meeting to discuss issues and concerns with SeaCorp's dealings, Ike sneaks from the meeting hall through a little-known storage closet and finds Billy holed up on a shelf in the dark with "[b]ooks and notepads" piled around him and pairs of "twined together" tea bags scattered about the floor (SS 451). When Ike admonishes Billy that he can't hide forever, Billy responds:

I would rather be an insignificant casualty of a random catastrophe in an indifferent system gone *insane* than risk salvation at the hands of that Bible-thumping Monster from Beyond the Locker Room. (SS 452)

The sad irony is that the "random catastrophe" Billy is obsessing over doesn't actually result in

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<sup>15</sup> The town's reporter tries to work him for information only to be told "he [Greener] would ask the questions."

that many casualties in Kuinak. It's only after the Event that Billy's desiccated body is accidentally discovered in the closet, when someone comes in to retrieve the prizes for Bingo night. In the end, it was Billy's confrontational bent that killed him, not the ice he had been predicting.

Ike himself, though, is not a stranger to this enraged obsession. On the contrary, it's what he's famous for. So famous, in fact, that the esteemed director Gearhardt Steubins meets with him privately to let him know what a big fan he is. After his time serving as a pilot in the Navy flying clandestine operations for the CIA everywhere from South America to Israel, Ike got a job flying a crop-duster in McFarland, CA--that is, until his almost-one-year-old *spina bifida* baby Irene died from complications when her shunt failed, leaving "her brow and temples . . . swollen huge, purple as an eggplant" (SS 145). Returning home after seeing Irene's body on a slab in the morgue, Ike finally "lean[s] his eye to that eyepiece" that magnifies, among other things, the connection between the rates of childhood cancer and the "*pesticido* planes" he flew for Bull's-Eye Aerial Spray [*sic*] (SS 146, 144). The next morning he returns to work at the normal time under the guise of maintaining a normal routine to cope with his loss. He then waits until the rest of the planes have departed to borrow Ojo Bravo's sucker truck to fill his Cessna with sewage, which he drops on the unsuspecting fairgoers of Madera County. Thanks in part to an entertaining interview with Ojo Bravo after Ike's arrest, the two were "world famous" by the time Ike was bailed out of jail two days later (pg?). In the next two weeks, Ike was able to hit both the Stockton County Fair and "the State Fair in Sacramento" before being locked up for good to await trial (SS 150). But by this point, the Bakatcha Bandit had spawned "a legion of similar bandits [who] had arisen to carry on the effort" (SS 150).

Despite his lack of complex scientific knowledge, Ike eventually becomes a fixture of the

environmentalist movement, speaking to crowds thousands-strong. In that context, he is known as the grassroots firebrand who "struck back" after the "Monster had struck him a random, circuitous blow, as it had so many others" (SS 441). After a spell, though, even the Bakatcha Bandit's fire "sputter[ed]" out, and finally Ike moved to Kuinak in search of a quiet life in his single-wide parked on the far side of the town's garbage dump. This was, surprisingly, a locale in which the legions of bandits had been particularly active: in addition to bombing the pipelines carrying oil around Prince William Sound, ecoterrorists had even torpedoed oilers with "[u]nmanned outboards . . . loaded with plastics" under the Bakatcha flag (SS 138).

The progression Ike and the Bakatcha name follow from the first flight over the Madera County Fair to Ike's eventual retreat to isolation and quiet exposes many of the aspects that make his eventual non-confrontationalism so hopeful. Beginning as an illegible, yet publicly successful, set of radical tactics, the Bakatcha brand was Ike's ticket to stardom. However, as the Bandits' objectives and actions became more codified, their success, and Ike's avidness, began to ebb. It is only through a non-confrontational, riparian strategy that Ike is eventually able to vanquish globalism's colonization. Tactics similar to the Bakatcha Bandit's were used throughout Germany's Red Decade, and are considered at length in Kimberly Mair's *Guerilla Aesthetics: Art, Memory, and the West German Urban Guerrilla*. In it, she observes of the "West German urban guerrilla actions" in the Red Decade, "that the aesthetic mode of action . . . deployed posited a new kind of radical subject unmoored from the contemporary social consensus of habitual norms, values, and assumptions. This new type of subject," she argues, "would produce a grammar of conduct that breaks free of the assumed relations between subjects, objects, and spaces governed by the normative social syntax" (GA 7). Yet while the urban guerrilla's "actions and words cannot be fully instrumentalized in terms of recognizable social goals . . . they remain

politicized in their refusal of hegemonic sensibilities and conventional communicative formations" (GA 7). A political grammar that thus refuses these "communicative formations" obstructs evaluations about the success or failure of such actions. The original Bandit actions--the fair fly-overs--certainly belong to this category of political actions with no easily defined objective while remaining highly shocking aesthetically--possessing a "spectacular, even staged, quality" (GA 3). Yet despite their obfuscated meaning, these demonstrations were wildly resounding. Ojo Bravo's widely-publicized eleven-o'clock-news interview provided plenty of opportunity for that: Ike wasn't a *terrorist*; he was "what we call a bandit," one whose "little baby choost [*sic*] died" (SS 150). Not only that, but Ojo Braavo put forth the case that getting "a little ca-ca on some upper middle class" isn't "so terrible" after all, considering he gets "the same thing on [himself] every day for under minimum wage" (SS 150). The opportunities for empathy based on this interview lead to support from a diverse array of groups: Director Steubins was reportedly "so pumped when [he] heard it on the news" that he "blew a very lucrative KFC endorsement" by going "right down to the studio and [throwing] a bucketful of giblets and gravy" on his director; the migrant workers at Bull's Eye continued supplying Ike access to the Cessna and sucker truck when the coast was clear; and, his stunt was being mimicked across the country (SS 139).

