Gas Masks, Pogo, and the Ecological Indian: Earth Day and the Visual Politics of American Environmentalism

Finis Dunaway

On April 22, 1970, approximately twenty million Americans celebrated the first Earth Day. According to many observers, the event—often described as the largest protest in U.S. history—signaled the emergence of a new form of environmentalism, one that emphasized the dynamic connections between human society and the natural world. While scholars have frequently noted the importance of Earth Day in popularizing the environmental message and establishing a legislative agenda for the new decade, they have tended to ignore the larger symbolic meanings of the event. This essay argues that Earth Day needs to be understood in visual terms as a moment that evoked, generated, and commented upon a wide range of popular images. The resonance of the event stemmed not only from the increasing concerns about pollution and other environmental problems, but also from participants and the mass media tapping into broader cultural themes, investing familiar images with new meanings. Long after the demonstrations had ended, Earth Day would leave behind visual icons and practices of seeing that would continue to shape U.S. attitudes toward the environment.[1]

This essay, then, looks beyond the events that took place on that single day to consider the wider constellation of images that emerged during the period surrounding Earth Day. I examine a diverse range of visual forms—photographs in popular magazines, television news, political posters, editorial cartoons, museum exhibitions, and public service advertisements—to explain how a variety of media interacted with one another to produce a popular visual discourse of environmental concern.[2] While the essay ranges across these different media and considers a broad array of imagery, much of the analysis focuses on three types of images—pictures of people wearing gas masks, the comic strip *Pogo*, and the portrayal of the Ecological Indian. These images circulated widely during this time period and became major sites for spectators to grapple with fundamental moral and political questions: How were they—as individuals, families, and

communities—affected by the environmental crisis? Who was responsible for the devastation of the environment—corporate elites, government officials, or each and every American? How could the crisis best be solved—through individual or collective means? These images, when situated within the broader contexts of visual culture and environmental politics, reveal how pictures helped shape dominant views and conceptions of American environmentalism, often to the exclusion of alternative and subaltern perspectives. Images of gas masks personalized the sense of risk by showing the ecological threat intruding upon the daily lives of all Americans, warning that everyone could suffer from the deadly spread of pollution. This emphasis on the widespread danger of the crisis and its frightening entry into private life also worked to personalize the sense of responsibility. The visual media, particularly through the popular cartoon character Pogo and the figure of the Ecological Indian, ignored larger social structures to suggest that Americans could ward off doomsday by altering their actions in daily life.

By placing images at the center of my analysis, I examine the ways in which visual culture helped popularize environmental concern but also obscured and deflected the movement's more radical ideas by framing it as a nonthreatening form of politics. Although other social movements at the time, including feminism and the New Left, were frequently ridiculed or dismissed by the mass media, environmentalists were not subjected to mockery. With the notable exception of one television commentator who described student environmental protests as "modern day panty raids with a conscience," the mass media accorded considerable respect to the environmental cause. On Earth Day itself, ABC News rejoiced that there was "something good about pollution. In a time of stress and strife, it has at least united the country in opposition to it. . . . Republicans and Democrats, radicals and rightists, young and old, rich and poor, finally found a war all can support—a war on pollution." Environmentalism, according to these reports, promised to replace the polarizing protests of the time with a consensual cause that could bring the nation together. Even though environmental activists were not derided by the media, they still found their ideas routinely distorted. In their campaigns, protests, and rhetoric, many environmentalists sought to forge links between individual behavior and structures of power: they called for changes in daily life and also challenged corporate and government poisoning of the air and water. They argued that personal decisions had a political dimension; individual consumer choices, they believed, affected the ecological fabric. The visual media, however, extracted and amplified only one part of their message—the focus on individual moral conduct—but severed it from questions of power.[3]

It would be too simple, though, to assign all the blame to the media for this particular framing of environmentalism. During this time, there was a struggle to define the meanings and scope of the environmental movement, a contest over such questions as what constituted an environmental issue and whether or not environmental causes would be linked to broader struggles for social justice. As the geographer Laura Pulido explains, subaltern groups, including African Americans in urban areas and Latino farmworkers, developed a form of politics that situated "environmental concerns within the context of inequality and attempts to alter dominant power arrangements." Mainstream environmental organizations, in contrast, promoted a vision of universal risk and vulnerability, what the sociologist Ulrich Beck would later describe as a "generalized consciousness of affliction." In upholding this conception of environmentalism, these groups tended to ignore environmental hazards—including lead poisoning in the inner cities and the effects of pesticides on farmworkers—that were clearly marked by the unequal distribution of risk. Indeed, mainstream groups often refused to consider such concerns as true environmental issues and concentrated instead on problems that supposedly threatened all Americans equally. By placing iconic images—gas masks, Pogo, and the Ecological Indian—in dialogue with these other environmental struggles, this essay will explore the complex relationship between the mass media and the multiple environmentalisms. Ultimately, both the media and mainstream organizations failed to understand the links between social inequality and the disproportionate experience of risk among racialized minorities.[4]

Likewise, while some Earth Day organizers sought to focus on power relations and corporate responsibility for environmental degradation, the media instead emphasized collective guilt: everyone was blamed for causing pollution. Popular imagery stressed that individual decisions and actions—especially those related to consumption and reproduction—led to the environmental crisis. According to these explanations, both a growing population and increasing affluence inevitably resulted in widespread pollution. If "Americans" (almost always described in these reports as a monolithic, undifferentiated group) would change their actions in daily life—if they would have fewer children and consume less—then they could overcome this crisis.

This focus on personal responsibility obscured other explanations that considered the social origins of environmental degradation. The scientist Barry Commoner, in *The Closing Circle* and other publications, argued that decisions made by corporate and government leaders accounted for most of the nation's environmental problems. In particular, Commoner focused on the shift to "new productive technologies" and other "counterecological pattern[s] of growth"

after World War II. From the introduction of synthetic fibers and nonreturnable bottles to the proliferation of pesticides and the massive allocation of funds to the interstate highway system (and with it, the underwriting of the automobile industry rather than public transportation), Commoner detailed the effects of these changes implemented by powerful public and private institutions. "The earth is polluted," he concluded, "neither because man is some kind of especially dirty animal nor because there are too many of us. The fault lies with human society—with the ways in which society has elected to win, distribute, and use the wealth that has been extracted by human labor from the planet's resources. Once the social origins of the crisis become clear, we can begin to design appropriate social actions to resolve it." For Commoner, these solutions would entail a shift away from counterecological technologies, the cultivation of a more democratic form of science attuned to the environmental consequences of modern industry, and the recognition that the burden of environmental risk often fell on poor and minority communities. Commoner's analysis of the causes of the environmental crisis and his agenda for social change echoed the claims of some environmental activists, especially those involved with subaltern struggles. Nevertheless, these perspectives would be submerged by the proliferation of imagery that emphasized individual responsibility.[5]

Even though the media stressed the role of the individual, the period surrounding Earth Day did lead to major environmental reforms: from the founding of the Environmental Protection Agency to the passage of the Clean Air Act and other legislation, these policies established the main features of the environmental regulatory state and expressed confidence in the government's ability to solve social problems. Thus, we find a paradox embedded in the environmental politics of the period: the regulatory state expanded while, simultaneously, the visual media emphasized individual responsibility. To end pollution, Americans were told to look both to the federal government and to their own actions in daily life. This essay will explain how these seemingly opposing trends actually reinforced one another and how they bequeathed a problematic legacy to U.S. environmental politics: one that successfully lowered lead levels in the ambient environment but did not strive to protect inner-city children from the hazards of lead paint; one that banned DDT but did not confront the dangers other pesticides posed to farmworkers; one that appeared to enact race-neutral policies but that ultimately intensified environmental inequalities throughout the United States.[6]

The visual images discussed in this essay crystallized a narrative of crisis and response that helped position environmentalism as an important element of U.S. public culture. By representing pollution as a crisis, they demanded

action on the part of spectators. For the most part, the prescribed remedies focused on the individual, but because the environmental crisis seemed so threatening and overwhelming, some of the images also implicitly sanctioned state action. While these pictures communicated knowledge of the environmental crisis and mobilized support for reform, they did not connect ecology to power relations. Crucial issues were left out of the frame, including how environmental pollutants posed greater risks to particular groups of the population and how subaltern activists created alternative forms of environmental politics. Ignoring questions of inequality and oppression, mass media images, like the mainstream environmental movement, effaced racial and class divisions to present environmentalism as a cause that everyone could support. These images marginalized questions of race and the unequal distribution of environmental risk by effectively addressing middle-class whites as "everyone," by representing them as the universal victims of environmental problems and hence the universal subjects of a potential environmental movement. Pictures made the environmental crisis visible to a mass public but, simultaneously, masked the ways in which structural inequities produced ecologies of injustice. This essay considers Earth Day as a complex layering of cultural, political, and visual practices, one that ultimately reveals both the prospects and limitations of American environmentalism during a pivotal moment in its history.

