

Ages. The redemption of the Adamic hero through labor in the earth replaced the hope of redemption through mere presence in a "natural" Eden. A "civilized" world replaced the "savage" world; Turner's "American" superseded the Native American; the recovered garden of Eden transformed the "howling wilderness" and the "Great American Desert." Fallen nature could be redeemed through science, technology, and the market. The outcome is today's Garden Planet.

Yet just below the veneer of complete control over nature lay the cracks of potential collapse, not only of dams, but of the mainstream Recovery Narrative itself. Environmental historian Donald Worster warns, "Salinity, sedimentation, pesticide contamination, diminishing hopes of replenishment, the dangers of aging, collapsing dams: all these were the hydraulic society's worsening headaches. Yet there was another peril . . . even less manageable because it had to do with faith, not technique. A sense of irreparable loss began to settle about the water empire by the late twentieth century, a remembrance of things past. . . . Nostalgia for what has been lost might lead people to the discovery of new, radically disturbing moral principles, in this case the idea that pristine nature in the West has its own intrinsic value, one that humans ought to understand and learn to respect."<sup>42</sup>

Here, set starkly against the Recovery Narrative's ideal of a reinvented, irrigated Eden, is the environmentalist's narrative of decline. Nature captured and controlled in the grid lines of private property, electrical power, and concrete canals might break forth from its prison, in what Max Horkheimer called "the revolt of nature."<sup>43</sup> But as Worster and others suggest, there are other options to explore, options for a new ethic and a new kind of society. That society would be based not on Adamic heroes clear cutting the forests and harnessing the rivers with vast organic machines, but on sustainable livelihoods rooted in dynamic relationships of give and take between humanity and the land.

## SIX

### *Eve As Nature*

AFTER ALL THESE YEARS I SEE THAT I WAS MISTAKEN ABOUT EVE IN THE BEGINNING. IT IS BETTER TO LIVE OUTSIDE THE GARDEN WITH HER THAN INSIDE IT WITHOUT HER. AT FIRST I THOUGHT SHE TALKED TOO MUCH, BUT NOW I SHOULD BE SORRY TO HAVE THAT VOICE FALL SILENT AND PASS OUT OF MY LIFE. . . . WHERESOEVER SHE WAS, THERE WAS EDEN.

—Mark Twain, "Extracts from Adam's Diary"

If Adam was the hero who transformed American lands, Eve was nature itself, gendered as female. The story of American settlement is filled with metaphors that cast nature as a female object to be improved by men. Images of Eve as virgin land to be exploited, as fallen nature to be redeemed through reclamation, and as fruitful garden to be harvested are deeply encoded in American history, art, and literature. These images acted as ethical imperatives and sustained settlement ideologies.

Associations of Eve with nature go back to the Genesis stories. Eve, more than Adam, is closely identified with nature in the form of the Garden of Eden itself and its trees, fruit, and serpent. As virgin Eve, she is untouched and unspoiled like the Garden and the two trees at its center. Eve, rather than Adam, communicates with nature in the form of the serpent. Eve, rather than Adam, is the first to ingest the fruit produced by

nature on the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In the process, she becomes one with nature and knows nature, gaining her knowledge from the tree's fruit. The tree symbolizes fertility, and Eve herself become fertile and bears fruit in the form of children after the Fall from the garden. As mother Eve ("mother of all the living"), she is a fruitful womb to be harvested and enjoyed or conversely to be exploited and made to pay in sorrow for her sin. After the Expulsion, initiated by Eve's tasting of the fruit, the ground is cursed and brings forth thorns and thistles and Adam is forced to "till the ground from which he was taken." Fallen Eve is a desert, a dark disorderly wasteland waiting to be reclaimed.

The image of Eve as nature played a vital role in the story of American culture. In the mainstream Recovery Narrative, nature is portrayed as undeveloped "virgin" land whose bountiful potential can be realized through human male ingenuity. Explorers and mapmakers cast the American continent as a naked or partly clothed female to be explored by men and seduced into service for settlers. Eve as "virgin" land submitted to the axe and plow in the east and the construction of dams and irrigation systems in the west, turning fertile soils into rich harvests. First by farms carved out as "wombs" within the "all-embracing" forest and later by large-scale agribusiness, men's plow agriculture triumphed over "virgin" nature. Driven by capitalist expansion, American men built toll roads, canals, and railroads to transport the fruits of the garden to market. In the mainstream Recovery Narrative, Eve becomes a fruitful land to be enjoyed; garden farms become the new Eden.

But nature as Eve is also central to the environmentalist counternarrative. Mid-nineteenth-century romantics and transcendentalists constructed an alternative to the mainstream story, personifying nature as a powerful female to be revered, rather than a virgin land to be plowed and improved. Writers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Muir rediscovered and drew upon images from the deep past that had portrayed nature as mother and teacher. They also began to incorporate images from their own personal experiences of nature as intimate companion. This image of nature harks back to the goddess imagery of the cultural feminist narrative. Both the environmentalist and feminist counternarratives view nature as originally positive and pristine, but as desecrated and downgraded by commercial and industrial development.

The environmentalist version of Recovery emerges fully with the conservation and preservation movements of the late nineteenth century. Here

Eve is seen as pristine nature to be conserved as forested resource and preserved for wilderness immersion. The environmentalist and feminist counternarratives converge in resurrecting, valorizing, and recovering nature as undesecrated forests and deserts to be appreciated for their beauty and experienced as antidotes to civilization. Here, wilderness becomes a retreat from capitalist production that preserves evolved landscapes. The two counternarratives diverge, however, in the conservation movement's validation of a male hero who could reenter the forest, confront and overcome wild nature, and reclaim a lost virility and the feminist critique of the "rape" of "virgin" nature through exploration and experiment.

My own view is that the deeply gendered character of the mainstream Recovery Narrative, as well as the environmentalist and feminist counternarratives, makes gender problematic as a basis for future narratives and ethics. While the use of the image of nature as fruitful female might be viewed as positive from the perspectives of either progress or decline, the negative associations of nature as virgin to be exploited need to be critically reassessed. My proposal for viewing nature as a partner retains the positive features of personal engagement with nature, as experienced by romantics and preservationists, but disengages from the negative sexual, acquisitive, and exploitative connotations of the image of nature as female.

#### "VIRGIN" NATURE TRANSFORMED

The mainstream Recovery Narrative begins with Eve as virgin land. Amerigo Vespucci's (1451–1512) voyages to the New World between 1497 and 1504 were illustrated by a German cartographer who feminized Vespucci's first name. Jan van der Straet depicted America in a hammock, awakening in surprise and innocence from her slumber and seductively welcoming Vespucci, the explorer, who represents Europe. America is naked and sits on an open hammock with her legs slightly parted, gazing upward at a fully clothed Vespucci who stands dominant over her. Her awakening from slumber suggests that America is ripe for discovery and is ready to be seduced, even raped. She has the long flowing hair symbolic of maidenhood, her only clothing being a cap of leaves or feathers, a barely visible loin cloth, and an braided anklet, while her hammock is made of rope, the two features indicating "inferior" clothing and housing technologies.

