

Thoreau's Notes on the Journey West: Nature Writing or Environmental History?

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In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community as such.

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

In 1861, Henry David Thoreau journeyed by train, boat, and stage-coach from Concord, Massachusetts, to the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, eventually traveling as far west as the Lower Sioux Agency on the Minnesota River. The three-month trip was the longest Thoreau ever took and his only voyage into the North American interior. Because he died of tuberculosis less than nine months after his return to Concord, however, Thoreau never published anything about his trip. All that remains of his Minnesota journey is a fragmentary set of notes and a handful of letters written by Thoreau and his traveling companion, Horace Mann, Jr.

Neither Thoreau's notes nor the trip they document has ever been highly regarded. The notes were published only twice: in 1905, in a corrupt limited edition edited by Thoreau's friend and biographer, Franklin B. Sanborn, and again in 1962, in a more reliable scholarly edition edited by Thoreau's modern biographer, Walter Harding. Harding's comments are representative of what little scholarship exists on this brief episode in Thoreau's life. He describes the organization of the notes as "completely chaotic"¹ and the trip as "a tragic failure" (Days 450).

In this essay, I reconsider the purpose, context, and content of Thoreau's notes and explore the significant challenges they pose for the contemporary reader. In particular, the incomplete character of the notes creates uncertainty about whether they should be read as nonfiction nature writing or as source texts for environmental history. By situating Thoreau's notes at the nexus of both of these disciplines—as part of Minnesota's emerging "literature of place"—the seeming weaknesses of this text can instead be seen as virtues that can help us make connections between the fields of environmental literature, history, and ethics. Thoreau's text enables us to begin to articulate a version of what Mitchell Thomashow has identified as "ecological identity"—a version that belongs not to a single person but to an entire community. In the notes of his Minnesota journey, in other words,

Thoreau offers a model for how to cultivate the kind of *ecological community identity* that Aldo Leopold later identified as central to the establishment of a land ethic.

Thoreau's own purpose in traveling to Minnesota was hardly as lofty as my reading of the text's potential meaning might suggest. The primary reason for his trip was to improve his failing health. As Thoreau indicated in a letter to Daniel Rickertson on 22 March 1861, he had caught "a severe cold about the 3 of Dec. which at length resulted in a kind of bronchitis" that confined him to home.² By late spring, his health had considerably worsened, and his doctor recommended that he travel to a more healthful climate, in accordance with the pre-viral theory of disease current at the time. Minnesota's comparatively cool and dry climate appealed to Thoreau for this reason, as he explained in a 3 May 1861 letter to H. G. O. Blake:

The Doctor accordingly tells me that I must "clear out," to the West Indies, or elsewhere, he does not seem to care much where. But I decide against the West Indies, on account of their muggy heat in the summer, & the S. of Europe on ac of the expense of time & money, and have at last concluded that it will be most expedient for me to try the air of Minnesota, say somewhere about St Paul. I am only waiting to be well enough to start—hope to get off within a week or 10 days. (C 615)

Health was not the only reason Thoreau set his sights on Minnesota. As Gordon Boudreau speculates, "It may be that his Minnesota journey was the geographical concomitant of an interior western voyage of mind and spirit that he had embarked upon years earlier" (148). Minnesota was then considered the "great northwest," and many of Thoreau's works demonstrate his preoccupation with the West and his identification of it with America's literary and national destiny. In "Walking" (1862), a posthumously published essay that originally began as an 1851 lecture, Thoreau had memorably exclaimed: "Eastward I go only by force; but westward I go free."³ The freedom Thoreau identified with the West is similarly illustrated in a 20 October 1856 letter Thoreau wrote to Thomas Cholmondeley, in which Thoreau praised "[t]he *great west* and *north west* stretching on infinitely far and grand and wild, qualifying all our thoughts. That is the only America I know. I prize this western reserve chiefly for its intellectual value. That is the road to new life and freedom. . . . The great northwest where several of our shrubs, fruitless here, retain and mature their fruits properly" (C 436).

Thoreau's interest in Minnesota was tied not only to all the West symbolized, but also to all the West contained, including American Indians, frontier settlers, and the region's indigenous flora and fauna. In 1861, Minnesota was still considered "frontier" territory, having been made a state only three years earlier. The Dakota were still living in reservations south

of the Minnesota River (in conditions that would lead to the Dakota Conflict of 1862), and much of Minnesota's native prairie and big woods biomes were still extant, though being rapidly transformed into acres of profitable wheat and lumber. The pineries were yet to be exhausted, the first steam locomotive would not arrive in St. Paul for another year, and the binders, threshers, and middlings purifier that would turn Minneapolis into "Mill City" were still a decade away. In short, Minnesota offered everything Thoreau might desire on a western excursion: a seemingly healthful climate, a wealth of natural and cultural history, and enough symbolic significance for him to explore in detail in a future book or essay.