Gas Masks and the Imaging of the Ecological Body

In January 1970, three months before Earth Day, *Life* magazine joined other popular periodicals in making the new environmental movement the focus of a feature article. The issue begins with an eerie, almost otherworldly image. A white woman walks down a street pushing a white child in a stroller: a simple portrait of everyday life, except that both the woman and the toddler are wearing gas masks (fig. 1). John Pekkanen, who wrote the story and whose two-year-old daughter, Sarah, is pictured in the image, described the sense of fear that gripped him as he researched the piece, a "feeling of dread," he explained, "about the prospects of my own two children" growing up in "a world without a future." Pekkanen was "deeply shaken" by the dire warnings of leading scientists, who told him that unless Americans solved the problem of air pollution, "we would all be walking the streets in gas masks ten years from now." In the photograph, the gas masks donned by Sarah and Lucy, the wife of photographer Mike Mauney, were meant, Pekkanen continued, "to be symbolic of what's ahead."[7]

Even though Lucy is not Sarah's mother, the image resembles a family snapshot, a casual picture of daily life. In this case, however, the scene represents a vision of the apocalyptic future, a time when all Americans, including women and children, must wear gas masks to protect themselves from the polluted atmosphere. The haunting quality of the image is accentuated by Lucy's appearance: wearing a stylish leather coat along with a striped scarf carefully draped around her neck, she seems to accept the need for a gas mask with ready equanimity. Rather than expressing fear, her face, clearly visible through the oval-shaped mask, reveals the hint of a smile. Meanwhile, Sarah's mask calls to mind the bug-eyed devices worn by troops on the western front during World War I; obscuring her face, the ghoulish headgear turns Sarah into a disturbing sign of the future awaiting America's children. With this photograph, *Life* magazine offered its readers a snapshot from the apocalypse, a visual warning about the world they may soon inhabit.

Pekkanen was not alone in seeing the gas mask as a suggestive emblem of the environmental crisis. Indeed, during this time period, it became ubiquitous in the visual discourse of pollution. In a 1970 editorial cartoon, widely printed in environmental magazines as well as the popular media, Ray Osrin from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* provided an updated version of Auguste Rodin's statue, *The Thinker* (fig. 2). Like Rodin, Osrin portrayed a muscular male figure, posed with his right hand under his chin in a contemplative fashion. While Rodin's figure seems sternly sober, his mind fixed on metaphysical matters, the face of Osrin's *Thinker* is shielded by a gas mask that protects him from the pollution surrounding his meditative perch. Environmental groups reproduced this cartoon on a poster and also circulated other posters featuring people in gas masks. In a particularly striking example that linked religious imagery to environmental concern, one poster shows Christ hanging from a smokestack cross above a littered landscape, speaking through his mask into the smoggy air: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." In a lighter vein, *Mad* magazine presented its freckled-face hero, Alfred E. Neuman, outfitted in a gas mask while reading a "special polluted issue" of the publication. On Earth Day itself, the mass media seized upon the gas mask as a defining symbol of environmental protest: numerous television and newspaper reports described participants in cities around the nation using the masks as theatrical props to convey their anger at the condition of the urban environment.[8]

Figure 1.
Photograph by Michael Mauney of Sarah Pekkanen and Lucy Mauney wearing gas masks, published in *Life*, January 30, 1970. Michael Mauney/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images.

Figure 2.
"The Thinker," by Ray Osrin. Editorial cartoon originally published in *Cleveland Plain Dealer* and reprinted in *New York Times*, January 25, 1970. Reprinted by permission of Stephanie Osrin.

The use of the gas mask marked a shift in the visual lexicon of environmental apocalypse. In the postwar period, many in the United States had feared the violent destruction of the bomb, the sudden eradication of all life under the shadow of the mushroom cloud. Now they began to recognize the gradual, ongoing degradation of the environment as a fundamentally different, but equally terrifying, sign of the end. Morris Neiburger, a Los Angeles–based meteorologist, carefully studied the smog that accumulated with each passing year, hanging like a pall over his city. He concluded that it bespoke a menacing, slowly escalating form of catastrophe. His apocalyptic language would be frequently cited in the period leading up to Earth Day. "All civilization," Neiburger warned, " . . . will pass away, not from a sudden cataclysm like a nuclear war, but from gradual suffocation in its own wastes."[9]

As an emblem of pollution, the gas mask took on environmental meanings during this time, but it had long been considered a symbol of death and destruc-

tion. In deploying gas mask imagery, environmental activists and the popular media drew on an established visual tradition to galvanize public concern for pollution. The power of these images derived in part from their prior claims on the cultural imagination. During World War I, the mask protected soldiers from asphyxiating gas, but it also became a purveyor of pejorative meaning, a symbol of the dehumanizing effects of modern warfare. "Gas," the historian Modris Eksteins argues, "took the war into the realm of the unreal, the make-believe. When men donned their masks they lost all sign of humanity."[10] Following World War I, peace activists in the United States used the gas mask to warn of the cataclysm that another war might bring, especially the development of deadlier gases targeted at civilians.[11]

In the period leading up to Earth Day, gas mask imagery would reappear, not to signify the terror of total war, but rather to represent the possibility of gradual ecological collapse. Beginning in the 1950s, protestors covered their faces with gas masks to express their outrage at the increasing levels of lead, carbon monoxide, and other pollutants in the atmosphere. On many occasions, women led these campaigns, marching with their children, using their status as nurturing mothers to call for pollution control measures to protect the next generation. Like *Life*'s photograph of Sarah and Lucy, these activists deployed traditional conceptions of gender to make women and children appear especially vulnerable to pollution. Yet men donned gas masks in many of these demonstrations, suggesting that their bodies, too, were permeable and threatened. Like Osrin's version of *The Thinker*, these protestors rejected the masculine ideal of strength and invincibility to express their anxiety about pollution. Appropriating the gas mask in their campaigns, environmental protestors—men, women, and children—activated the familiar association of the device with apocalyptic fears to issue a warning that all Americans could become victims of the air they breathed.[12]

Besides conveying fear of the ecological crisis, the photograph of Sarah and Lucy can also be viewed as a secularized image of the Madonna and child, set not in the biblical past, but rather in the apocalyptic future. Madonna images typically depict bodily closeness and motherly protection, but these features are not apparent in the photograph of Sarah and Lucy. Separated by their gas masks, *Life*'s Madonna and child are unable to share the warmth and affection enjoyed by most parents and children.