While Ojo Bravo's marketing of the action is a great factor in garnering such widespread support, the un-readability of the act also plays a sizeable role as well. Since the target and objective of the action are undefined, there is no recognizable political aspect to deter would-be supporters, leaving membership open to anyone looking to vengefully get "bakatcha," nevermind the fact that the subject of that vengeance could be anyone from a boss, to a fastfood chain, to a Dutch oil company. His guerilla-style tactics, though, were more aesthetically shocking than they

were immediately recognizable as environmentalist action. In hindsight, he laments "not driving straight on up to boss Jason 'Cog' Weil's" home and "blowing a hole in the fat prick's tomato can" which, he points out, statistically garners offenders less time. However, such an act--being much more easily readable--would certainly have garnered much more limited support than the aesthetically spectacular "ca-ca" dumps did; direct retaliation likely would only resonate with those who feel directly wronged by that particular boss, whereas the indirect fly-overs allowed diverse interpretations as to whom the subject of "bakatcha" is. As Tim Jensen notes in "Social Movement Names and Global Frames," "the name [of a movement] shapes the articulation of motives and goals, justifies action, and has clear implications at the level of recruitment" (154). The fact that Ike's guerilla attack won favor with movie directors and migrant workers demonstrates how inclusive the name and actions of the Bakatcha Bandit were, especially from a "recruitment" standpoint. Quoting from Michael Calvin McGee, Jensen also points out the fallacy of believing that a movement "stays the same despite my choice of one term or another to characterize and conceptualize it" (qtd in Jensen 154). Interestingly, while Ike remembers making the Bakatcha logo from a stack of Bull's-Eye business cards and the oil leaking from his Cessna, he "couldn't remember ever writing the word [Bakatcha] himself," leaving the genesis of the movement's framing title unclear. This could go a long way toward explaining how Ike's act--which his ruminations show to be a response to Bull's-Eye's role in his infant daughter's death--wound up being interpreted so broadly.

What is clear, however, is what happens to the Bakatcha movement once it calcifies as an environmental movement. For while the initial "articulation of motives and goals" warranted by the name "Bakatcha" may have been so broad as to be seen more as a disarticulation, the subsequent actions and alignments of the Bakatcha movement significantly limited the scope of



its motivations, severely limiting its recruitment possibilities. Ike--the movement's progenitor and poster child--became singly-aligned with the environmental movement, as did the actions of his fellow bandits. Moreover, the bandits' shift from aesthetically spectacular actions to spectacularly violent actions against material property also severely limited their efficacy. Mair shows how the aesthetic, illegible actions of the German urban guerillas of her study defy the "taken-for-granted assumption inherited from Newton and Kant of space as an empty, infinite, non-substance awaiting our stake-claiming, naming, and place-making," but instead "acknowledge [an action] in its profound relationality" to the spaces to which it is contingent (GA 10). In abandoning the illegible guerilla tactics of Ike's early fly-overs for the legible guerilla attacks against pipelines and tankers, the Bandits not only limited their recruitment possibilities and opened themselves up to evaluations of their efficacy, they also forsook many of the possibilities that illegible actions offer: to expose and illuminate the already-existing edges and flows of the world around us, to force us "to think about how human subjects do things," and to "[call] upon us to think about how places, objects, and conventions . . . do things and continually transform the social realities that we, together with supposed inanimate things, make and remake" (GA 9). Although there's no strong framework for predicting an alternative history of the Bandits had they not undergone such a shift in their actions, we learn that the movement is now more-or-less defunct--"There hadn't been any real documented bandit hits in ten years"--with their only recognizable victory being that tankers now "take on oil at the source well" north of the Bering Straits rather than transporting it solely via "the pipeline to Valdez" (SS 139).

