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# The Wilderness Within: Western Female Creatives, Embodiment, and Landscape as Craft

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## Abstract

It took leaving my own "natural" homeland of ten thousand lakes to discover I was more comfortable one thousand miles away in New Mexico high desert country. But, as an Anglo woman ranching on the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico, I've experienced some conflicting feelings about the history of women within the west and southwest, aware that most often their narratives are told in masculine voices. Those voices are often the same ones that promoted the wilderness ideal: the concern of white, educated, Eastern males to preserve Western spaces as pristine and untouched, in reality, accessible only to their race and social class. Historically, women are all but omitted from this history, yet they seem to have realized early on how such landscapes could facilitate a return to the wilderness within them.

In my paper, I examine how the three dominant Southwest cultures (Anglo, American Indian, and Chicana) interact with landscape and narrative individually through unique cultural differences. Drawing from fiction, non-fiction, poetry, current news, and artist's work, I'll show how women in these three cultures unite through shared commonalities to create an embodied, cross-cultural response that rejects a patriarchal artistic tradition, offering landscape-based alternatives that allow the inner wilderness of female creatives to flourish. I'll interview Linda Hogan and Eric T. Wurth, two indigenous writers, and compile their views on being contemporary creatives and how landscape affects their writing processes. I will use work by Linda Hogan, Mary Austin, Paula Gunn Allen, and Lucy Tapahanso, among others, to inform my essay and prove that inscapes mirror landscapes, a vital component to the creative female individual.

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