In addition to air pollution, other environmental concerns—especially the presence of pesticides in breast milk—would be represented through reference to the Madonna tradition. A series of environmental posters, including one reproduced in *Time* magazine two months before Earth Day, portrayed the

bare breasts of white women from various camera positions. One poster offers a close, detailed shot, focused only on the breast itself, while another shows a woman's hair draped over her breast, pointing toward her obviously pregnant belly (fig. 3). In each poster, the following language appears in typeface over the naked breast: "Caution: Keep out of the reach of children." Text in another part of the poster warns of the high DDT content in the milk of nursing mothers. This imagery visualized a concern that Rachel Carson had voiced in her influential environmental text *Silent Spring*, which, among other issues, warned that DDT could be "passed on from mother to offspring" through "human milk." Like the photograph of Sarah and Lucy, the posters convey fear about the world children are being born into—in this case, triggered by reports of pesticide content in mothers' milk. The posters link this concern to religious iconography by invoking the tradition of the nursing Madonna. In medieval art, the Virgin Mary was often portrayed breast-feeding Christ, her milk seen as "an emanation of heaven." In modern America, milk flowing from the breast instead appears as an unnatural poison, profaning the sacred connection between mother and infant.[13]

Before this time period, secular portraits of the Madonna and child had frequently circulated in American visual culture. Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* (1936), the most famous photograph of the Depression era, joined many other New Deal images in portraying a woman and her children as helpless victims of the depression. After World War II, photographers associated with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and other organizations drew on this tradition to generate concern for impoverished people in Africa and other places around the globe. In these cases, the Madonna and child signified victims who deserved the sympathy of viewers, people who needed to be rescued, either through government assistance or donations offered by spectators. The images were directed at middle-class audiences; it was assumed that viewers did not suffer from the poverty and hunger that afflicted the subjects of the photographs.[14]

In striking contrast, environmental images did not differentiate the Madonna and child from viewing audiences, but rather suggested that subjects and spectators inhabited a shared geography of ecological risk. *Life*'s photograph evokes this theme of universal victimhood. Although Sarah and Lucy appear white and comfortably middle class, their gas-masked faces illustrate the way pollution endangers the health of all Americans. Likewise, posters of nursing women did not portray any signs of poverty. Closely cropped, focusing on the woman's breast and pregnant belly, with little evidence of the surrounding context, the images suggested that any woman in the United States, no matter her

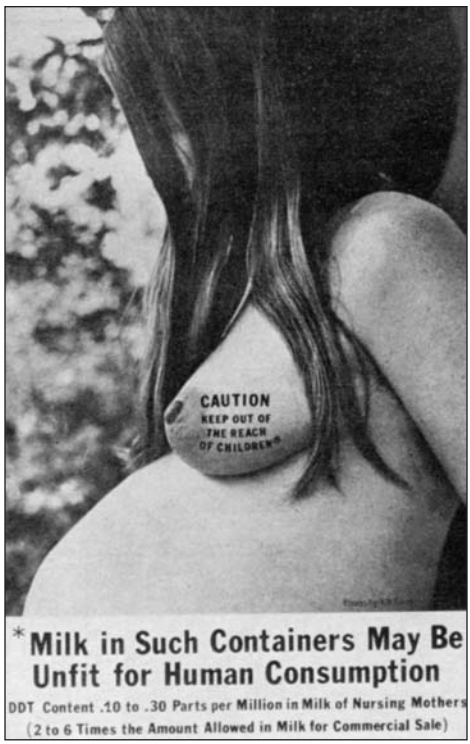

Figure 3.
The Ecology Center, poster warning of pesticides in breast milk, 1970, published in *Time*, February 2, 1970.

social or economic position, could pass deadly substances to her nursing infant. These posters, like the photograph of Sarah and Lucy, project images of whites, rather than a multicultural collection of women and children, as representing universal risk, thereby marginalizing race and masking the inequality of environmental harm.

Images of gas masks and nursing mothers helped popularize the concept of the ecological body, reinforcing the notion there was a crucial link between human health and the condition of the surrounding environment. These pictures also provided the rationale for state action, visualizing the need to regulate industry and ban particular pesticides in order to protect public health. Yet lurking within this imagery was an unspoken assumption of racialized privilege that helped create what the historian Michelle Murphy calls a "regime of imperceptibility." The same media that helped make the environmental crisis visible to a mass public also made invisible the various spaces in which different groups of Americans encountered pollution, pesticides, and other

environmental threats. Even though some scientists, such as Commoner, pointed to studies that indicated that racialized minorities were "the special victims of pollution," subjected in their ambient environments, their workplaces, and their often substandard housing conditions to greater quantities of "smog, carbon monoxide, lead," and other pollutants, this imagery located all Americans within a common geography of environmental danger. The visual media heightened fears of the environmental crisis while ignoring the nation's widespread environmental inequities. Pictures encouraged audiences to perceive pollution as a generalized, apocalyptic danger that affected all Americans equally but to turn their eyes away from the ecologies of injustice that marked the spaces where different people lived and worked, the spaces that shaped their experience of the environmental crisis.[15]

Pogo and the Causes of the Environmental Crisis

If gas mask imagery, together with pictures of nursing mothers, provided spectators with an answer to a key question of the time—how were they affected by pollution?—a popular comic strip answered a second question: who was responsible for causing the ecological crisis? Indeed, during the months surrounding Earth Day, the one quotation repeated most frequently to explain the origins of the crisis was first uttered not by a leading ecologist or political activist, but rather by a comic strip character: Pogo the Possum. The main protagonist in Walt Kelly's *Pogo*, the eloquent marsupial offered his perspective on pollution in his usual habitat—the funny pages of the newspaper—as well as on a poster Kelly created just in time for the first Earth Day. In the poster, Pogo, with anxious eyes and a quizzical brow, stands beneath a pair of stately, flowering trees (fig. 4). The landscape before him is covered with litter, as numerous bottles and cans, a discarded cabinet, and a busted mattress fill the space. Pogo turns his head back to look directly at the viewer and deliver his famous words: "We have met the enemy and he is us."[16]

During the year 1970, Pogo's statement cropped up in a variety of sources. In January, for its lead story in a special issue on "The Ravaged Environment," *Newsweek* closed with the quotation as a way to summarize its analysis of the environmental movement. *Newsweek* claimed that one of the main goals of environmentalists was to convince the American public that all were complicit in the current crisis. "For the villain of the piece," the magazine explained, "is not some profit-hungry industrialist who can be fined into submission, nor some lax public official who can be replaced. The villains are consumers who demand . . . new, more, faster, bigger, cheaper playthings without counting

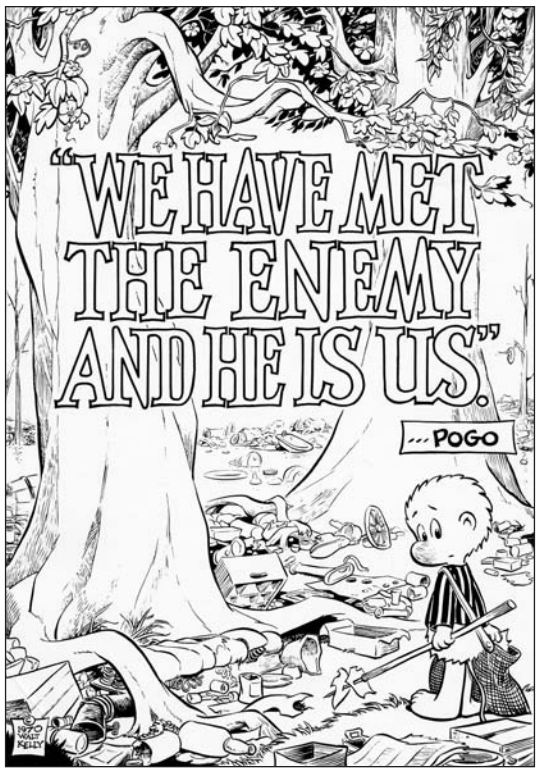

Figure 4.
"We have met the enemy," Pogo poster, by Walt Kelly, 1970. © Okefenokee Glee & Perloo, Inc.

the cost in a dirtier, smellier, sicklier world." According to this analysis, all participants in consumer culture—especially those who demand and desire more "playthings"—shared equal responsibility for ravaging the nation's environment. Throughout its special issue, *Newsweek* tended to obscure the differences between different groups of Americans, ignoring issues of class, race, or power, to suggest, like Pogo, that pollution resulted not from the nefarious actions of a single individual but rather from the accumulation of choices made by an entire nation of consumers: the enemy is us.[17]

Although *Newsweek* did not reproduce Kelly's poster, the magazine relied on another representational strategy to reinforce his message: matching photographs with captions that guide readers toward particular interpretations of the images. In one photograph, a person walks down a city street murky with smoke. The caption reads: "Man has always been a messy animal." Linking pollution to human nature, this comment naturalizes the environmental crisis,

suggesting that "man"—and not any specific interest or group of people—deserves censure for ruining the natural world. Another page displays a collage of four images: a heap of junked automobiles, an aerial view of suburban sprawl, a colossal pile of tin cans, and a mass of people. "Too many people," the caption explains, "living too close together pile high the earth with worn-out junk and trash." Through these visual and verbal cues, *Newsweek* repeatedly echoed Pogo's view of the environmental crisis. No wonder the author of the lead story chose to end his piece with the opossum's familiar refrain.[18]