### **Ike Sallas: From Bandit to Buffer**

Ike's earlier violence and activism, the sputtering of his internal flame that sent him to Alaska in search of isolation, eventually sputters out, even when the incarnation of globalization arrives at his figurative doorstep in Kuinak. In addition to the incident with Greener and the apparent slaughter of his own dog, Ike pulls up the murdered body of his neighbor in a fishing net. This neighbor's death means the title passes to his son-in-law, Nikolas Levertov, who cedes the land to SeaCorp for development. The development of the pleasant isolation Ike enjoys outside his *literal* doorstep is one of the most overt affronts which Ike faces, but it's only one of many. Yet Ike stubbornly refuses to indulge in confrontation even when it seems that myriad forces are working in concert to drag him into perilously encroaching brawls. Nikolas Levertov, Ike's one-time "slam buddy" with a grudge, is the one responsible for bringing the movie set to Kuinak in the first place. This puts Ike's decision to opt-out of SeaCorp's offer to invest in the development of Kuinak at odds with the rest of the town-members who are anxious for the influx of cash and modernization (even at the expense of their town's uniquely quaint charm which brought the developers to it to begin with). Ike's problematic history with Levertov also complicates his already troubled relationship with Levertov's mother, Alice "the Angry Aleut." She interprets Ike's cold reception of SeaCorp and negative attitude toward her son as an affront against her, since she plays a key role in the movie's development as artistic coordinator. She had received this position because she was one of the official DEAPs remaining in the town. Ike's apparent rebuttal of the increased presence of Alice's native culture is worsened when the much younger Shoola--who was brought in to star in Levertov's movie--becomes enticed by Ike, putting Alice even more at odds with him.

Still, Ike refuses to be pulled into the fray of conflicts swirling around him and throughout the town, much to the disappointment and surprise of many of his friends--and likely

to many of the novel's readers. After all, the apparent heroes of Kesey's earlier (more successful) novels are well-noted for their stubborn and resilient confrontationalism. Yet in *Sailor Song* Ike's most striking character feature--perhaps because of this contrast--is his resilient avoidance of confrontation, which he seems to see as a nuisance. However, as the novel unfolds it turns out to be his non-confrontationalism--his repeated insistence on standing between two opposing forces rather than on one side--that leads to his prosperous survival. Ike's arrival on shore with 134 animals aboard his small craft--"an excited crowd of squirrels, moles, possums, gophers, and chipmunks . . . along with a pair of young raccoons, a white-tail fawn and a mass of other immigrants"--is hardly difficult to interpret. After several days at sea surviving a prolonged, inexplicable storm first signaled from the heavens, Ike arrives on shore and immediately embraces Alice. The implication as they settle into a home together that evening, is that they will be among those to repopulate the Earth after the storm. It also can't be overlooked that the reason Ike was in his liferaft to begin with was that he was ferrying back and forth between SeaCorp's Steelumed mega-yacht and his boss Carmody's fully-automated, self-navigating, ultra-futuristic fishing boat, which had the film-crew and foreign developers and the rebellious townies aboard, respectively. Between these warring factions, Ike resolved tension by saving threatened combatants and disarming SeaCorp's more violent capabilities.

This symbolism combined with Ike's contrast with earlier Kesey protagonists--both in remaining non-confrontational and surviving the novel's climactic struggle--combines to offer a strong message about an approach for surviving dire environmental phenomena. The approach here is one which favors less confrontation rather than more as a way to provide a sustainable buffer against rapid loss and annihilation by large-scale systems, be they human or natural. An approach that elides dualism in its tactics is far-removed from the counter-cultural emphases of

earlier Kesey works. The symbols of counter-culturalism which were by name inherently oppositional, while valiant, tended more toward self-destruction than toward destruction of the oppressing system. McMurphy was martyred by Nurse Ratched. Hank is rafting down the river toward certain death. Houlihan was counting railroad ties to win a bet. This dualism is present in Kolodny's ecofeminism, too, which exposes that even the writing of women was complicit in the exploitation and colonization of Westward expansion. Instead, as she says, "a changing of minds" is necessary. This change is evident in the transformation from Bandit to buffer on the part of Ike, and it is what saves him and those closest to him from destruction.

## **Chapter 2: Penis Envy Compersion: Emook's Affirmation of Non-binaristic Identity**

The parallels between the plot of *Sailor Song* and the plot of *The Sea Lion: A Story of the Sea Cliff People* are hard to miss. A brief summary highlighting but a few of the analogous aspects might include that *The Sea Lion* is a story in which a traditional<sup>16</sup> Alaskan fishing town is mortally threatened by the arrival of a foreign colonizer who entices the Sea Cliff People with his sophisticated entertainment technology and unique knowledge of alien civilizations. This colonizer, though, is ultimately repelled into the sea when the protagonist, Emook, relinquishes the cultural capital that would have presumably allowed him passage from his marginalized position as a "worthless slaveboy" to the esteemed position of man (SS 212). This relinquishment of culturally-perceived power as a useful tool to subvert and expel a foreign colonizer closely mirrors the character arc of Ike Sallas in *Sailor Song*, especially because both Emook and Ike first strike falteringly at their oppressor and are laughed out of the social commons following their oratory stumbling. This parallel-reading is further bolstered by the fact that Nikolas Levertov--the chief antagonist, and globalization spokesperson of *Sailor Song*--is cast as the invading Lion of the Sea for the cinematic *Shoola and the Sea Lion* which is being filmed in Kuinak throughout *Sailor Song*.