That Thoreau was hoping to use his Minnesota journey as the basis for a book or essay is nearly certain. As Robert F. Sayre has written, "Minnesota was the real West. And hardly any eastern writer of a hundred and fifty years ago went to the Mississippi without at least thinking of a book about the trip" (195). One of Thoreau's readers even suggested as much, writing him from Chicago: "I hope you will have a pleasant time[,] get heartily well and write a book about the great West that will be to us what your other books are" (Fussell 190). In making notes on his journey, Thoreau followed his typical method of composition, which involved taking notes in the field, refining those notes into entries in his *Journal*, and then using those *Journal* entries as fodder for his published work. Thoreau's Minnesota notes, therefore, "were intended only for his own use," as Harding has observed. "They were to be the skeleton on which he would hang a fully-developed account of his excursion" (MJ v).

Thoreau began to transform his notes into *Journal* entries when he returned to Concord, but he completed only the entries for 12-14 May before turning his attention to other projects (Howarth 209). A long letter Thoreau wrote to Sanborn from Red Wing, Minnesota, on 25 June 1861 gives some sense of how Thoreau might have described his journey, had he lived long enough to do so, but this narrative hardly merits characterization as a finished work (C 618-22). We are left, therefore, with little choice but to come to terms with Thoreau's notes, as free and wild in form and content as the West itself seemed to appear to him in 1861.

Thoreau's notes on the *Journey West* pose several challenges to the contemporary reader, the most prominent being their fragmentary structure and the abundance of botanical information they contain. John Marshall commented on the first of these challenges when he deemed it "unfortunate that the notes are so fragmented" (148). The fragmentary structure of Thoreau's notes derives from several factors, including Thoreau's organizational technique, which consists of a chronological arrangement of daily journal entries. This rudimentary structure need not necessarily lead to textual fragmentation, as Thoreau's multi-volume *Journal* demonstrates,

but in the case of his Minnesota notes, his minimal reference to movement through space and time makes these daily entries little more than a formal convention. Thoreau's notes, therefore, truly are *notes*, a record of species sighted, landscapes encountered, distances traveled, and documents reviewed. Thoreau's regular use of abbreviation further fragments the text, as does his employment of the question mark to signal his taxonomic uncertainty.

The abundance of botanical information contained in the notes also contributes to their piecemeal quality and adds a scientific specificity that many readers find off-putting. Harriet Sweetland's response is representative of the critical opinion:

[F]rom the time of his arrival in the St. Anthony area on, he [Thoreau] devoted more and more space to these [botanical] observations—making the account a treasure-trove for botanists but offering, it must be admitted, certain hazards for the lay reader. In fact, one of the difficulties the average reader encounters in examining [the text] . . . is the constant interruption of Thoreau's daily account by his detailed annotations of flowers observed in different areas, as well as by several summarizing lists he includes, which occupy several pages. . . . [T]he Poet-Naturalist of the Walden era has almost disappeared; in his stead the itemizing Naturalist has taken over—one preoccupied with plant and animal listings. (273, 282)

Thoreau's late interest in science has been widely documented—most recently by Michael Benjamin Berger, Bradley P. Dean, Robert Kuhn McGregor, and Laura Dassow Walls—but little attention has been paid to how this interest affected Thoreau's prose.

In the case of his Minnesota notes, many readers believe it to have been deadly. Richard Lebeaux, for instance, describes the notes as a "feeble literary performance" (358). Rather than the wide-ranging metaphysical speculations that engaged the younger Thoreau, we instead get the narrow, dry lists of flora and fauna characteristic of the older Thoreau. These plants and animals may have "thrilled Thoreau and his companion," as Vernon L. Doss has suggested (15), but they seem to have bored modern readers to tears. Harding described the notes as constituting no more than "a perfunctory study of the flora and fauna of the Middle West" (*Days* 450), and Edwin S. Fussell complained that "Minnesota and Henry Thoreau, standing face to face, found nothing to say to one another" (190).

Both of these challenges of fragmentation and specialization derive from the incomplete character of the notes, of course, which were designed for Thoreau's private use and not intended for publication. With no finished text to consult, however, we are faced with a choice: should we read these notes as an example of nature writing or as a source text for environmental history?

Were we to read them as nature writing, the notes would fall far on the

end of the spectrum Thomas J. Lyon has created to taxonomize the various species of nature writing—much closer to the field guide in their presentation of natural history information and much further away from the record of one's personal experience in nature or any kind of philosophical interpretation of that experience (4). Indeed, one might reasonably ask whether the pages of raw botanical observations the notes contain render them worthless as literary artifacts. As Donald Wesling has observed, nature writing "is one of the most discontinuous of literary forms, always liable to be destroyed by interminably precise noticing; one thinks of Thoreau's decline into over-particularity in his later notebooks" (42). William Howarth similarly finds Thoreau's field notes of "little value" as literature. According to Howarth, "the Journal entries depended on contributions from his memory and imagination. The notes are precise and disciplined; entries would have supplied the softening brushwork of description, thought, and humor" (210).