As Earth Day approached, Pogo's words enjoyed increasing currency. In March, a political columnist for the *Saturday Review* noted, with no apparent surprise, that a member of the White House Council on Environmental Quality—an advisory body appointed by President Richard Nixon—had quoted the cartoon character at a recent meeting. Pogo's statement also echoed through the crowded streets of New York City, where hundreds of thousands gathered to celebrate Earth Day. As they walked around Union Square, the site of many Earth Day events, New Yorkers saw Pogo's statement emblazoned across a prominently displayed booth. They also glimpsed his words printed on lapel buttons that were distributed by eager volunteers throughout the day. In the Earth Day edition of the *New York Times*, a book reviewer complained that leading environmental activists and writers had not cogently explained the meanings of the environmental crisis. So he concluded, as so many others did, by quoting the environmental thinker he found most sagacious: Pogo the Possum.[19]

Pogo's statement seemed to encapsulate two popular (and problematic) explanations for the origins of the environmental crisis: population growth and U.S. affluence. Even before Walt Kelly designed his Earth Day poster, the quotation appeared in an exhibition titled "Can Man Survive?" which ran from 1969 to 1971 at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In the time leading up to and following Earth Day, record-breaking audiences attended this exhibit about the environmental crisis. Pogo's words were strategically placed above a graph documenting the dramatic rise of world population: from a gradual, barely perceptible increase in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to a sudden surge in the twentieth (fig. 5). As the line stretches into the future, it becomes almost completely vertical, suggesting that population numbers will continue to expand exponentially. This concern about population growth would be conveyed to Earth Day participants by colorful balloons—imprinted with the population control slogan "Stop at two"—that floated above the crowds in New York City. It would also be represented on a widely distributed poster titled "Population Explosion" that showed human

Figure 5.
Photograph of "Can Man Survive?" exhibition, American Museum of Natural History, 1969. Neg. no. 61814—111A: 160. © American Museum of Natural History, courtesy the Library, American Museum of Natural History.

beings literally falling off the face of the Earth, since the planet has become overcrowded with people. Together with these images, Pogo's statement seemed to confirm the message of the scientist Paul Ehrlich, whose best-selling *The Population Bomb* identified overpopulation as the root cause of all environmental problems. "The causal chain of the deterioration is easily followed to its source," Ehrlich argued. "Too many cars, too many factories, too much detergent, too much pesticides . . . too little water, too much carbon dioxide—all can be traced easily to *too many people*."[20]

Pogo's words were also deployed to suggest another explanation of the crisis: that U.S. affluence and overconsumption led to environmental degradation. In the months leading up to Earth Day, the mass media—including television news and *Life* magazine—gave extensive coverage to a popular form of environmental protest: people destroying automobiles or burying combustion engines. By orchestrating these spectacles, protestors hoped to garner media attention and to condemn the automobile for its role in causing pollution. In Santa Barbara, California, they used sledgehammers to smash an old station wagon; on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, at the site of a pre-Earth Day environmental teach-in, they placed an automobile

on trial, found it guilty of environmental crimes, and then "sentenced it to be smashed to death." Students at the University of Southern California and the University of Minnesota held mock funerals for the automobile engine (fig. 6). At Colorado State University, where another engine burial took place, pallbearers wore gas masks. Finally, at the conclusion of a "Survival Fair" at San Jose State College, protestors buried "a polished 1970 automobile, still smelling new, right off the lines at Detroit."[21]

With these theatrics, environmental activists could have launched a critique of the nation's transportation system, including the disproportionate use of public monies to subsidize the automobile industry at the expense of mass transit. Yet media reports of these actions conveyed nothing more than a general attack on consumerism and affluence. The San Jose State automobile burial in fact sparked a counterdemonstration by African American students who believed that the funeral goers were blind to their own class privilege and to the conditions of inner-city life. Likewise, Barry Commoner rejected the "personalized approach to the environmental crisis," which he saw reflected in these actions, an outlook that ignored inequalities within the United States and simply urged Americans "to 'consume less.'" Just like population control advocates, these "ecological crusaders," he continued, chose "to march under Pogo's banner" by focusing on "personal acts that lessen environmental impact."[22]

Figure 6.
Photograph by Gerald R. Brimacombe of members of Students for Environmental Defense at the University of Minnesota burying an internal combustion engine. Published in *Life*, January 30, 1970. Gerald R. Brimacombe/Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images.

Indeed, Pogo's statement tapped into an important strand of U.S. environmentalism—the emphasis placed upon individual action. The mass market paperbacks produced for Earth Day all featured a section that offered "consumer hints"—from carrying a lunch box to buying low-phosphate laundry detergents—to help solve the ecological crisis. Environmental activists focused on questions of individual behavior to encourage Americans to think about the politics of consumption and to recognize how their daily lives were enmeshed in broader ecological systems. Even though the question of individual responsibility formed an important part of their political vision, many of these same activists, including some of the organizers of the first Earth Day, began to challenge the media and corporate elites for appropriating this rhetoric in a manner that ultimately obscured questions of power. "While [the capitalists] have been trying to fight off the environmental lawyers," one critic observed, "their PR men have been working overtime promulgating 'the Pogo syndrome.'


BURY THE ENGINE
R.I.P
ENGINE
Without
Ecology
We All
PERISH

It is called that because its spokesmen, who are with surprising frequency the vice-presidents of oil companies, frequently quote Pogo: 'We have met the enemy and he is us.' In other words, it's all your fault, however rich or poor you may happen to be." "The trouble with this argument," the writer continued, "is that it deludes people into thinking that their individual decisions can help. . . . Saving cans and bottles and newspapers on an individual basis and hauling them to 'recycling centers' may make you feel better; it does not help. . . . [It] is, in bleak fact, not worth a damn."[23]

The Ecological Indian and the Quest for Solutions

This critic pointed, with obvious skepticism, toward the mass media's answer to a third question raised by Earth Day: how could the ecological crisis best be solved—through individual or collective means? Over and over again, visual imagery stressed individual action over social change, most famously in a public service advertisement featuring the "Crying Indian." Released in 1971, just after the first anniversary of Earth Day, the commercial for the antilitter organization Keep America Beautiful starred Iron Eyes Cody, an actor in native garb who paddles a birch bark canoe on water that seems, at first, tranquil and pristine, but that becomes increasingly polluted along his journey. He pulls his boat from the water and walks toward a bustling freeway, where someone in an automobile hurls a paper bag, which lands at the Indian's feet and scatters trash all around. The camera focuses closely on Iron Eyes Cody's face, as a single tear wells up in his eye and trickles slowly down his cheek (fig. 7). In a stern voice, the narrator comments: "Some people have a deep, abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country; some people don't. People start pollution. People can stop it." The Crying Indian appears as a static remnant from the past, someone who enters the contemporary landscape to find natural beauty replaced by industrial blight. His tear condemns an entire society that has laid waste to the environment, a nation composed of people who routinely throw trash on the side on the road.[24]

Figure 7.
Advertising Council/Keep America Beautiful advertisement featuring the Crying Indian, 1971. Courtesy of Advertising Council Archives, University of Illinois, record series 13/02/207.

This commercial followed other forms of visual culture in depicting Native Americans as paragons of ecological virtue. For members of the counterculture, in particular, the Ecological Indian figured prominently in their formation of an oppositional identity. A 1969 poster distributed by activists in Berkeley, California, who wanted to protect "People's Park" as a communal garden,

Pollution: It's a crying shame

But it won't be, if we start doing something about the problems. Things as easy as using a hand mower if your lawn is small. Or not overtaxing sewage systems by running water needlessly. Or actively supporting programs to clean up our rivers, lakes and streams. Let's restore the natural beauty that was once this country.

People start pollution.
People can stop it.