Vespucci, by contrast, bears a sword representing European dominance and carries an astrolabe, symbolic of the science of astronomy useful in the

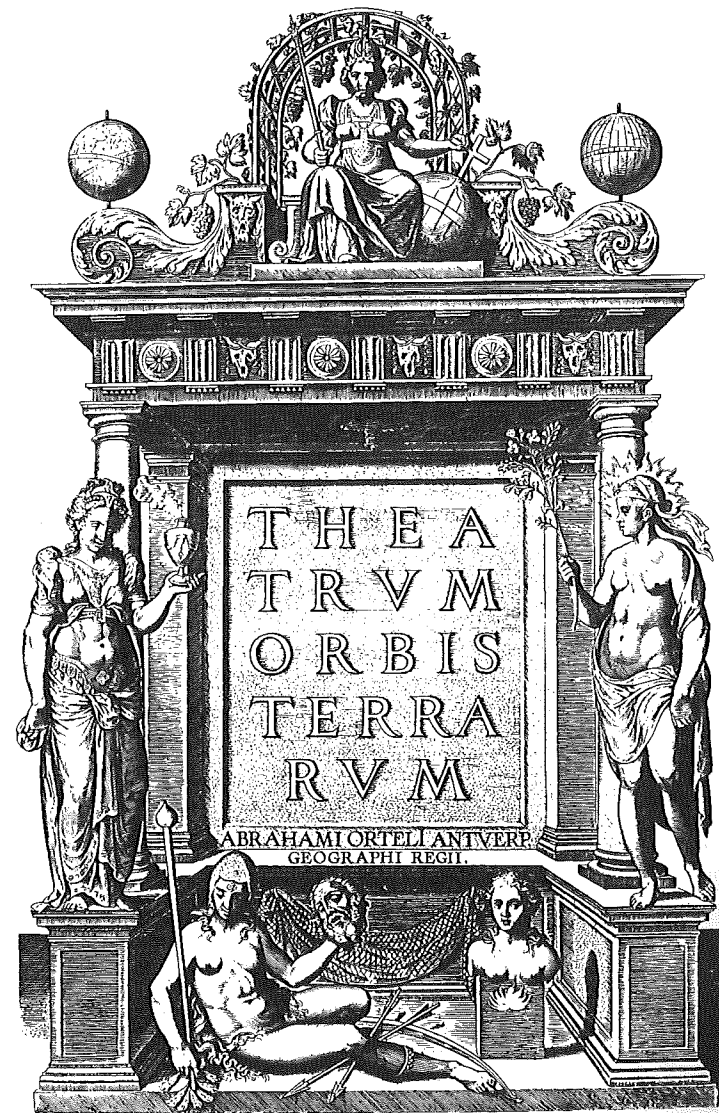


1. *Americen Americus rexitit, AMERICA. Semel vocavit inde semper excitam*

Fig. 6.1. In Jan van der Straet's *America*, Amerigo Vespucci startles a voluptuous maiden, America, who is seemingly ripe for discovery and seduction. *Nova Reperta* (Antwerp, 1579). Courtesy of the Burndy Library, Dibner Institute for the History of Science and Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts

skilled arts of navigation and exploration. He plants a staff topped by the cross of Christianity and a banner bearing the stars of the southern cross firmly and authoritatively on the land. Behind Vespucci, his ship is shown in full sail, and a landing bark on the shore claim the sea and shoreline as that of Europe. A wooden war club leaning against a tree behind the maiden indicates the primitive weaponry of the natives, while in the distance naked men shown roasting body parts on a spit symbolize savagery and cannibalism. An anteater and other animals represent the wild nature of the New World. Here Vespucci is the European hero who dominates and seduces America, the virgin land. The illustration sets up a narrative of the transformation of undeveloped American nature into civilized European lands that will become the dominant story of American development.<sup>1</sup>

Another illustration of America as virgin land appeared as the title page of Abraham Ortelius's atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, or *Picture of the World* (1579). Figures representing the four continents—Europe



THE THEATRE OF THE WHOLE  
WORLD: SET FORTH BY THAT  
Excellent Geographer *Abraham Ortelius*.

LONDON,  
Printed by Iohn Norton, Printer to the Kings most excellent Maieslie in  
Hebrew, Greeke, and Latine. 1606.

Fig. 6.2. The title page of Abraham Ortelius's *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* (Antwerp, 1579), published in English as *The Theatre of the Whole World* (London, 1661), shows the four known continents as female figures. America, representing the virgin land of the New World, reclines at the base of the pedestal. Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago

(Europa), Asia, Africa, and America—all depicted as female—are shown surrounding a pedestal framing the book's title. Europe, fully clothed (representing the known world), dominates the top of the pedestal, while partially clothed Asia and Africa (two partially known continents) stand in front of its two supporting pillars, and a naked America (the unknown New World), with legs slightly parted, reclines seductively at its base. America is placed in the foreground, eyes cast downward, bearing a wooden, feathered spear with two arrows under her leg and holding a decapitated, bearded head. She represents the wild, savage, uncivilized virgin land of the American continent, ready to be exploited and to receive the arts and letters of Europe. Again the image is consistent with the playing out of the mainstream Recovery Narrative of Western culture.<sup>2</sup>

Gerhard Mercator's *Atlas, or A Geographical Description of the World* (1636) likewise contained dualistic hierarchical meanings that associated the Old World and Europe with masculinity, knowledge, and power and the New World with femininity, subordination, and resources. Fully "civilized" Europe is depicted as female, while Asia is partly "civilized" and America and Africa are "uncivilized." Men—such as explorers, mapmakers, and colonizers—are the agents who convert uncivilized female nature (America and Africa) into civilized female society (Europe and Asia). Such oppositions confirm the hierarchies of culture over nature, civilized over savage, and nation over colony that would in turn drive and legitimate settlement of the New World by the Old World.<sup>3</sup>

On Mercator's map, the Earth—*Terra*—is portrayed as a fruitful mother, a female figure holding a cornucopia from which flow fruits from all over the world. Beside her sit animals from the several continents: an elephant, lion, camel, ox, and wildcat. Palm trees, mountains, and deciduous trees fill the background. Of the earth, Mercator wrote, "To her only, for her excellent worth, we have imposed the surname of *venerable mother*. She receiveth us from our first birth, and being borne nourisheth, and maintaines us thereafter without ceasing, and for the last office having received us into her bosome; abandoned of the rest of nature, covereth us as a good mother." The earth, however, could show her ferocity in the chaos of hail, floods, and tempests. Or, she could accommodate herself "as a handmayde, for the use of man," by nourishing and producing a diversity of colors, odors, saps, and juices of her own accord. Here nature as a mother, who is both nurturing and punishing, accommodating and withholding, sets up the dynamic of the Recovery of Eden narrative in the New World.<sup>4</sup>

Building on the mapmakers' images, colonial rhetoric characterized the continent as a virgin to be both enjoyed and exploited. While filled with potential, American lands required improvement. In 1616, John Smith extolled New England as a place in which "her treasures hauing yet neuer beene opened, nor her originals wasted, consumed, nor abused" are available for European use and settlement. Thomas Morton, who in 1632 praised New England as a new Canaan, likened its potential for development by "art and industry" to a "faire virgin longing to be sped and meete her lover in a Nuptiall bed. "Her fruitfull wombe," he said, "not being enjoyed is like a glorious tombe."<sup>5</sup>