The son of Alice "the Angry Aleut" Carmody, Levertov is the prodigal son who, after years of exile, brings the SeaCorp film crews with him when he makes his return. SeaCorp was sold on the plan by the quaint, untouched character of Kuinak, and the townspeople are more than willing to acquiesce when they learn how much capital SeaCorp plans to invest during the filming and subsequent projects. As Emook is the only character able to see the shape-shifting Sea Lion for the monster he is, Ike is the only Kuinak local able to see the problem with

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<sup>16</sup> It's important to note that "traditional" has two meanings here--both the folkstyle Alaskan fishing village of *The Sea Lion* and Kuinak which is traditional in the context of late capitalism, yet still essentially modern relative to the village.

SeaCorp's deal: once they make their promised investment in Kuinak, it will lose its untouched quality, and therefore its commercial appeal. Once the townspeople have forfeited all of the commodity-value of their natural resources, the company will, presumably, move to the next investment opportunity and repeat the process. Seeing the threat presented by the Sea Lion, both protagonists vanquish their respective towns of the colonizing Sea Lion.

It is also important to note here the stark contrast between Ike and Emook. The previous chapter charted the movement of Ike from a fringe radical who exploits his dominant positionality as a white American male to a riparian centrist who refutes the potential of directly oppositional tactics. Emook, on the other hand, is born into marginality and wishes to join the dominant class of males so that he may enjoy the societal value awarded to that group, although he eventually finds power not through assimilation but through the destruction of the systems that endow power unevenly. These contrasting character arcs establish Emook as the arch-hero upon which Ike is modeled. This is bolstered by the fact that, in *Sailor Song*, Emook's story is widely famous before Ike begins presenting riparian characteristics.

This reading is further advanced if we queer the children's book *The Sea Lion*. While the central relationship of the story--that between Emook and Shoola--may appear as an heterosexual adolescent affair, a closer analysis that considers the specificities of the story's setting averts this reductive interpretation. Reading *The Sea Lion* against the documented traditions of the Dene people, who historically inhabited the story's setting, would provide more than ample evidence for recognizing Emook as occupying an "other" gender identity, outside of the dichotomized categories of male and female<sup>17</sup>. However, the story's dubious background makes it dangerous to read against a historico-cultural reality. However, even without the Dene practices informing a

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<sup>17</sup> Born simultaneous to mother's death, therefore Dene custom would recognize her soul as being located in Emook.

reading of *The Sea Lion*, there is ample evidence in the text which characterizes Emook as existing outside of the gender binary imposed by colonizers. These invaders have labeled natives with such terms as *berdache* without recognizing the unique gender formations being practiced. Emook's destruction of the figurative phallus that would have, in his mind, allowed him to become a "man" demonstrates his avowal to reject the dichotomized gender roles practiced by the rest of the tribe and his affirmation of an undefined gender role beyond of the male-female binary. What is ultimately at stake here is the the story's possibility when read in in conjunction with the narrative in *Sailor Song*, the novel inside of which *The Sea Lion* was reprinted in 1992. As Emook's story is re-enacted in the literal town of Kuinak as an effective way to dispel neoliberal colonization, the possibility for stories--even those with convoluted, inauthentic histories--to imagine and predict real possibilities is suggested. In this case, Emook's story models the natural, riparian metaphor which Ike re-enacts to resist SeaCorp's exploitation.

The position of the story within the larger narrative of *Sailor Song*, then, is also a critical consideration for understanding not just *how* to read the story, but also to understand what a contextualized reading of the story might or should accomplish politically. *The Sea Lion* was published in 1991 by Viking Press as a standalone children's book, illustrated by Neil Waldman. The text of that book is reprinted in whole in 1992's *Sailor Song*, although within the novel the story goes by the name *Shoola and the Sea Lion: A Shadow Dance*. Further, while *The Sea Lion* is authored by Kesey and illustrated by Waldman, the fictive *Shoola and the Sea Lion* is authored by Isabella Anootka, whom "[e]verybody now [knows] [. . .] was a total fraud, not an Eskimo of any blood, but a retired math teacher from New Jersey" (SS 197) and is illustrated by Joseph Adam Liebowitz, "[n]ot only a round-eye, but a Jewish American *man to boot*" (SS 198). These reactions to the Shoola story from Alice, whose reading of the story allows its replication within

*Sailor Song*, may offer a poignant critique of Kesey's *The Sea Lion*, a story reportedly original to native people of present-day Washington state which he was told and then rewrote in an Alaskan setting before publishing it under his own name. However, what's more important is that despite the story's inauthenticity, Alice still finds it reflective of "what was happening in *real* native life . . . namely dirt and despair and perversion" (SS 215). The story "misted her eyes with emotion," forcing her to admit that, while the story may be inauthentic, its themes weren't necessarily culturally specific (SS 240). Additionally, the setting of *Sailor Song* in the 2020s paired with Alice's memories of reading *Shoola* as a child in the 90s--when *The Sea Lion* was published--invites readers to see *Shoola*'s function in *Sailor Song* as a possibility for *The Sea Lion*'s function in our own world. The question, then, is, *Can we use the strategies proffered by Kesey and Waldman's storybook to respond to neoliberal colonization as effectively as Ike does in Kuinak?*

### **Emook: Considering Two-Spirit Identity as Riparian**

Throughout *The Sea Lion*, Emook's sexual- and gender-identity remain tacit, undefined. While this fact may seem mundane considering the book's target audience, there are key moments in the text which encourage readers to consider these aspects of his character, such as his designation as a "boy" juxtaposed against his categorical exclusion from the activities reserved for males. This dynamic--of appearing male while performing work outside of the male sphere--was a common enough practice in the Pacific Northwest and Alaska (where Kesey learned the story and where it is set, respectively) that French colonizers and missionaries used a common word for the phenomenon: *berdache*. While it would be unwise to try to infer from the text whether or not Emook fits into a particular identity category, an analysis of his characterization compared to the historical notion of the *berdache* can illuminate important



aspects of the story as it relates to *Sailor Song*.