Keep America Beautiful

advertising contributed for the public good

B-50

HELP FIGHT POLLUTION CAMPAIGN
MAGAZINE AD NO. HFP—1790-72——7" x 10" (110 Screen)
Volunteer Agency: Marsteller Inc., Volunteer Coordinator: W. Howard Chase, American Can Company

features a picture of Geronimo, the legendary Apache resistance fighter, armed with a rifle. The accompanying text contrasts the Indians' reverence for the land with the greed of white men who turned the space into a parking lot. While the Berkeley activists held up Geronimo as a symbol of resistance, the Crying Indian appears completely powerless, unable to challenge white domination. All he can do is lament the land his people lost.[25]

Yet the advertisement does offer a prescription for action, expressed in the narrator's closing words: "People start pollution. People can stop it." Just as Walt Kelly portrayed Pogo picking up trash in the Earth Day poster (fig. 4 above), the Keep America Beautiful organization suggested that each individual could play a role in cleaning up the nation's environment. When the commercial first aired, NBC News described the group's campaign as part of a larger effort to demonstrate that "individuals can do more to stop pollution and litter, should do more themselves and criticize government and business less."[26]

Indeed, the Crying Indian commercial was part of a massive publicity campaign launched by Keep America Beautiful (KAB), in cooperation with the Advertising Council, the nation's preeminent public service advertising organization, to emphasize the role of individuals in fighting pollution. The advertisements repeatedly personalized the ecological crisis, suggesting that pollution emerged not from the decisions made by corporate and government elites, but rather from the "carelessness, indifference and bad habits" of individual Americans.[27] One advertisement features a freckled-face white girl, with pigtails and inquisitive eyes, asking her father: "Daddy, what did you do in the war against pollution?" (fig. 8).[28] In another advertisement, KAB claimed that "kids" and "mommies" were equally to blame as "businessmen" and "vice presidents" for causing pollution.[29] Blurring the line between the public and private spheres, these advertisements placed pollution squarely within the family domain. By personalizing the question of responsibility, the imagery reinforced the sense of collective guilt that audiences were meant to feel as they witnessed that single tear rolling—on television, across billboards, and in myriad newspapers and magazines—down the cheek of Iron Eyes Cody.

Figure 8.
Advertising Council/Keep America Beautiful advertisement, "Daddy, what did you do in the war against pollution?" 1971. Courtesy of Advertising Council Archives, University of Illinois, record series 13/02/207.

Just as a number of Earth Day organizers rejected Pogo's statement, some leading environmentalists began to challenge the visual politics of KAB. Founded in 1951 by the American Can Company and the Owens-Illinois Glass Company, a corporate roster that later included the likes of Coca-Cola and the Dixie Cup Company, KAB had worked with the Advertising Council

Daddy, what did you do in the war against pollution?

Of course you can always try to change the subject.

But one answer you can't give is that you weren't in it. Because in this war, there are no 4F's and no conscientious objectors. No deferments for married men or teen-agers. And no exemptions for women.

So like it or not, we're all in this one. But as the war heats up, millions of us stay coolly uninvolved. We have lots of alibis:

What can one person do?

It's up to "them" to do something about pollution – not me.

Besides, average people don't pollute. It's the corporations, institutions and municipalities.

The fact is that companies and governments are made up of people. It's people who make decisions and do things that foul up our water, land and air. And that goes for businessmen, government officials, housewives or homeowners.

What can one person do for the cause? Lots of things – maybe more than you think. Like cleaning your spark plugs every 1000 miles, using detergents in the recommended amounts, by upgrading incinerators to reduce smoke emissions, by proposing and supporting better waste treatment plants in your town. Yes, and throwing litter in a basket instead of in the street.

Above all, let's stop shifting the blame. People start pollution. People can stop it. When enough Americans realize this we'll have a fighting chance in the war against pollution.

Keep America Beautiful

advertising contributed for the public good

People start pollution. People can stop it.

on antilitter campaigns throughout the 1960s.[30] Soon after the first Earth Day, leaders of the Advertising Council, recognizing the increased popular interest in the environment, urged KAB to broaden its appeal by incorporating pollution imagery into future advertisements, including the legendary Crying Indian spot. When this new campaign debuted in 1971, KAB enjoyed the support of mainstream environmental groups, including the National Audubon Society, the Sierra Club, and the Wilderness Society. But these organizations all resigned from its advisory council by the mid-1970s. They objected to KAB for two reasons: its troubling political agenda and its penchant for visual obfuscation.

KAB clashed with these groups over an important environmental debate of the 1970s: an effort to pass "bottle bills," legislation that would require soft drink and beer producers to sell, as they had until quite recently, their beverages in reusable containers. Indeed, the flip-top can and the disposable bottle were relatively new arrivals on the beverage scene. According to one study from 1976: "The throwaway container, which represented less than 10 percent of the soft drink market as recently as 1965, now represents nearly 70 percent of that market."[31] The shift to the throwaway was responsible, in part, for the rising levels of litter that KAB publicized, but also, as environmentalists emphasized, for the mining of vast quantities of minerals, the production of various kinds of pollution, and the generation of tremendous amounts of solid waste. The KAB leadership, composed of major corporations in the beverage and container industries, lined up against the bottle bills, going so far, in one case, as to label supporters of such legislation as "Communists."[32]

KAB's opposition to bottle bills led many environmental groups to sever their ties with the organization and to rebuke its advertising campaigns. A leader of Environmental Action, the group that helped sponsor the first Earth Day, explained how the single-minded focus on litter obscured larger environmental problems. "In reality," he argued, "there is no *ecological* difference if an item is discarded in the street or if it is disposed of 'properly' in an open dump. In either case it will never biodegrade, never be reused, and never cease to be an eyesore. In either case, the effort and energy which went into making the bottle or wrapper is wasted, and the raw materials used have been forever removed from the earth's limited supply." Likewise, a leader of the National Audubon Society dismissed Iron Eyes Cody as "the flip-top American Indian."[33]

But KAB continued to promulgate the image of the Ecological Indian. By the mid-1970s, an Advertising Council official noted that "TV stations have continually asked for replacement films" of the 1971 commercial, "because they have literally worn out the originals from the constant showings." In

1975, the Advertising Council released a new television spot that featured Iron Eyes Cody, still outfitted in buckskins, riding a horse across the land to promote KAB. Although he still shed a tear, this new commercial also offered an optimistic message, depicting scenes of environmental improvement and claiming that "some Americans today" display the same "simple reverence" for nature as the Native Americans did long ago. The Ecological Indian cast judgment but also provided reassurance. Modern Americans, having ruined the environment, could now, KAB promised, experience a rebirth of native wisdom and even, another advertisement suggested, learn to chant an ancient prayer: "Oh great spirit . . . make me walk in beauty! Make my heart respect all you have made."[34]

While the original Crying Indian spot quite clearly fits with the antilitter agenda and individualist message of KAB, the advertisement can also be read differently to find more critical themes embedded in it. Even though the commercial's voice-over emphasizes the threat to "natural beauty" and the penultimate shots depict fast-food items being flung from an automobile window, other images vividly demonstrate the effects of unregulated industry releasing all kinds of pollutants into the nation's air and water. In one shot, as Iron Eyes Cody leans forward and paddles the canoe, his figure appears against a menacing backdrop of belching smokestacks and befouled air. The commercial could thus be seen as asking its viewers not only to pick up roadside trash, but also, like the imagery of gas masks and nursing mothers, to demand environmental reform, to call upon the state to expand its regulatory powers to prevent the continued devastation of the environment.[35]

Public Policy, Subaltern Perspectives, and the Limits of Mainstream Environmentalism

And, indeed, in the years surrounding Earth Day, the federal government adopted a whole host of measures to combat pollution and established the policies and institutions that define the environmental regulatory state. The paradox of environmental politics during this period is that the government increased its regulatory authority concerning pollution even as the mass media repeatedly urged Americans to solve the environmental crisis through changes in their individual behavior. So how can we understand these developments that seem, on first glance, to contradict one another?