If New England's cold climate could engender images of paradise, encounters with Maryland and Virginia produced even more effusive prose. George Alsop's 1666 "Character of the Province of Maryland" publicized the land as a "natural womb [which] (by her plenty) maintains and preserves the several diversities of Animals" and "generously fructifie[s] this piece of Earth with almost all sorts of Vegetables." Robert Beverley, writing in 1705, described Virginia's fertile soils and pleasant climate as so seductive to Europeans that they might forget their mission of laboring on the land, returning in effect to that lost Eden of the past: "All their senses are entertained with an endless succession of Native Pleasures. Their Eyes are ravished with the Beauties of naked Nature. . . . Their Taste is regaled with the most delicious Fruits . . . and their smell is refreshed with an eternal fragrance of Flowers and Sweets, with which Nature perfumes and adorns the Woods almost the whole year round." In 1733, William Byrd set out to survey lands he had purchased along the North Carolina-Virginia border, an estate of 20,000 acres that he dubbed the "Land of Eden," where the waters were "as sweet as milk." These Edenic lands, however, could not be just enjoyed, they needed to be improved lest people fall into a slothful, lazy way of life. Plowing and planting were the ways to convert virgin nature into fields of plenty.<sup>6</sup>

#### VIRGIN LAND INTO FRUITFUL FIELD

In his book *Virgin Land*, Henry Nash Smith portrayed the West's "virgin land" as a region to be transformed from a great American desert into a garden of the world—a prototype of the Recovery Narrative in the American West. From Daniel Boone and Kit Carson as frontier heroes who explored the land to the Yeoman farmer who converted the desert

into a garden, it was men who acted on the land to bring it to fruition. Annette Kolodny, however, in *The Lay of the Land*, removes Smith's gender-blind glasses and shows that his "virgin land" was in fact gendered as female—a land to be surveyed, laid waste, praised, and made to bear fruit in the process of creating an American paradise. Symbols, both argue, are powerful indicators of relationships between people and nature. They reflect, as Smith later put it, "a continuous dialectic interplay between the mind and its environment." From clearing womb-like places in the forest to plowing and planting "virgin soils" that bear fruit, male and female symbolism operate as ethical imperatives and as permissive ideologies. Thus what people believe and what they say permits them to act, and the way people act in turn indicates belief in stories and myths.<sup>7</sup>

Generations of American agriculturalists believed that plow technology would compel female nature to produce new bounty. In 1833, Henry Colman, the Massachusetts agricultural improver, promoted Francis Bacon's approach to recovering the garden through agriculture. "The effort to extend the dominion of man over nature," he wrote, "is the most healthy and most noble of all ambitions." He characterized the earth as a woman whose productivity could help to advance the progress of the human race. "Here man exercises dominion over nature; . . . commands the earth on which he treads to waken her mysterious energies . . . compels the inanimate earth to teem with life; and to impart sustenance and power, health and happiness to the countless multitudes who hang on her breast and are dependent on her bounty." Here the Recovery Narrative's progressive plot is revealed in its mandate to convert virgin land into fruitful field for the benefit of all Americans.<sup>8</sup>

Frank Norris provides a graphic example of female nature succumbing to the male plow in his 1901 novel *The Octopus*. In this story of the transformation of California by the railroad, the earth is portrayed as female, sexual, and alive. He writes, "The great brown earth turned a huge flank to [the sky], exhaling the moisture of the early dew. . . . One could not take a dozen steps upon the ranches without the brusque sensation that underfoot the land was alive, . . . palpitating with the desire of reproduction. Deep down there in the recesses of the soil, the great heart throbbed once more, thrilling with passion, vibrating with desire, offering itself to the caress of the plough, insistent, eager, imperious."<sup>9</sup>

Norris describes the female earth being seduced on a massive scale by thousands of men operating their plows in unison. "Everywhere through-

out the great San Joaquin, unseen and unheard, a thousand ploughs upstirred the land, tens of thousands of shears clutched deep into the warm, moist soil." And he leaves no doubt that the seduction becomes violent rape, as he writes, "It was the long stroking caress, vigorous, male, powerful, for which the Earth seemed panting. The heroic embrace of a multitude of iron hands, gripping deep into the brown, warm flesh of the land that quivered responsive and passionate under this rude advance, so robust as to be almost an assault, so violent as to be veritably brutal. There, under the sun and under the speckless sheen of the sky, the wooing of the Titan began, the vast primal passion, the two world-forces, the elemental Male and Female, locked in a colossal embrace, at grapples in the throes of an infinite desire, at once terrible and divine, knowing no law, untamed, savage, natural, sublime."<sup>10</sup>

The idea of an Edenic fruitful, female land—waiting to be seduced, plowed, planted, and watered by male ingenuity—gripped the imaginations of settlers and promoters of the American West. During the first quarter of the twentieth century, California—the Golden State—sold itself through richly colored brochures, flyers, five-color labels, and orange-crate art. Images of "Eve" as the fertility of nature and of California as Edenic garden conveyed to the consumer a female nature as provider of fruit and food. The Collins Fruit Company of Riverside, California displayed a young woman holding orange blossoms and ripened fruit in her draped robe as if pregnant, while a wreath of blossoms encircled her curly locks. Behind her male workers picked ripened oranges from fully laden trees. Similar designs by La Belle and Amethyst oranges showed voluptuous females, with rounded bellies, wearing skirts filled with oranges.<sup>11</sup>

Other advertisements featured fruits, such as those found in the Garden of Eden, waiting invitingly to be plucked by anyone strolling past. Orchard Run of Riverside, California, displayed oranges pouring out of a pathway between fruit-laden trees, while Rose-Garden of Redlands, California, showed Sunkist oranges set against unending fields of green orchards. The sexual temptations of the Garden of Eden were also used as themes. Indian Belle seedless oranges featured an Indian warrior seducing a voluptuous Indian maiden against a background of orchards, green hills, and snow-capped mountains, while Yorba Linda Gem Valencias of Orange County showed a young couple in an automobile driving under a canopy of trees past ripened orange groves into an orange sun setting against purple hills.<sup>12</sup>

Integral to the mainstream Recovery Narrative was the transformation of desert into garden. In the American West, water obtained from irrigation was a necessary component of turning the arid wastes into fertile fields. The “four rivers” that flowed out of the Garden of Eden were a persistent theme in attracting settlers to the West. An Idaho pamphlet in the early 1900s displayed a maiden in flowing robes pouring water from an urn onto a fertile land, while another brochure depicted a young couple under a fruitbearing tree looking out over well-watered planted fields.<sup>13</sup>

Once the land had been cultivated, the produce had to be distributed through the capitalist market system that permeated America from east to west by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Railroads not only marketed the fruits of the garden, but also lured settlers to the irrigated Eden. The Southern Pacific Railroad published a series of promotional brochures entitled “California for the Settler.” One cover depicted an arbor of oranges through which one could view a pastoral landscape filled with cows grazing on hillsides, a lake, and fields of neatly planted crops against a backdrop of sun-drenched mountains. Another brochure showed green pastures with hay mounds grazed by dairy cows in front of orchards and fields, while a third displayed fields of California poppies along ocean beaches with a train arriving under an enormous orange sun.<sup>14</sup>

The realities of living in the West belied the Edenic promotions. Women labored on the land and in the home with backbreaking work as intense as that of men. Digging irrigation ditches was expensive, time-consuming work frequently doomed to failure by disasters that ranged from financial and technological to frequent drought that ended in crop failures. The promises of yellow-gold ore, green-gold crops, and white-gold water under persistently sunny skies were often tarnished by the realities of settlement and the difficulties of creating family farms on arid lands. Yet the Recovery of Eden narrative in which anyone who worked hard enough could participate and from which anyone could profit continued to lure settlers and to create hope that a wild West could be turned into a Golden West.