The term Two-Spirit was adopted in 1990 as a replacement of the term *berdache*. *Berdache*, the French word for "younger partners in male homosexual relationships," was used by French explorers and missionaries of the 17th and 18th centuries to describe Native American subjects whom they were unable to identify as male or female (Roscoe). That is, rather than identifying a subject as a "berdache" due to their patterns of sexual behavior, in the context of the Americas (especially the Mississippi Valley) it was used to designate "an alternative or third gender role" (Roscoe). This alternative gender role was typically characterized by performing work typically designated to the other sex, cross dressing, or mixing the clothing of the two dominant gender roles. Thus, in one sense, replacing "berdache" with "Two-Spirit" is a corrective of a lasting anthropological misuse of terms. Another reason for this, though--and one that is highlighted by the misleading use of "*berdache*"--is that the French language was inadequate at contending with the culturally-specific, unique gender roles among the diverse groups they were encountering in the Americas. The incongruity between the French culture's idea of where sex is located (as reflected in its language) and the gender ideologies of different native groups meant that the French terminology would not be able to accurately articulate the distinct gender roles that missionaries were encountering. While the French missionaries sought to categorize people according to their sexual behavior, cultures in which Two-Spirit people have been documented often have distinct means for recognizing gender. One example, offered in Jean-Guy A. Goulet, is a Kaska girl who, according to historical record, "was 'dressed in masculine attire' because she was chosen to become a hunter" (Jacobs, Thomas, & Lang 50). In 1983 this girl was included in the well-received article "The Northern American Berdache" in *Current Anthropology*, although Goulet disputes this designation. Goulet claims this designation

is inappropriate because among the Athabaskan family of languages, gender is located in the spirit which, when reincarnating, may choose to occupy a body of the other sex. Thus, the Kaskan girl would not fit the standardized notion of berdache, but could be considered under the more capacious term "Two-Spirit."

This distinction between the ideological underpinnings of the designations "*berdache*" and "Two-Spirit" provides a critical frame for analyzing *The Sea Lion*. Without this distinction, it would be easy for (especially Western) readers to mistake the story for a standard Romance tale. One in which a valiant peasant is esteemed by his heroism and wins the approval of his romantic desire and her previously dissenting father. However, it would be reductive to read the story as only the traditional Romantic trope when considering the details of the story. Instead, taking into account Emook's origin story and his social status as both slave and cripple pivots away from that Western Romantic standard which would obscure his non-normative gender role. This is vital to uncover because, as Kolodny's work shows, the traditional binarism that reverberates through stories such as this one has historically, and to a great degree, contributed to the super-exploitation of the natural world. *The Sea Lion* provides an excellent case, since in a binaristic reading Emook wins the approval of Shoola's father by defeating the Lion of the Sea (who, in one form, *is* a sea lion) which might be read as conquering the natural world. As Kolodny has shown, the treatment of women as something to acquire and dominate was also projected onto the natural world to justify environmental exploitation. Instead, Emook's story can be seen as one that rejects this binarism, and through its rejection is able to restore harmony and save his people. In the end, Emook's heroic refusal of gender binarism leaves Chief Gawgawnee--who had previously referred to Emook diminutively as "boy"--unable to vocalize Emook's gender. Like the Two-Spirit people who confounded French-speakers' ability to linguistically

categorize them accurately, Emook's identity exceeds the linguistic capability of his tribe's Chief by disrupting the bifurcation between male and female. This boundary-troubling aspect of Emook's identity aligns with the characterization of the riparian since he acts not in binaristic opposition, but instead by inhabiting two counterposed categories at once. In this way, he works as a buffer by standing between the colonizing Lion of the Sea and the indigenous Sea Cliff People. To better understand how Emook's story predicts Ike's despite their originary differences, a closer examination of Emook's story is necessary.