To explain this paradox, I want to situate these seemingly opposing trends in relation to the emerging historiography on the 1970s. Much of this scholarship seeks to define the cultural politics of the era around specific turning

points, around moments, for example, when the United States moved in a more liberal or more conservative direction. Thus, both Philip Jenkins and Edward Berkowitz, in their recent books, argue that 1974 marked a "great divide" that signaled the end of liberal reform measures and a turn toward "more limited domestic policy." Both suggest as well that after this time the decade became increasingly characterized by a focus on individual responsibility for a wide range of issues, from ideas and policies related to criminality and insanity to the government's role in encouraging public health. "If the sixties," Berkowitz argues, "was an era of government grants to fix social problems and regulatory laws to assure proper behavior, the seventies was a time in which people rediscovered the power of . . . individual responsibility and raised questions about the effectiveness of regulation to change behavior in a desired way."[36]

Rather than revealing absolute shifts—*from* liberal reform *to* individual responsibility—the environmental politics of this period demonstrate instead how these themes complemented one another. Moral appeals about individual responsibility reinforced the expanding power of the regulatory state—and vice versa. In both cases, pollution and other environmental issues were seen as constituting a "crisis," a visible, definable problem that could be "solved"—on the one hand, through changes in individual behavior, and, on the other, through technical fixes initiated by the federal government. In both cases, environmentalism was portrayed as a movement devoted to a specific entity—the "environment"—and not a broad-based effort to bring about social justice. Issues of race, class, and power, therefore, had nothing to do with the quest for a cleaner environment. Neutral experts employed by the environmental policy apparatus, together with individuals engaged in voluntary action around the nation, would participate in a consensus-building crusade to rid America of pollution.[37]

By placing visual images in dialogue with public policy and subaltern perspectives, we can better understand the limits to American environmentalism as it developed during this period. To be sure, some environmental activists sought to forge connections with other social struggles, to link their cause to the antiwar movement or to the fight against systematic racism and poverty in the inner cities. For the most part, however, mainstream environmental organizations adhered to a narrow conception of the "environment." These groups worried about the presence of lead in the ambient environment and pushed for clear air measures, to make sure that people like Sarah and Lucy would not have to wear gas masks in the future. Nevertheless, they did not participate in the contemporaneous struggle against lead poisoning, a debilitating condition most commonly found in the inner city, among children who

lived in dilapidated housing units with peeling lead paint. Rather than making connections between this environmental hazard and questions of social justice, rather than forging links with grass roots and community organizations, the major environmental groups simply ignored it and did not view it as constituting an environmental issue.[38]

The mass media, moreover, found no place for African Americans in the environmental movement. Media coverage of Earth Day described the overwhelming whiteness of the event's participants and implied that pollution was irrelevant to the plight of minority groups. NBC News interviewed Michael Harris, an African American student at Howard University, who dismissed Earth Day as a "calculated political move by the established order in this country to divert attention from the pressing problems of black people." Other media reports emphasized similar criticisms of environmentalism, including the pointed words of Mayor Richard G. Hatcher of Gary, Indiana, who argued that this newfound "concern with environment has done what George Wallace was unable to do: distract the nation from the human problems of the black and brown American, living in just as much misery as ever."[39]

These comments, much like the demonstration staged against the San Jose State car burial, reveal an important dimension of environmental discourse during this time period. Earth Day participants, and environmental activists more generally, claimed to speak for the general public and to represent all Americans. Their vision of environmentalism imagined the movement as unifying everyone in a common struggle against pollution. Yet left unspoken, and almost never acknowledged by mainstream groups at the time, was how their conception of environmentalism obscured divisions among the American population and elided the ways that economic and racial inequalities influenced the experience of environmental risk.

Even as the media provided some space for criticisms of Earth Day, this same coverage also ignored the efforts of subaltern communities to form an alternative vision of environmentalism. In St. Louis, for example, an organization called Black Survival performed a series of skits on Earth Day dramatizing the environmental problems of the inner city: high rates of air pollution that led to asthma, emphysema, and other respiratory ailments; inadequate city services, such as infrequent trash removal that resulted in rat and roach infestations; and a frightening epidemic of lead poisoning among children in the city's poorest neighborhoods. Black Survival in fact grew out of a larger campaign against lead poisoning, a struggle coordinated by Ivory Perry, Freddie Mae Brown, and other civil rights activists in conjunction with scientists based at Barry Commoner's Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Washington University. The Earth

Day skits featured poignant moments, including a father learning that his baby has died of lead poisoning, and voiced radical sentiments, including chants of "Black Power" and "Power to the People." Although newspapers in St. Louis described these skits and other actions, Black Survival went unmentioned in national media coverage of Earth Day.[40]

It is worth asking why this form of environmental theater did not receive media attention, while white people wearing gas masks or smashing or burying automobiles became central to mainstream views of the environmental cause. As the growing literature in the field of environmental justice studies demonstrates, subaltern groups did not separate environmental struggles from the broader quest for social justice. Black Survival's conception of environmentalism thus did not fit within the dominant understanding of the movement as a cause that voiced the concerns of all Americans and that described its constituency as a classless, undifferentiated group. By enacting their position as an oppressed segment of the population, by revealing the particular environmental conditions of the inner city, problems, they emphasized, that were located within larger structures of power, the members of Black Survival posed an important challenge to the self-conception of mainstream environmental organizations.[41]

The sociologist Nathan Hare, writing in *Black Scholar* during the same month as the Earth Day celebration, reminded readers that the term "'ecology' was derived" from the Greek word *oikos* "meaning 'house.'" Environmental activists adopted the language of ecology, but they seemed, Hare suggested, to have forgotten this etymology—or perhaps they were simply unwilling to concern themselves with the "household and neighborhood environment of blacks." Indeed, mainstream environmental groups did not join in the struggle against lead poisoning and even refused to define it as an environmental problem. The journalist Jack Newfield, who described lead poisoning as "an environmental disease of the urban ghettos," suggested why the mass media and mainstream organizations neglected to confront this "silent epidemic." "It seems," he wrote, "that nothing is real to the media until it reaches the white middle class. . . . Then it is a crisis."[42]

The photograph of Sarah and Lucy represented the crisis of air pollution reaching the middle class, as did the posters that warned of poisoned breast milk. These latter images also became linked to another struggle, one that suggested the possibility of viable interaction between mainstream and subaltern environmentalisms. In 1969, as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC) struggled to get union recognition and bargaining rights for its primarily Latino membership, the group also began to focus on farmworkers' exposure to pesticides. The UFWOC had earlier called for a grape

boycott in order to link consumers to producers and put pressure on growers to accept its demands. As part of this boycott campaign, the UFWOC began to stress that grapes posed health threats to consumers as well as workers. The UFWOC suggested that all bodies were porous, that both consumers and workers could suffer from the "economic poisons" sprayed on grapes. In publicizing this dimension of the boycott, the UFWOC emphasized that nursing mothers could pass pesticides on to their babies. The vulnerable female body again became a central motif in environmental politics.[43]

While the grape boycott signaled a promising collaboration, it also revealed the limitations of mainstream environmentalism. For the most part, these organizations did not give their support to the UFWOC. Even as mainstream environmental groups called for the banning of pesticides such as DDT, they focused on how these toxic chemicals affected wildlife populations and did not form alliances with farmworker organizations. The UFWOC viewed its campaign against pesticides as part of a larger struggle against the inequalities and power relations faced by Latino workers on a daily basis. Mainstream environmental groups did not understand how the pesticide issue was embedded in these larger, structural frameworks. Moreover, even though the UFWOC played an important role in removing DDT from the fields, the replacements for this pesticide—known as organophosphates—were in fact even more hazardous to workers (although not to wildlife). Nevertheless, mainstream organizations did not view the health of workers as an environmental issue and so, with few exceptions, did not worry about the dangers of pesticide replacements. As both the lead poisoning and pesticide issues illustrate, the dominant strand of American environmentalism refused to consider power relationships among different groups of Americans and detached itself from larger struggles for social justice. By defining environmental problems in a narrow fashion, by focusing on technical solutions, and by refusing to ally itself with other social movements, the environmental cause became an interest group that seemed to speak primarily for white, privileged Americans.[44]