#### FROM NATURE TO CIVILIZATION

The overarching mainstream Recovery Narrative is the movement from wild nature to civilized society. Presaged by John Locke and Adam Smith, the goal of Western culture has been to domesticate and improve the wild.

Wild lands and wild people are to be subdued in the quest for civilized society. Gathering, hunting, and pastoralism are to be superceded by agriculture and commerce. Civilization—land improved by male intervention—is the final end toward which “wild” nature is destined. The Recovery Narrative undoes the Fall. Here Eve is fallen nature—wild land, barren desert, impenetrable forest. Civilization is “the end of nature”; it is nature natured, *natura naturata*—the natural order—nature ordered and tamed. Nature is no longer inchoate matter endowed with a formative power (nature naturing, *natura naturans*—nature as creative force); it is the civilized natural order designed by God. The unruly energy of wild female nature is suppressed and pacified. The final happy state of nature natured is female and civilized—the restored garden of the world.<sup>15</sup>

John Gast depicts this ascensionist narrative in his 1872 painting *American Progress*. On the left—toward the west—is *natura naturans*, nature active, alive, wild, dark, and savage, filled, as William Bradford would have put it, with “wild beasts and wild men.” Buffalo, wolves, and elk flee in dark disorder accompanied by Indians with horses and travois. On the right—advancing from east to west—is *natura naturata*, nature as ordered, civilized, and tamed. No longer to be feared or assaulted, she floats angelically through the air in flowing white robes, emblazoned with the star of empire. She carries telegraph wires in her left hand, symbols of the highest level of communication—language borne through the air, the word or logos from above. The domination of logic or pure form is repeated in the book she grasps in her right hand. It artfully touches the coiled telegraph wires. She represents the city, the civil, the civic order of government—the highest order of nature. She is pure Platonic form impressed on female matter, transforming and ordering all beneath her.<sup>16</sup>

It is American men who have prepared her way. They have dispelled the darkness, fought the Indian, killed the bear and buffalo. Pioneers in covered wagons, gold rush prospectors, and the pony express precede her. Farmers have settled and tamed the land, and now plow the soil near their fenced fields and crude cabins. Stagecoaches and trains follow, bringing waves of additional settlers. At the far right is the civilization of the Atlantic seaboard, where ships bearing the arts of the Old World arrive in the New. The painting’s east to west progressive narrative presents a story of ascent and conquest.

A similar theme is portrayed in the mural Emanuel Leutze painted in the United States Capital in 1861. His famous *Westward the Course of*



Fig. 6.3. John Gast's *American Progress* (1872) shows the westward movement as the advancement of civilization represented by a female figure bearing the gifts of knowledge and communication. Courtesy of the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, Los Angeles

*Empire Takes its Way* illustrates a line from a poem by George Berkeley. A Madonna-like grouping of a pioneer with his wife and child are at the center of the mural. They stand on a rock outcrop and point west toward barren "virgin" lands. Below them pass armed and mounted men leading covered wagons that bear women, representing civilization. Men use axes and uproot trees to cut a path for the party. The mural's frame shows a view of San Francisco's Golden Gate flanked by portraits of explorers William Clark and Daniel Boone. Like Gast's "American Progress," this mural portrays a dynamic moment in the transformation of "virgin" nature into female civilized form through the agency of men.<sup>17</sup>

Domenico Tojetti's 1875 painting, *Progress of America*, is a third example. Personifying progress, a female Liberty figure drives a chariot pulled by two white horses. On the right, American Indians and buffalo flee into darkness and disorder before the advance of civilization. Behind the Liberty icon, female figures representing agriculture, medicine, mechanics, and the arts accompany her advance. Other women bear a tablet that sym-

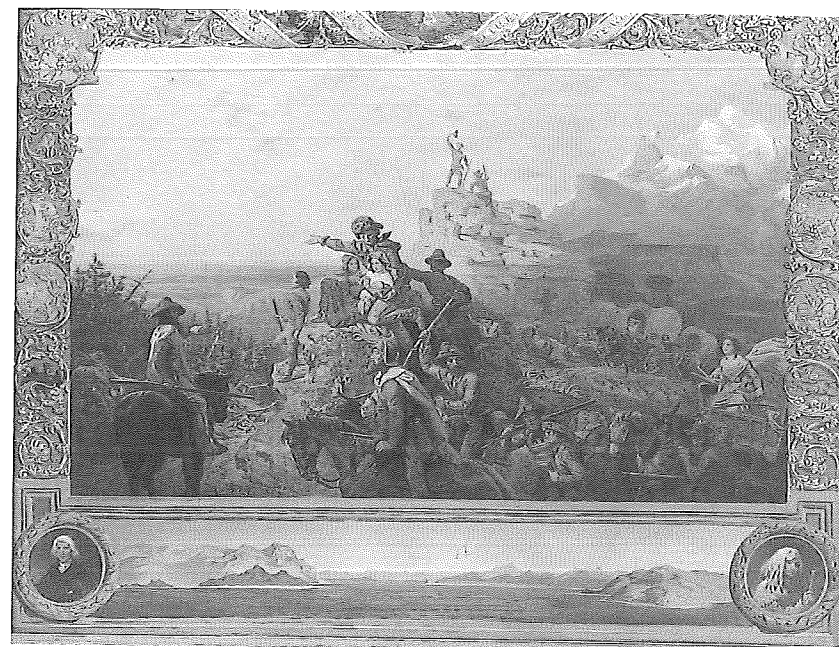


Fig. 6.4. In *Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1861), Emanuel Leutze depicts pioneer families cutting forests enroute to "virgin" lands, while bearing the accoutrements of "civilization" in their covered wagons. Mural Study, United States Capitol, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of Sara Carr Upton

bolizes literacy, followed by a train bringing commerce and light to a barren "virgin" landscape.

*Civilization*, painted by George Willoughby Maynard in 1893, is a fourth representation. Here a white female figure is dressed in white robes and seated on a throne decorated with cornucopias. She holds the book of knowledge on her lap and points to its text as the epitome of enlightenment and education. The book represents the logos, the light or word from above. The woman's Anglo-Saxon whiteness excludes the blackness of matter, darkness, and dark-skinned peoples.

All four paintings portray movement from dark, virgin, undeveloped nature (*natura naturans*) to final platonic, civilized, ideal form (*natura naturata*). In the first two paintings, male agents effect the transformation from the undeveloped disorder of the wilderness to the ordered, idealized landscape. The final two paintings reveal the outcome, an enlightened world made safe for educated Euroamerican men and women.