### **Penis Envy Compersion**

*The Sea Lion* opens with Emook engaged in his work as a spoon-maker, but not before we get a brief origin story for him. Emook's mother was a slave woman whose labor was induced when she suffered a serious injury that would result in her death post-partum, and leaves Emook crippled from birth with "a cocked backbone and a shrunken leg" (6). Chief Gawgawnee initially "decided [ . . . ] that the baby should be left on the low rocks, the way the girl babies were often disposed of" before Um-Lalagic, the "ancient root woman," insisted on adopting him. From this uncertain beginning, the narration reveals, Emook became the tribe's spoonmaker, despite the fact that this "was not the proper task for a young brave" (5). However, Emook "liked making spoons" and "didn't mind that boys younger than his years were already out on the rocks, assisting the spearmen" (9). Unable to join in the labor of either the men, who fish "out on the rocks," (9) or the women, who collect grasses and roots "to grind for the People's bread," (13) the reader first sees Emook at his work on the shore alone, collecting shells and assembling spoons from them. It is from the vantage point of this spot on the shore that we first get a detailed understanding of the relationship between Emook's identity and those of the dominant gender groups in the society. The men--working on the shores below--sing "a song of praise of the sea,"

whom they refer to as a "Great Warrior," while the women working on Emook's other side sing of the sea as "a Mighty Mother that should be feared for her ferocity, and honored for the care and nourishment she granted her children" (13). Not only does this display the strict separation of genders based on labor performed, but it also indicates the gender-based relationship the Sea Cliff People have to to an animate version of the sea. The oppositional characteristics of the two genders in this case mimic the depictions Kolodny has identified in early American letters. The men, who see the sea as "an adversary that should be ever battled" for "victories of food" mirrors the colonial-settler mindset of European frontiersmen who sought to conquer and tame the natural environment for nourishment and sustenance, whereas Kolodny shows that the writings of frontierswomen depicted nature as maternal, pregnant with the possibility for future life (13).

When Shoola--who had come to visit Emook on the shore--is admonished by her father, Chief Gawgawnee, for "dawdling" with "this frogboy slave [Emook]," Emook responds by wishing to himself that he might not "be a frog boy forever," that he "could *change*," that he could turn into a frog *man*" at least (12, *emphases in original*). He also wishes that "Shoola would come keep him company again, the way she used to," although he wonders whether "the two wishes were the same wish" (12). Whether or not his becoming a frog *man* would consequently fulfill his second wish of Shoola, "keep[ing] him company again," what's clear here is that Emook either has internalized a false interpretation of himself as a "boy" as opposed to a "man," or he accurately sees himself as belonging to a different gender category. Either way he longs to become a member of the male discourse community, "at least [ . . . ] a frog *man*!" in order to attain Shoola (12).

There are multiple reasons for seeing the gender binaries in this story as revolving around a linguistic center. The first is the way that Alice, a character in *Sailor Song*, describes the

"funky and Freudian" nature of the book as she reads it (SS 231). The irony of Alice's observation about Isabella Anootka's *Shoola and the Sea Lion* is that it's actually Kesey making an observation about his own publication from the previous year, lending credence to a Freudian-style analysis that might locate sexual difference in the linguistic patterns of the Sea Cliff People. With this interpretive mode bolstered by the author himself, the practice of putting relationships to the sea into gendered, group speech acts which are repeated by the young and old alike seems to suggest a linguistic foundation to the society's notions about gender roles. It's important to note that Emook's designation as "frog boy" as opposed to "frog man" was not based on his age, hence his wish that he "*could*" transform (12, *emphasis mine*). Indeed, many of the boys younger than Emook "were already out on the rocks, assisting the spearmen" and singing songs praising the sea (9). In other words, the story makes it clear that being among the singers is what allows a tribesperson to claim their gender, and Emook's removal from the group prevents him doing this.

A second reason to see gender based in a linguistic center, though, has to do with the first instance in which we see Emook affirming his identity as separate from the men or the women of the tribe. After wishing that he "could turn into a frog *man*," Emook concedes to himself that "[t]his wishing will change nothing" because "[t]hings are what they were made to become" (13). It is at this point--with the men on one side singing to the Great Warrior sea and the women on the other singing to the Mighty Mother--that Emook asserts the sea is neither of these things, but instead "a great bowl of fish stew!" (13). It is with this proclamation that Emook unfurls his giant, carved rib bone--the first instance in which it is revealed to the reader--with which he plans to honor the fish-stew-sea. Emook's assertion of his own unique relationship to the sea concomitantly with the revelation of the phallic rib bone links the oral relationship one has to nature with the phallic center represented by the bone.

Emook's proclamation that the sea is a great bowl of fish stew, immediately following the songs of the men and women from the tribe, gives a strong indication that Emook hasn't yet been enculturated into the gendered frameworks of these groups, despite many boys younger than him already having joined the men. It's important to note, though, that while Emook's pronouncement provides evidence for seeing him outside of the dichotomized gender categories, it doesn't represent a willingness to remain in that position. In fact, as Emook's greatest treasure is revealed to the reader in the pages that follow, it is seen that Emook expects the bone to deliver him to the class of men. For while Emook refers to the myriad animals carved into bone hilt as his "little family" as if he has developed an alternative kinship system separate from that sanctioned by the tribe, it also becomes clear that Emook has faith in the carved bone's ability to function as cultural capital. While he is polishing the handle, Shoola sneaks up on him before he has the chance to hide the bone away. Finding him and his handle--"the grandest [she has] ever seen"--irresistible, Shoola begs to hold the handle (18). It's at this exact moment that the perfect shell washes up at Shoola's feet, leading her to confirm that Emook must be right, that indeed "[f]or every footprint there must be a foot"(19). This is a conspicuous transformation of the actual claims Emook makes: "that for every hook there is a fish; and for every spade a hole" (18-19). The spoon complete, Emook "beam[s]" thinking about how impressed the People will be once they see his magnificent spoon (20). Agreeing, Shoola urges Emook not to show his treasure to anyone, for she knows that her father would be envious of the spoon, causing him to declare potlatch. In the story, potlatch is a ceremony in which "each grown member of the tribe had to give up his most prized possession" and Chief Gawgawnee has a history of invoking potlatch whenever he is feeling envious of what someone else has.