The technical solutions proposed by environmental groups and policymakers assumed that "everyone breathes the same air and drinks the same water." As one critic of mainstream environmentalism explained, referencing the widespread use of the gas mask image: "If air pollution continues to get worse, the rich will produce the gas masks but they will not be the first to have to buy them." Indeed, the legislation that emerged from this period failed to consider how racial and economic inequalities determined rates of environmental risk. The generalized air and water pollution measures also created other problems: the proliferation of toxic waste dumps, located primarily in

minority communities. "The primary legacy of the environmental movement and its resulting regulations," the historian Andrew Hurley writes, "was not so much a reduction of industrial waste but a transfer of wastes from water and air to the land." Because white privilege was inscribed into the American landscape, these apparently race-neutral policies in fact only worked to racialize the distribution of environmental risk even further, forcing "aggrieved racial minorities," as George Lipsitz explains, to "encounter higher levels of exposure to toxic substances." To a certain extent, these new policies did help clean up the nation's air and water, but they also exacerbated environmental inequities by increasing the levels of pollution in minority neighborhoods, the spaces so often ignored by mainstream environmentalists and hidden from view by media coverage of the environmental crisis.[45]

Conclusion

The association between environmentalism and a particular social group also helps explain the appeal of the Keep America Beautiful commercial. The Crying Indian functioned as a kind of secular jeremiad, his tear a liquid sermon on the nation's sinful disregard for the environment. His tear elicited feelings of guilt not from minority communities coping with the hazards of lead paint or farmworkers whose jobs required them to use pesticides, but rather from middle- and upper-class Americans who worried about their complicity in the environmental crisis and romanticized the pristine past of the American Indian. Throughout the 1970s, his face appeared frequently on television and in the print media, a constant reminder of the failure of Americans to accommodate themselves to the land. This commercial, along with gas mask pictures, Pogo the Possum, and other visual images, suggested that the environmental movement—even as it became an interest group—could also masquerade as a unifying cause that promised to stitch together a fragmented nation.

The Crying Indian commercial also indicates the complex, multifaceted meanings of visual imagery produced during this time. Even though KAB opposed bottle bills and distorted the message of environmentalists by exaggerating the role of individual responsibility, the commercial nevertheless visualized the environmental damage caused by unregulated industry and thereby tacitly justified some forms of state action to combat the menace of pollution. Mainstream environmentalists challenged, with considerable justification, the KAB spots for equating litter with pollution and for emphasizing the quest for individual salvation. Yet, in a larger sense, the visual media and mainstream environmentalism, together with public policies created during this time,

overlapped and reinforced one another to naturalize certain meanings of the environmental crisis. Across these different fields, subaltern perspectives were submerged, drowned out by the repeated insistence upon universal danger and culpability. Visual images helped produce an environmental public culture, whose members learned to see themselves as potential victims of an escalating crisis and to overlook divisions, differences, and inequalities among the U.S. population. Earth Day, often described as a moment of origins for modern environmentalism, thus helped frame and validate a particular conception of the movement as a cause that promised to unite the nation but that lacked a social edge.

Visual images, including pictures of gas masks, Pogo, and the Ecological Indian, were interwoven with the era's environmental politics. These images did not passively reflect the values of environmentalism, but rather selected and amplified certain perspectives to the exclusion of others. Nevertheless, this filtering process revealed, far more than its leaders were willing to admit, the narrow assumptions that guided mainstream environmentalism during a critical phase in its development, the period surrounding the first celebration of Earth Day.

Notes

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1. For useful discussions of Earth Day, see, among others, Robert Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1993), 105–14; Hal K. Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation? Environmentalism in the United States since 1945* (Fort Worth, Tex.: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 121–24; J. Brooks Flippen, *Nixon and the Environment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 7–14; and Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *Journal of American History* 90 (September 2003): 525–54, especially 549–52.

2. My approach draws on insights from visual culture studies to examine the dynamic interplay between different kinds of media. See Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2. See also work on visual culture by scholars in environmental history, ecocriticism, and communication studies, including Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Derek Bousé, *Wildlife Films* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); David Ingram, *Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema* (Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press, 2000); Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and "Reframing the Last Frontier: Subhankar Banerjee and the Visual Politics of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," *American Quarterly* 58 (March 2006): 159–80; and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Articulating Anti-Toxic Activism to 'Sexy' Superstars: The Cultural Politics of *A Civil Action* and *Erin Brockovich*," *Environmental Communication Yearbook* 3 (2006): 21–48.
3. On mass media and other social movements, see Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (New York: Times Books, 1994); and Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World Is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (1980; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). The quotations are from CBS News, March 12, 1970, available on videotape from Vanderbilt Television News Archive, Vanderbilt University (hereafter VTNA); and ABC News, April 22, 1970, VTNA.
4. Laura Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1996), xv; Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage Publications, 1992), 74.
5. Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle: Nature, Man, and Technology* (New York: Knopf, 1971), 176, 177, 178. For more on Commoner's career, see Michael Egan, *Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival: The Remaking of American Environmentalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007).
6. On environmental policy during this period, see Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, chap. 4; and Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?* chap. 5.
7. Ralph Graves, "Editor's Note: Why John Pekkanen Gave Up Eating Liver," *Life*, January 30, 1970, 3.
8. Ray Osrin's "The Thinker" first appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. It was reprinted alongside Tom Wicker, "In the Nation: The Pollution of Promises," *New York Times*, January 25, 1970. It was also reproduced as a poster for Earth Day and reprinted in several publications, including Luther J. Carter, "Earth Day: A Fresh Way of Perceiving the Environment," *Science*, May 1, 1970, 558. An advertisement for the poster appears in *Environmental Action*, March 12, 1970, 2. The gas mask poster of Christ is reprinted in Gary Yanker, *Prop Art: Over 1000 Contemporary Political Posters* (New York: Darien House, 1972), 203. The Alfred E. Neuman illustration appeared in *Mad*, October 1971, 25. Many examples of the portrayal of gas masks in television news coverage of Earth Day can be seen on tapes from April 22, 1970, and April 23, 1970, VTNA.
9. Morris Neiburger, quoted in "Professor Says World Will Smother in Smog," *New York Times*, August 9, 1965. See also Scott Hamilton Dewey, *Don't Breathe the Air: Air Pollution and U.S. Environmental Politics, 1945–1970* (College Station: Texas A&M Press, 2000), 105. My comments here have also been informed by Frederick Buell, *From Apocalypse to Way of Life: Environmental Crisis in the American Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
10. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (1989; New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1990), 163.
11. Hugh R. Slotten, "Humane Chemistry or Scientific Barbarism? American Responses to World War I Poison Gas, 1915–1930," *Journal of American History* 77 (September 1990): 476–98; and Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from World War I to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), especially 90–91.
12. See Dewey, *Don't Breathe the Air*, 93–94, and "Fighting to Save the Earth from Man," *Time*, February 2, 1970, 62. For an insightful discussion of the gendered implications of ecology, health, and the body, see Maril Hazlett, "Voices from the *Spring*: *Silent Spring* and the Ecological Turn in American Health," in *Seeing Nature Through Gender*, ed. Virginia J. Scharff (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 103–28.