Fig. 6.5. Domenico Tojetti's *The Progress of America* (1875) shows the flight of Indians and buffalo in the path of a chariot-driven Liberty figure followed by agriculture and the arts. Oakland Museum of California, The Oakland Museum of California Kahn Collection

The next stage of the Recovery Narrative is represented by the city, which developed in response to expanding capitalist markets. The city in the garden (Virgil's *urbs in horto*, discussed in chapter 3) epitomizes the transformation of female nature into female civilization through the mutually reinforcing powers of male energy and interest-earning capital. Frank Norris's second novel, *The Pit* (1903), captures these connections.<sup>18</sup>

Norris depicts the city as female in his story about the wheat pit at the Chicago Board of Trade.<sup>19</sup> The city is the locus of power that operates in the natural world, pulling everything toward its center. It functions as the bridge between the raw matter of the surrounding hinterlands and civilized female form. Norris describes Chicago drawing raw materials towards itself, transforming natural resources into capitalist commodities:

[T]he Great Grey City, brooking no rival, imposed its dominion upon a reach of country larger than many a kingdom of the Old World. For thousands of miles beyond its confines was its influence

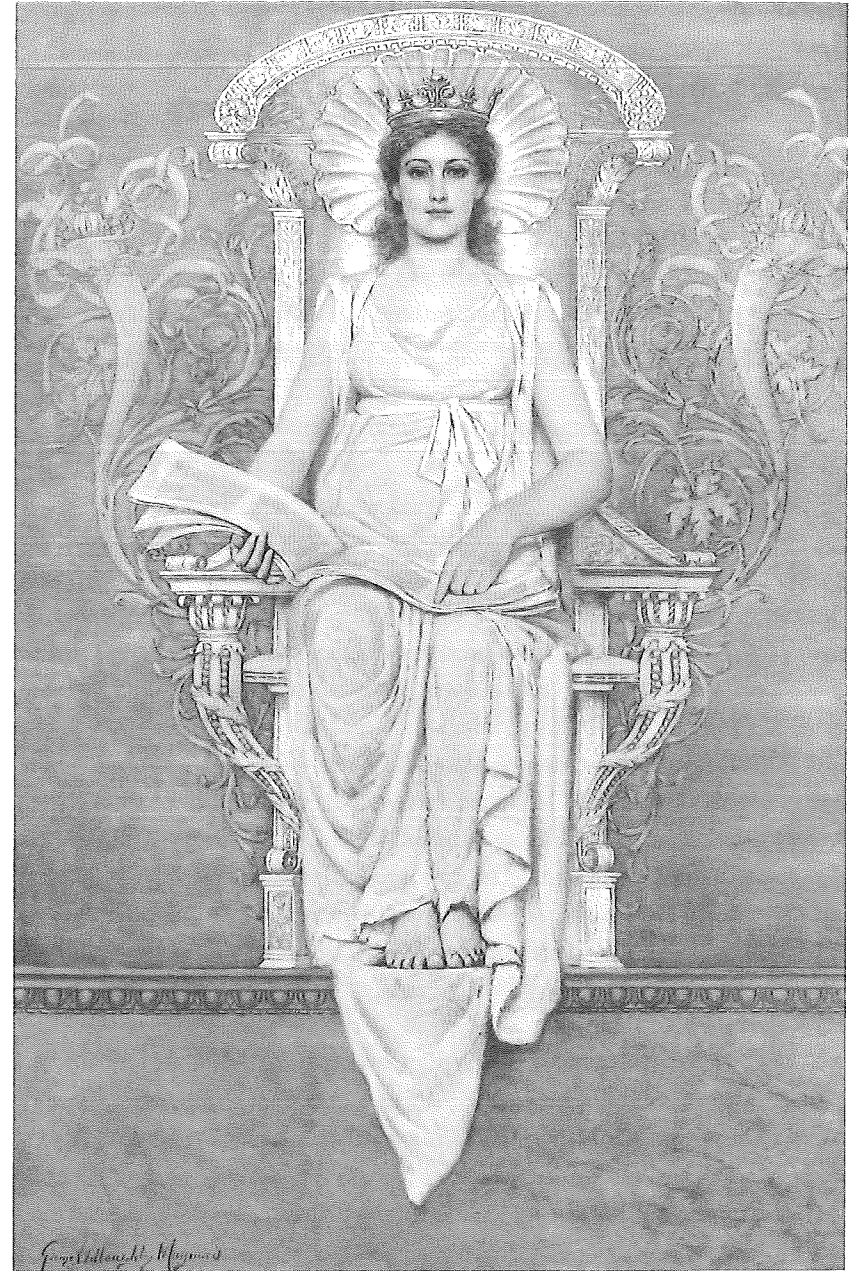


Fig. 6.6. In *Civilization* (1893), by George Willoughby Maynard, knowledge and civilization are depicted as female, epitomizing the height of enlightenment and the arts. George Willoughby Maynard, *Civilization*, Oil on canvas, 54 1/2 x 36 5/8 National Academy of Design, New York (845-P)



felt. Out, far out, far away in the snow and shadow of Northern Wisconsin forests, axes and saws bit the bark of century old trees, stimulated by this city's energy. Just as far to the southward pick and drill leaped to the assault of veins of anthracite moved by her central power. Her force turned the wheels of harvester and seeder a thousand miles distant in Iowa and Kansas. Her force spun the screws and propellers of innumerable squadrons of lake steamers crowding the Sault Sainte Marie. For her and because of her all the Central States, all the Great Northwest roared with traffic and industry; sawmills screamed; factories, their smoke blackening the sky, slashed and flamed; wheels turned, pistons leaped in their cylinders; cog gripped cog; beltings clasped the drums of mammoth wheels; and converters of forges belched into the clouded air their tempest breath of molten steel.<sup>20</sup>

Like Plato's female soul of the world, turning herself within herself, the city provides the source of motion that permeates and energizes the world around it. It is the bridge between primal, changing matter and final, civilized form. In Norris's novel, men are subordinate agents to the city's higher force, facilitating the change from *natura naturans* into *natura naturata*, from natural resource into fabricated product. Men operate the steam engines, sawmills, factories, lumber barges, grain elevators, trains, and switches that make Chicago an industrial city. Business men travel to the city, bringing trade from the country. This process of "civilization in the making," says Norris, is like a "great tidal wave," an "elemental" and "primordial" force, "the first verses of Genesis." It "subdu[es] the wilderness in a single generation," through the "resistless subjugation of . . . the lakes and prairies."<sup>21</sup>

Yet behind the scenes, other men, the capitalist speculators of the Chicago Board of Trade, attempt to manipulate the very forces of nature by pushing the transformation faster and faster. Capitalism mystifies by converting living nature into dead matter and by changing inert metals into living money. To the speculators above the trading pit, nature is a doll-like puppet they can control by manipulating the strings of the wheat trade and changing money into interest-earning capital. Male minds calculate the motions that control the inert matter below.<sup>22</sup>

For Norris's capitalist trader, Curtis Jadwin, nature is dead. Only money is alive, multiplying through the daily trade of the wheat pit.

Because the bulls and bears of the marketplace comprise his only compelling encounters with living things, Jadwin utterly fails to account for the earth and the wheat as alive. But when Jadwin corners the market, the living wheat planted by hundreds of farmers throughout the heartland, rises from the soil as a gigantic irrepressible force, thwarting his apparent control. The capitalist's manipulation of apparently dead nature has widespread repercussions. Jadwin, Norris writes, had "laid his puny human grasp upon Creation and the very earth herself." The "great mother . . . had stirred at last in her sleep and sent her omnipotence moving through the grooves of the world, to find and crush the disturber of her appointed courses."<sup>23</sup> By the late nineteenth century, capitalism's domination of nature as female—of Eve as nature to be exploited for profit—was reaping the backlash of living nature's revolt.