Instead of taking the completed spoon to the People, but still wanting to celebrate the

combination of each of their parts--the handle and the shell--Emook and Shoola decide to have a secret celebration, at which Emook informs Miss Loon (one of the party-goers) that Shoola "is also becoming a woman" (22). This scene further substantiates Emook's expectation that the completed spoon could function as cultural capital that would allow him entry into the class of men. Whereas before Shoola's contribution of the well-fitted shell Emook identified a potential kinship system in the bone which he polished and shined in solitude, with the contribution of Shoola's complementary part the two engage in a ceremony by which Shoola "become[s] a woman." It is at this point that Emook's leg--without explicit explanation--straightens, leading him to throw aside his cane and dance with Shoola. The two dance for hours before their celebration is broken up by an approaching storm. This scene reveals the strong connection and co-dependency between (en)abled-bodiness and heterosexuality. Looking at the scene between Emook and Shoola on the beach, in which Emook experiences a singular experience of able-bodiedness at precisely the time that he fits his handle to Shoola's shell, we see a re-ification of the dyad presented earlier in which men and women hold different, conversely-gendered orientations to nature (one provides the spade while the other provides the complementary hole).

While it's perhaps most obvious how Emook's spatial relationship to the gendered workgroups marks him as an *Other* outside of this gender binary, it is critical to note, according to Robert McRuer's analysis of the "connection between heterosexuality and able-bodied identity" that it is actually Emook's disability that excludes him from the binary which he yearns to enter into. We see here that the space of work for the Sea Cliff people is what determines their discourse community, which is how they name their collective heteronormativity--through repeated singing of songs that explicate the group's gendered relation to the world. And, to state again, it's the rib bone which accomplishes both heteronormativity and able-bodiedness that

seems to promise Emook entry into the privileged class.

That night, two things arrive to the Sea Cliff people: a maelstrom and a mysterious, enchanting stranger. This stranger, seeking refuge from the storm in the People's longhouse, mesmerizes the community--especially Shoola. The only citizens not enchanted by the visitor are Emook and his adoptive grandmother Um-Lalagic. Employing her skill with shadow puppets to quiet the children frightened by the storm, Um-Lalagic is frustrated by the stranger's ability to overshadow her depictions of animals with increasingly complex, increasingly alien shadow figures. Seeing this stranger win the attention of Shoola despite his own attempts to dispel the visitor and acknowledging that "his playmate was never going to be his true mate," Emook--the rebuffed lover--resolves to partake in the "Long Walk," a ritual suicide customary to the tribe (37). However, at the last moment, Emook sees from the cliff's edge "all the tribe's maidens, tumbled on the sand in sodden sleeps" (38). The only girl not yet in the waves was Shoola, who "was about to straddle the monster for a ride in the waves"--the monster being the other form of the stranger from the longhouse (39). Rather than attempt to defeat the stranger directly, Emook returns to the tribe's longhouse and declares potlatch himself. Emook throws his rib bone into the fire, despite many pleas that he stop, and the stranger is eventually forced by Chief Gawgawnee to destroy his medallion, the object which provides him the power to take on human form. Significantly, there are initially protests that Emook not be permitted to invoke potlatch due to his status, but once he presents his spoon handle his invocation is heeded. The important aspect of this detail is that it was Emook who first destroyed his symbolic privilege, which led to the Sea Lion having to destroy his. Reverting to his monstrous form, the exposed stranger is quickly rushed out of the village and into the sea by the tribe. Following this communal banishment, the chief admits that Emook "was very clever and brave for a crippled--" before pausing under the



eyes of the community and finishing "spoonmaker" (48).

### **Slaveboy Frog to Crippled Spoonmaker: Emook Holds the Center**

This address represents a seismic shift from the book's first interaction between the chief and Emook, in which he calls Emook a "crippled slaveboy *frog*" (11). Taking into account the historical debate about how to predict the sex organs of a frog based on its precedent tadpole--in conjunction with the fact that, when he was delivered, "Chief Gawgawnee decided at once that the baby should be left on the low rocks, the way the girl babies were often disposed of"--and the chief's final referral to Emook, "crippled spoonmaker," we see Emook's public gender identity mutate from potentially ambiguous ("the way the girls babies were"), to a condescended male category ("frogboy"), to a tacit subjectivity based instead on vocation ("spoonmaker"). These nominations also align with the tribe's understanding of Emook's physical abilities: his gender ambiguity at birth mirrors the uncertainty about his able-bodiedness based on his congenital physical abnormalities; his classification as "frogboy" matches his lower-class status as a result of his less productive work as a spoonmaker; and finally his lack of gender identifiers reflects the way his community is now understanding him in terms of his relationship to the environment--one which falls outside of the male/female designations generally employed by the tribe.