13. "Fighting to Save the Earth," 63. See also Yanker, *Prop Art*, 204; and Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), 23. The last quotation is from Maria Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Knopf, 1976), 198.
14. See Wendy Kozol, "Madonnas of the Fields: Photography, Gender, and 1930s Farm Relief," *Genders* 2 (1988): 1–23; Laura Briggs, "Mother, Child, Race, Nation: The Visual Iconography of Rescue and the Politics of Transnational and Transracial Adoption," *Gender and History* 15 (August 2003): 179–200; and Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 53–67.
15. Michelle Murphy, "Uncertain Exposures and the Privilege of Imperception: Activist Scientists and Race at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency," *Osiris* 19 (2004): 266–82. See also Linda Nash, "The Fruits of Ill-Health: Pesticides and Workers' Bodies in Post–World War II California," *Osiris* 19 (2004): 203–19; and Gregg Mitman, *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2007), chap. 4. The Commoner quotations are from *The Closing Circle*, 208.
16. This poster is reprinted in Selby Kelly and Steve A. Thompson, *Pogo Files for Pogophiles: A Retrospective on 50 Years of Walt Kelly's Classic Comic Strip* (Richfield, Minn.: Spring Hollow Books, 1992), n.p.
17. Kenneth Auchincloss, "The Ravaged Environment," *Newsweek*, January 20, 1970, 32.
18. The first photograph and caption appeared in Auchincloss, "The Ravaged Environment." The collage was featured in the same issue of *Newsweek* as part of a color gallery, which was not paginated. The caption appeared after the gallery on 37.
19. John Lear, "The Enemy Is Us," *Saturday Review*, March 7, 1970, 58. See also Joseph Lelyveld, "Mood Is Joyful as City Gives Its Support," *New York Times*, April 23, 1970; and Karl E. Meyer, "Joy in New York—Autoless Streets," *Washington Post*, April 23, 1970. The book review mentioned is Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Troubles Aboard the Spaceship Earth," *New York Times*, April 22, 1970.
20. See Robert M. Smith, "Museum Uses Psychedelic Lights and Electronic Music to Show That Life Can Be Ugly," *New York Times*, May 19, 1969; "Mr. Corinth: May I Present Mr. Tanaka," *The Herald News* (Passaic, N.J.), May 24, 1969; Jane Allison, "We Have Met the Enemy and They Are Us: Pogo," *Indianapolis News*, May 28, 1969; and "Record Number Visit History Museum Here," *New York Times*, October 30, 1969. Walt Kelly had first used the "We have met the enemy" quotation in reference to McCarthyism. On Kelly's politics, especially his criticism of Joseph McCarthy during the 1950s, see Erik Dussere, "Subversion in the Swamp: Pogo and the Folk in the McCarthy Era," *Journal of American Culture* 26 (March 2003): 134–41. For Kelly's explanation of the origin of the quote, see Walt Kelly, "Zeroing In on Those Polluters: We Have Met the Enemy and He Is Us," in *The Best of Pogo*, ed. Selby Kelly and Bill Crouch Jr. (New York: Simon and Schuster), 224. On the balloons at Earth Day, see Lelyveld, "Mood Is Joyful." The Population Explosion poster was reprinted in *Environmental Action*, March 12, 1970, 2. The final quotation comes from Paul R. Ehrlich, *The Population Bomb* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 66–67.
21. CBS News and NBC News, January 28, 1970, both in VTNA; ABC News, March 11, 1970, VTNA; John Pekkanen, "Ecology: A Cause Becomes a Mass Movement," *Life*, January 30, 1970, 24–25; Suzann Roalman, "Earth Day Is Coming," *American Education*, April 1970, 3–5; and ABC News and CBS News, April 22, 1970, VTNA.
22. Commoner, *The Closing Circle*, 207 and 211; Egan, *Barry Commoner and the Science of Survival*, chap. 4.
23. *Earth Day—The Beginning: A Guide for Survival,* ed. Environmental Action (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), 231; Gene Marine, "Scorecard on the Environment," *Ramparts*, December 1973, 20.
24. See Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 1999), 15–16, 229.
25. On the counterculture's appropriation of Indianness, see Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), chap. 6. The People's Park poster (Frank Bardacke, People's Park Manifesto, 1969) is reproduced in Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 162.
26. Quotation from NBC News, May 4, 1971, VTNA.
27. "Help Fight Pollution—1971," Campaign Copy and Fact Sheet, box 2, folder: Campaign Fact Sheet & Copy Guide #49-R—100, 1968–1971, 13/2/210, Advertising Council Archives, University Archives, University of Illinois (hereafter ACA).
28. Advertisement in file 1646, May 1971, 13/2/207, ACA.

29. Advertisement reprinted in Peter Harnik, "Debunking Madison Avenue," *Environmental Action*, September 4, 1971, 11.
30. See Heather Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow: The Hidden Life of Garbage* (New York: New Press, 2005), 141–50.
31. John G. Mitchell, "Keeping America Bottled (and Canned)," *Audubon*, March 1976, 107.
32. Ted Williams, "The Metamorphosis of Keep America Beautiful," *Audubon*, March 1990, 126; Rogers, *Gone Tomorrow*, 141–51.
33. Harnik, "Debunking Madison Avenue," 11; and Mitchell, "Keeping America Bottled," 106.
34. Lewis W. Shollenberger to Vincent J. Mullins, July 29, 1976, box 28, folder: FCC Petition, 1976, 13/2/305, ACA; Storyboard for Television Spot, March 1975, box 1, folder: Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; Red Cross; Keep America Beautiful; Help America Work; Rehabilitation of the Handicapped; Forest Fire Prevention; United Negro College Fund, March 1975, 13/2/214, ACA; Newspaper Advertisement in file 1905, April–June 1975, 13/2/207, ACA.
35. My approach here has been influenced by the reading of Lange's *Migrant Mother* in Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed*, 58–60; and, more generally, by W. J. T. Mitchell's *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), especially chap. 2. I thank Norm Rosenberg for encouraging me to develop this reading of the KAB commercial.
36. Edward D. Berkowitz, *Something Happened: A Political and Cultural Overview of the Seventies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 87, 84, and 10. For similar comments see Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), especially 5 and 149. Other recent scholarship on the 1970s includes Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001); Beth Bailey and David Farber, eds., *America in the Seventies* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); and Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).
37. My critique of environmentalism and environmental policy is informed by Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*.
38. See Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, 244–50.
39. NBC News, April 23, 1970, VTNA; Jack Rosenthal, "Some Troubled by Environment Drive," *New York Times*, April 22, 1970.
40. See "Many Events Scheduled Here for Environmental Observation," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 19, 1970, and "'Black Survival' Group Pushes Pollution Fight," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, April 26, 1970. On Perry's involvement with this struggle, see George Lipsitz, *A Life in the Struggle: Ivory Perry and the Culture of Opposition*, rev. ed. (1988; Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), chap. 7. For the Earth Day skits, see Freddie Mae Brown and the St. Louis Metropolitan Black Survival Committee, "Black Survival: A Collage of Skits," in *Earth Day—The Beginning*, ed. Environmental Action 95–105.
41. See Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*, especially 25–30. For a sampling of other work in the field of environmental justice studies, see Andrew Szasz, *EcoPopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 298–320; David Naguib Pellow, *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, eds., *The Environmental Justice Reader* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002); Julie Sze, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007); Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism: Warren County, PCBs, and the Origins of Environmental Justice* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007); and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, *Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Travel, Pollution, and Environmental Justice* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007).
42. Nathan Hare, "Black Ecology," *Black Scholar* 1 (April 1970): 5; Jack Newfield, "Let Them Eat Lead," *New York Times*, June 16, 1971; and Christian Warren, *Brush with Death: A Social History of Lead Poisoning* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), chap. 10.
43. See Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*, chap. 3; Robert Gordon, "Poisons in the Fields: The United Farm Workers, Pesticides, and Environmental Politics," *Pacific Historical Review* 68 (February 1999): 51–77; Nash, "The Fruits of Ill-Health"; and Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of*

Environment, Disease, and Knowledge (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 161–67. See also "Mothers Alarmed at DDT Danger," *El Malcriado*, August 1–15, 1969, 3, 11, which includes a photograph of nursing mothers protesting the use of DDT.

44. See Pulido, *Environmentalism and Economic Justice*, chap. 3; Gordon, "Poisons in the Field"; Nash, "The Fruits of Ill-Health"; Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*, 161–67; and Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, chap. 7.
45. Sam Love, "Ecology and Social Justice: Is There a Conflict?" *Environmental Action*, August 5, 1972, 5 (first two quotations); Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945–1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 162 and passim; George Lipsitz, "Toxic Racism," *American Quarterly* 47.3 (September 1995): 420. See also Laura Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90 (2000): 12–40; and George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: Racialized Social Democracy and the 'White' Problem in American Studies," *American Quarterly* 47.3 (September 1995): 369–87. For statistics on the overall improvement of the nation's air and water quality since Earth Day, see Richard N. L. Andrews, *Managing the Environment, Managing Ourselves: A History of American Environmental Policy* (New Haven, N.J.: Yale University Press, 1999), 232–37. On the disproportionate siting of toxic waste dumps in minority communities, see, for example, Robert D. Bullard, ed., *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994).