#### ROMANTIC NATURE

During the nineteenth century, romanticism emerged as a powerful counternarrative to the mainstream Recovery Narrative. Based on the perception that America had declined from its Edenic natural state, the roots of romanticism lay in alternatives to dominant Western traditions. The romantics rediscovered a past in which nature had been positively personified as a mother, virgin, and teacher. The legacies of Plato and the philosophers of the Middle Ages, reflected in the writings of Renaissance neoplatonists and naturalists, were reminders of an idealized earlier time. The romantics deplored the mechanization of nature that had resulted in a cold, calculable order of Newtonian forces and a deforested, polluted landscape. As in the feminist narrative, nature was a revered female.<sup>24</sup>

For Thoreau, Walden Pond was like Eden before the Fall: "Perhaps on that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden," he wrote, "Walden Pond was already in existence . . . and covered with myriads of ducks, geese, which had not heard of the fall. . . ." He frequently quoted ancient writers as he articulated some cherished idea about the pristine beauty of nature. Emerson found that Neoplatonism validated his idea of nature as an emblem of universal truths. And preservationist Muir, writing effusive if less scholarly prose in the last quarter of the century, was also influenced by romantic ideas of an untouched pristine nature created by God.<sup>25</sup>

Thoreau and Muir drew on ancient traditions in their eulogies of nature, depicted in the female gender. Plato's *Timaeus* had described the world soul as female, the source of motion at the center of the cosmos. Over the centuries Neoplatonists had synthesized Christian principles and divided this female soul into two components. The higher *Endelechia* fashioned souls from divine ideas, while the lower *natura* created individuals as copies of these pure forms. By the twelfth century *natura* had been personified as a goddess, God's agent, whose creativity was greater than that of human artists.<sup>26</sup>

"Nature is a greater and more perfect art, the art of God," pronounced Thoreau, "though referred to herself she is genius." Muir agreed with the Renaissance humanists that nature as teacher and artist was superior to humans in ease of production: "It was delightful to witness here the infinite deliberation of Nature, and the simplicity of her methods in the production of such mighty results, such perfect repose combined with restless enthusiastic energy."<sup>27</sup>

A coherent interpretation of nature as a human being writ large—an individual with whom one develops an intimate personal relationship—is evident in the essays, letters, and books of the early founders of the preservationist philosophy in America. This vestige of personal animism—the I/thou relationship to nature so critical to the worldview of native, traditional societies—incorporates a restraining ethic. The prescriptive power of this environmental ethic is apparent in how these nineteenth century preservationists wrote about nature.<sup>28</sup>

Emerson, Thoreau, and Muir depicted nature as a female. Nature had physiological systems that were projections of human bodily functions onto nature. Thoreau pictured nature's perspiration in the form of "warm drizzling rain." But "after this long dripping and oozing from every pore, she began to respire again more healthily than ever." The late afternoon "haze over the woods was like the inaudible panting, or rather the gentle perspiration of resting nature rising from a myriad of pores into the attenuated atmosphere." Thoreau's poetics extended to nature's circulatory and nervous systems as well: "globule(s) from her veins steal . . . up into our own."<sup>29</sup>

It was a common nineteenth-century conceit to refer to nature as female—virgin, vixen, or mother. In contrast to many earlier American writers who had supported commercial enterprise and had described nature in exploitative terms, Thoreau and Muir depicted nature in deeply personal terms as mother and virgin that militated against aggressive postures.<sup>30</sup>

Thoreau and Muir gave nature the attributes of a nurturing mother. Thoreau once described a woodland lake in summer as "the earth's liquid eye, a mirror in the breast of nature." Tasting beer as "strong and stringent as the cedar sap" seemed "as if we had sucked at the very teats of Nature's pine-clad bosom." Muir celebrated nature with prose more purple: "fondly, too, with eternal love does Mother Nature clasp her small bee babies and suckle them, multitudes at once, on her warm Shasta breast."<sup>31</sup> These passages embody the idea of Eve as a mother whose archetypal purpose is realized through bearing and nurturing children.

Thoreau related to nature as a son to his mother. "Sometimes," he exclaimed, "a mortal feels in himself Nature—not his Father, but his Mother stirs within him, and he becomes immortal with her immortality." At other times he was aware of "a certain tender relation to Nature," one that for every man "must come very near to a personal one; he must be conscious of a friendliness in her." Similarly, Muir reveled in "tracing rivers to their sources, getting in touch with the nerves of Mother Earth."<sup>32</sup>

But these early preservationists also celebrated nature's virginity. Soils, forests, rocks, water—all the parts of nature that humanity had left undisturbed—were worthy of their admiration. This philosophy of valuing pristine nature contrasted with the idea of developing the potential of virgin nature so prevalent among the early entrepreneurs. As America's rich soils became exhausted or as forests were denuded in the rush for profits, the preservationists lamented the losses and championed restoration.

The prose of Thoreau and Muir personified virgin nature. Her face and mind were, like the Virgin Mary, the focus for adoration. Thoreau described a nature who "superior to all styles and ages, is now, with pensive face, composing her poem Autumn with which no work of man will bear to be compared." Her head was adorned "with a profusion of fringes and curls," although man was quite capable of "shearing off those woods, and making earth bald before her time." Muir, ever resourceful, found a sympathetic visage beneath Mount Gibbs which "enabled him to feel something of Nature's love even here, beneath the gaze of her coldest rocks."<sup>33</sup>

But Thoreau and Emerson also expressed a relationship to nature as a fallen virgin. Emerson found nature seductive and alluring, noting that "the solitude of wilderness is a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife." Sometimes, Thoreau admonished, "as seductive as a mistress, by one bait or another, Nature allures inhabitants into all her recesses."<sup>34</sup>

The romantics found that nature could be schizophrenic—without notice “she” might become wild, savage, and vindictive. Here nature is akin to fallen Eve—dark, unknown, potentially savage, and chaotic. Thoreau sought to reverse the implications of nature’s wilfulness when he wrote, “Man tames Nature only that he may at last make her more free even than he found her.” Despite this unpredictable quality, associated culturally with witchcraft and defiled womanhood, Thoreau’s faith in nature’s capacity for forgiveness was unshaken. “Here is this vast, savage, howling mother of ours, Nature, lying all around, with such beauty, and such affection for her children as the leopard. . . .” Muir, wandering through sunny alpine meadows, was brought up short by a change in terrain when “suddenly we find ourselves in the shadowy canon, closeted with Nature in one of her wildest strongholds.” His faith in nature was challenged during storms in the Sierras when he encountered the destructive power of hail, lightning, and avalanches. Yet “the manifest result of all this storm-culture is the glorious perfection we behold; then faith in Nature’s forestry is established, and we cease to deplore the violence of her most destructive gales. . . .”<sup>35</sup>

The anxiety caused by the tension between nature’s gentleness and destructive power demanded reassurance if one’s faith in the goodness of universal nature were to be retained. For Muir, chaotic patterns were manifestations of the majestic power of nature despite their unpredictable and catastrophic potential for humanity. “By forces seemingly antagonistic and destructive,” Muir marveled, “has Mother Nature accomplished her beneficent designs—now a flood of fire, now a flood of ice, now a flood of water; and at length an outburst of organic life, a milky way of snowy petals and wings, girdling the rugged mountain like a cloud. . . .”<sup>36</sup>