It's important to notice, as well, the way in which Emook's possession of, theorizing about, and destruction of the rib bone chronologize around these nominations. In the scene directly after we see Chief Gawgawnee call Emook a frogboy, Emook reveals the rib bone to the reader--while in private--musing almost simultaneously about the potential of turning "into a frog *man*" as well as the impossibility of a frog ever "turn[ing] into anything more than a frog" (12-13). Following this, his consummation with Shoola seems to offer credence to his plan to homogenize before the stranger arrives to steal Shoola's attention, leading him to concede that

"his playmate was never going to be his true mate" regardless of what treasures he could acquire. Deciding, then, against seeking increased power by moving toward higher ranks of power, Emook affirms his riparian-like identity and destroys his material marker of power in a process that also erodes the system of privilege which the stranger was manipulating.

In the end, Emook is identified simply as a crippled spoonmaker. With the Sea Lion safely exiled to the sea, Emook reflects that "[a] cripple he would always be--things are as they are--but no more a slaveboy." This affirmation, notably, addresses two of the three identity markers identified in the story (Emook's non-abledness and his labor) but his gender identity is left tacit. In fact, it was the weight of the town's eyes when Chief Gawgawnee nearly attempted to name Emook's gender that led him to halt and, in a whisper, name Emook *spoonmaker*. In "Tacit Subjects" Carlos Ulises Decena insists on the importance of "tak[ing] seriously the distinction between refusing to discuss an openly lived homosexuality and silence," a distinction which I think could be equally important for other non-heteronormative identities (340). After all, it's the definitiveness before Emook's heroism combined with his tacit identity after he becomes a hero that allows the possibility for effective resistance to remain open to multiple trajectories.

The true variance of these potential trajectories is evidenced by Ike's eventual enactment of the ideology Emook's story represents despite the fact that Ike, for all intents and purposes, sits opposite Emook on the spectrum of privilege. An able-bodied, white, cis/het American with a Navy Cross medal and a famous past as an influential eco-terrorist and -activist, there are certainly no clues at the beginning of these stories that the protagonists will play similar roles to save their respective communities. The first strong clue connecting these two characters might not come until it's revealed that Nikolas Levertov--the foreigner who brings with him to Kuinak

the capital and camera crews of the multinational SeaCorp and Ike's arch-nemesis--is cast in the role of the sea lion in SeaCorp's filming of the storybook. Eventually, Ike tries to flex his latent privilege at a town-hall meeting, denouncing Levertov before his community with the help of the rhetorical techniques he used to such success before leaving the lower 48. The town, however, laughs Ike out of the meetinghouse, just as Emook was laughed out of the longhouse when he tried to garner community support in his effort to expel the sea lion. But like Emook, Ike survives his encounter with the sea lion by quashing his privilege and in the end sends Levertov--resplendent in his sea lion costume--back to the sea. While Ike's situation and his arrival there are radically different, the parallels between their respective plot arcs in responding to markedly similar situations exposes a strong suggestion in *Sailor Song* to adopt the characteristics and behaviors present in *The Sea Lion* in dealing with the problems of globalizing, colonizing environmental destruction in its current iteration.

The parallel's between Emook's story (which is well-known among all the people of Kuinak) and Ike's serve to illuminate it as a prefiguration of Ike's progress toward a riparian center: Emook and Ike, both outsiders with the resources to acquire social dominance in their adoptive locales, relinquish their respective cultural capital in order to reject colonizing menaces--Emook, the Lion of the Sea, and Ike, Nikolas Levertov who is cast as the Lion of the Sea in his production of the film version of *Shoola and the Sea Lion*.

The major difference between these two characters, though, is the direction from which they reach the riparian center. Ike, the world-famous Bakatcha Bandit Navy Cross recipient arrives in Kuinak, in part, to escape the notoriety he (no longer) enjoys in the lower 48. Throughout the novel he must struggle to resist the continued attempts to draw him into more overt, outspoken opposition. Emook, on the other hand, is an outsider with virtually no social

power. Orphaned in childbrith, Emook is the crippled son of a slave woman who "had been captured as a child" by the Sea Cliff People during a raid and would have been killed had it not been for the elderly Um-Lalagic insisting on keeping him, under threat of suicide.

While Ike doesn't destroy the system that gives him privilege as a white male American or even revoke his membership in that club as a more literal reading of *The Sea Lion* might lead us to look for, his behavior does seem to follow the queer example Emook demonstrates as far as refusing to take place in binary oppositions and opting to remain outside of the dichotomy instead. While the dichotomies that the protagonists of these two stories vary noticeably, they do still avoid binaries in order to defeat essentially the same enemy: Emook, the Lion of the Sea, and Ike, Nik Levertov who is cast in its role. While the two protagonist/antagonist dyads exist in vastly different historico-political contexts, it is interesting to see that the same general technique of refusing to engage in binarism is successful in allowing both protagonists to expel their respective colonizers. In this way, the main takeaway from *Sailor Song* might be the possibility of deploying a queer resistance like that presented in *The Sea Lion*.

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