The romantics’ construction of nature as a person writ large was a manifestation of a more widespread need to relate to nature in positive, but also deeply personal terms. Reacting to the mainstream Recovery Narrative’s exploitation of nature for personal gain, the romantics looked to “her” for personal solace and wisdom. Through appreciation, preservation, and restoration, the decline of nature initiated by Eve could be reversed. The romantic conception of nature as a person writ large did not view nature as a partner, but rather drew on historical constructions of nature as a female—virgin, mother, or vixen—that placed nature above or below humanity rather than as equal partner. Nevertheless aspects of Thoreau’s philosophy were compatible with a partnership ethic. His beanfield at Walden Pond was an example of working with the soil in ways that

promoted the health of both the land and humanity. He wrote of his beans, “The earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed they were not easily to be put off. What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antaeus. . . . What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day’s work.”<sup>37</sup> Here the beans are autonomous actors and Thoreau is an assistant to their labors. His “auxiliaries are the dews and rains,” his enemies are “worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks.” He used the soil and rains as helpers and did not make war on the woodchucks, but simply gave them their quarter acre’s worth. On a small scale, Thoreau and his beanfield exemplified the potential for a partnership ethic.

#### NATURE CONSERVED, MANAGED, AND PRESERVED

During the late nineteenth century, the counternarrative of the romantics helped to forge the beginnings of the conservation and preservation movements in America. Conservationists and preservationists, like the romantics, viewed with alarm the decline of a pristine earth exploited for its natural resources. The goals of both the conservation and preservation movements were to recover the earth, but the two movements differed in approach. The conservation movement attempted to restrain shortsighted exploitation of natural resources, while supporting a utilitarian philosophy of wise use. The preservation movement, on the other hand, wished to preserve pristine nature in the form of parks and wilderness.

Early conservationists drew on a potpourri of rhetoric that warned of the consequences of exploiting the earth while acknowledging human dominion over it. No one could have predicted that *Man and Nature*, published in 1864 by Vermont statesman George Perkins Marsh, would become a best seller within a decade. Marsh chronicled the deterioration of the lands of Europe and America, beginning with the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean and culminating in the environment of his native Vermont. He drew on the idea of nature as mother and provider, defiled by human carelessness and greed. After all, he claimed, human beings were not really nature’s children, for they had powers surpassing those of other organisms. Marsh lamented, “man alone is to be regarded

as essentially a destructive power." Humans derived from a power outside and above the earth, not from mother earth herself. "He is not of her, . . . he is of more exalted parentage, and belongs to a higher order of existences than those born of her womb and submissive to her dictates."

Marsh depicted nature in the female gender, strong and stable if left alone, but vulnerable to human technology and greed. Following in the tradition of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (c.E. 7) and Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queen* (1595), Marsh's *Man and Nature* portrayed a set of creatures who have turned against the earth and destroyed "her." The ultimate result would be the ruin of the very nature upon which all humanity depended.<sup>38</sup>

Yet Marsh condoned human power over nature for human benefit, as long as it was contained within reasonable limits: "Man . . . cannot rise to the full development of his higher properties unless brute and unconscious nature be effectually combated, and in a great degree, vanquished by human art." He acknowledged that restraint was essential, given that ever since the colonization of the world by Europeans, "man" had sought "to subjugate the virgin earth." In Marsh's solution can be found the roots of a partnership ethic between humanity and nature. Marsh maintained that the proper ethical role was one of the restoration of nature through cooperation. "Man," Marsh said, "should become a co-worker with nature in the reconstruction of the damaged fabric." Humanity could cooperate with nature to repair the human damage and restore the lost harmonies.<sup>39</sup>

A broad-based movement for the conservation of the nation's waters, forests, and range lands had developed by the late nineteenth century. Embracing the rationale of progress through efficient technology, engineers built dams that would provide water and power, conserve watersheds, and distribute water throughout the year to dry farmlands. Foresters promoted selective harvesting and reforestation, while ranchers instituted forage, seeding, and fencing of range lands. The U.S. government created the Division of Forestry in 1886, headed by Bernhard Fernow. And the 1902 Reclamation Act provided for the construction of dams and irrigation works in the arid Western states.

Utilitarian conservationists such as Fernow challenged the idea of *laissez faire* capitalism, which allowed people to exploit resources for profit. The utilitarians substituted a *faire marcher* ("make it work") policy of government regulation. Unlike Thoreau and Muir, who felt a personal intimacy with "virgin" nature, Fernow was concerned that the virgin forests would soon disappear as commodities. He found the earth's bosom a

source of production for human benefit, not a place to rest one's head in solitude. In his *Economics of Forestry* (1902), he quoted the French statesman Maximilien Sully: "Tillage and pasturage are the two breasts of the state.' It is true the manufacturer increases the utility of things, but the farmer multiplies commodities. . . ." Fernow believed that frontier individualism was destroying "virgin" nature, and he argued that the state should restrict access on behalf of future generations. The "careless and extravagant use" of the "enormous resources in fields and forests and mines" had made "virgin supplies available more rapidly than the needs of a resident population," causing "rapacious exploitation and exportation." So as to guard the interests of the many, he advocated that American forests be managed to conserve water and prevent soil erosion.<sup>40</sup>

A new umbrella concept for natural resource conservation was introduced in Theodore Roosevelt's administration (1901-9). The ethic of the utilitarian conservation movement, as formulated by geologist WJ McGee and forester Gifford Pinchot, was "the use of natural resources for the greatest good of the greatest number for the longest time." Natural resource conservation brought together under one banner the previously separate efforts to deal with forests, mines, agriculture, soil erosion, fish, and game. Pinchot wrote that formulating the relationship among all these resources was like emerging from a dark tunnel and seeing, for the first time, the light of an entirely new landscape: "All these separate questions fitted into and made up the one great central problem of the use of the earth for the good of man."<sup>41</sup>

A major motif in the progressive conservation campaign was to decry the destructive nineteenth-century commercial assaults on nature—a nature cast in the female gender. President Roosevelt addressed the White House Conference of Governors in 1908: "Our position in the world has been attained by the extent and thoroughness of the control we have achieved over nature; but we are more, and not less, dependent upon what she furnishes than at any previous time of history since the days of primitive man."<sup>42</sup>

Roosevelt was a nature lover, writer, and a vigorous advocate of conservation; but he was also a champion of the manly virtues gained through encountering nature. His *Wilderness Writings* extolled the ruggedness of outdoor life, including colorful descriptions of hunters in the American West, the thrills of tracking African game, and the dangers of the Brazilian Amazon. His writing underscored the need to preserve both

manly engagement with wild nature and to conserve dwindling natural resources.<sup>43</sup>

Acknowledging that nature could retaliate, conservationists advocated working with “her” through careful stewardship rather than conquering her with pickaxe and plow. Cardinal James Gibbons, in opening the second National Conservation Congress in 1910, called on the country to preserve its resources for future generations: “Mother Earth is not only a fruitful mother, she is also a grateful mother, and repays her children for every kindness and tenderness we exercise toward her. And there are also instances on record to show that she is relentless when she chastises.” Here, nature as female is personified as both the giving and punishing mother of her human children.<sup>44</sup>

Careful stewardship meant educating people to appreciate nature deeply and to use “her” gifts in moderation. At the 1910 Conservation Congress, Mrs. Mathew Scott, president general of the Daughters of the American Revolution, spoke eloquently to this point: “It is well for youth to be at one with Nature and to learn of her; to know and feel the joy there is in bountiful, glorious nature; to be familiar with her song—the ripple of the river on its stones, the murmur of trees, the rhythm of the sap that rises in them. . . .” Educating all people, and particularly children, would teach them to honor and respect nature as a giving, fruitful mother.<sup>45</sup>

Here nature is engaged in deeply personal terms consistent with the romantic vision, but set within the early conservationists’ concerns over dwindling resources and the decline of the earth. Women were active in setting aside the national parks and national forests, in saving California’s redwood trees, and in founding Audubon Society chapters to prevent the desecration of birds for hat plumes.<sup>46</sup>

The women who helped to save parks, forests, and birds did so not only to preserve middle-class lifestyles, but also for reasons of deep personal engagement with nature. Women joined hiking clubs, such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Sierra Club, birdwatching clubs, and garden clubs. They entered the parks and wilderness in groups and alone. Some did so for aesthetic reasons, others for religious reasons, and still others for the sake of recreation, health, and healing. Among the latter was Isabella Bird, who hiked and rode her horse through the Colorado mountains, recording her reflections in a series of letters in 1878, later published as *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains*. Among those who did so for aesthetic reasons was Mary Austin, whose books on the arid West, such as

*The Land of Little Rain* (1903), helped to create an appreciation for desert landscapes. Still others wrote on birds and the reasons to save them from the hunter’s rifle. They included turn of the century writers Olive Thorne Miller, Mabel Osgood Wright, Florence Merriam Bailey, and Sarah Orne Jewett.<sup>47</sup>

The preservation movement built up during the same period as did conservation, but the two movements did not find separate definition until the proposal to dam Hetch Hetchy Valley came to public attention. Around this time, most women in the conservation movement began to remove their support from Pinchot’s style of conservation and joined forces with Muir’s preservationist movement.

The split between conservation and preservation took place during the controversy over the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park as a source of water and power for the city of San Francisco. Conservationists saw a greater public good in the use of water for the fulfillment of people’s needs. Muir saw the greatest good in the preservation of the valley and its God-given waters and flowers for appreciation and reverence by humanity. Muir’s theocentric ethic was rooted in the preservation of an earth created by a God whose power and majesty should be revered by his earthly children.

Environmental historian Mark Stoll sees the conflict in terms of Christian religion and its role in humanity’s attempt to recover the Garden of Eden in America:

[T]he rhetoric of the Hetch Hetchy debates encapsulated the history of Christian attitudes toward and ethical impact on nature. Dam supporters marshaled a variety of age-old religious arguments. God had made the earth for man’s benefit and put it under his dominion. . . . Defenders of the undammed valley also appealed to ancient religious doctrines. To dam opponents, the world was an emanation of God’s glory and power; a place like Hetch Hetchy was a temple designed to worship in. Earthly beauty mirrored the beauty of God; the government must preserve the valley for the moral and spiritual uplift it invoked. . . . In America, the image of a renewed Eden, of humanity happy in abundant and harmonious nature, [had] created conflict between the ideals of capitalist plenty and nature preservation.<sup>48</sup>

The passage of the Raker Act in 1913 that authorized the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley validated the conservationists’ goals for the wise use

of natural resources, while the passage of the National Park Service Act in 1916 reinforced the preservationists' objectives of setting aside natural areas to be appreciated for their beauty and managed for their recreational potential. Both movements fitted into the overarching narrative of the Recovery of Eden. Both started from the perception of an earth in decline, but conservation reclaimed a desecrated earth for human use within the capitalist system, while preservation saved and restored as yet unblemished landscapes for human appreciation and recreation within that same system.

### NATURE AND MEN

As the frontier closed and civilization advanced, American men began to lament the loss of wild nature. There was an apparent need to retain the "virgin forest" as a wilderness for men to test their maleness, strength, and virility. While men were associated with nature, "civilized" women were symbolized as the moral model who suppressed internal sexual libido. Conservationists looked to mother earth to restore the vigor and strength sapped by the competitiveness of capitalist enterprise. J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association stressed in 1908 that "the noise and strain of the market place" caused people to flee to "the very bosom of nature . . . for that renewing spirit and strength which cannot be had elsewhere."<sup>49</sup>

In 1913, the nation was captivated by the saga of a naked man who had decamped into the Maine woods to live—"as Adam lived"—completely off the land. He fashioned clothing from a slain bear, gathered ripe berries, fished for trout, and hunted deer and ducks, which he cooked on a fire created by rubbing two sticks together. His "red blood" restored after two months in the wild, Joe Knowles, "primitive man," became a national hero. He turned his alleged encounter with the wild into a commercial success, writing a best-selling book, *Alone in the Wilderness*. This saga epitomizes the male encounter with female nature to restore the frontier ruggedness lost to the soft, civilized, city life also gendered as female.<sup>50</sup>

The wise-use ethic of utilitarian conservationists and the back-to-nature ethic of the preservationists were both responses to the rise of industrial capitalism. Nature was a resource for both economic well-being and spiritual growth, and each faction had a different strategy to recover the original Edenic oneness. The utilitarian conservationists advocated carefully using and improving a "virgin" nature, while the preservationists believed in protecting and merging with a pristine "virgin" nature.

The national parks and forests established at the turn of the century were a signal that preservationist values had been absorbed into mainstream American life. Wilderness preservation was no longer a mere counterpoint to capitalist development; it now acted as a safety valve for the new industrial order. Those who reaped the benefits of the urban industries that depended on nature as a resource were the same people who forcefully proclaimed the need for a rustic retreat from competition and the pressures of urban life.<sup>51</sup>

### CONCLUSION

In the mainstream story of American progress, men continue to be the transforming agents between active female nature and civilized female form. Men are deemed to make the land safe for both women and men by suppressing unpredictable external nature and unruly internal nature. But nature as wilderness does not "become" male, nor does civilization "become" female. There is no reversal of male/female symbols in the closing chapters the frontier expansion story.

Symbols such as nature and culture or maleness and femaleness are not binary opposites with universal meanings encoded into the very "essence" of what it means to be a man or a woman. Nature, wilderness, and civilization are socially constructed concepts that change over time and function as stage settings in the progressive narrative. The roles that men and women act out on the stage of history are also social constructs. The authors of such powerful narratives as laissez-faire capitalism, mechanistic science, manifest destiny, and the frontier story were usually the privileged elites. Their words were read and interpreted by persons of power who added new chapters to the older biblical story. These books become the library of Western culture. This library functions as ideology when ordinary people read, listen to, internalize, and act out the stories told by their elders—parents, ministers, entrepreneurs, newspaper editors, and professors who teach and socialize the young.

The reinvention of Eden by a heroic Adam acting to improve a nature depicted variously as a virgin, fallen, or fruitful Eve is the mainstream story of most European Americans. But questions concerning non-Western and darker-skinned peoples are also a significant component of the Recovery Narrative. The ways that Native and African Americans were brought into the mainstream story—and how they resisted or accepted inclusion—are also integral to the plot.