Reading the notes instead as source texts for the environmental history of Minnesota might at first appear a more promising approach, but to do so is to neglect their intended purpose, effectively making them equivalent to any number of other records of observation, such as the farmer's daily temperature readings or the birdwatcher's catalog of visits to a backyard feeder. Thoreau's notes certainly have much to offer the environmental historian, and it comes as no surprise that several of the most detailed assessments of their content have been made by historians (e.g. Flanagan, Swanson). But reading Thoreau's notes only as a record of what life was like in Minnesota in 1861—what species were found here, how economic and cultural activities were transforming the landscape, and how transportation systems functioned, for instance—fails to consider Thoreau's purpose in selecting these facts and the ways in which reading them as a literary text can shape our understanding of that purpose. It also misses the larger significance of the text: that is, its function as an example of how to integrate the discipline-specific concerns of environmental history and environmental literature with ethical considerations about how human beings might best live in their various environments. In what follows, I suggest a few of the ways the apparent weaknesses of this text might be seen as virtues if we read it as part of a "literature of place" that can contribute to the formation of an ecological community identity in Minnesota.

Ecological community identity is not an easily definable concept, but by it I mean to identify a shared set of natural and cultural characteristics by which a particular community can recognize itself, and be recognized by others, in an ecological context. More than just a "sense of place," which has generally been discussed in terms of the sense a particular *individual* might have of his or her place, ecological *community* identity concerns the

way a *community* might envision its collective place in relation to the natural systems on which it depends and the other human communities whose interests may overlap with its own. Part of many different kinds of information that the inhabitants of a place might transmit from generation to generation through a myriad of complex ways, ecological community identity is a critical factor in the creation of sustainable human communities and an important component of the well-being of the individuals—both human and nonhuman—living in those communities.

Thoreau's notes on the *Journey West* have the potential to contribute to the formation of an ecological community identity in Minnesota in several ways. To begin with, rather than serving as an impediment to reading, the unfinished character of the text could instead be seen as an invitation to participate in the making of the narrative Thoreau likely wanted to compose, a challenge to collaborate with him and with other readers in the ongoing interpretation of the Minnesota landscape. This is particularly true, of course, of readers in Minnesota, since residents of other places are obviously much more concerned with the fate of their own places. But one need not have a text like Thoreau's to begin this task of interpretation. For current residents of Minnesota, however, Thoreau's notes offer an especially promising entry point into this process.

Thoreau's notes also offer a guide for how to do this, particularly in their illustration of the process of accumulation and connection by which an ecological community identity might be established. Ecological community identity is not limited to any particular historical moment but develops over time, binding different generations of residents together in a shared set of images and concepts. Thoreau understood this, having spent many years accumulating a body of information about Minnesota before he ever left Concord. As John Aldrich Christie has pointed out, Thoreau's trip west was "but the last of a long series of travels westward across the continent which he had been taking through his reading" (111). In the 1850s, Thoreau read accounts of early explorations of Minnesota, such as the Long (1823), Schoolcraft (1832), and Nicollet (1838-39) expeditions (Christie 114-15), and before he began his travels he ordered the entire publication collection of the decade-old Minnesota Historical Society and carried it with him for reference on his trip (Morse-Kahn 24).

Once in Minnesota, Thoreau continued his research, spending hours in the libraries of Minneapolis reading the histories of the region and copying extracts from them into his notes (*MJ* ii). Thoreau also called upon the expertise of others to deepen his knowledge of this place, communicating at length with Mann, his traveling companion; Samuel Thatcher, Jr., his distant cousin, who lived in St. Anthony; Dr. Charles L. Anderson, the Minnesota State Geologist; Jonathan Taylor Grimes, an orchardist; Horace

Brown Wilson, the Red Wing educator; and a knowledgeable "Illinois man" he met on his trip to Redwood, Minnesota, to name just a few.

Unlike most mid-nineteenth-century historians, Thoreau was as interested in the nonhuman world as he was in the human world, and his notes freely interweave natural and cultural history (Burbick 3). In fact, some readers have expressed discomfort at the amount of attention Thoreau pays to natural history as compared to human history. John T. Flanagan, for instance, observed that Thoreau was "[m]ore interested in the wild pigeon, the basswood, and the hyssop than in the strange wild life of the primitive civilization that surrounded him," and he accused Thoreau of having "practically ignored the traders, soldiers, pioneer settlers, and Indians of the region" (38). We might better view Thoreau's interest in both natural history and human history, however, as offering a useful model for how a community might expand its sense of identity to be truly ecological, to include both the individuality of particular organisms and the history of the communities of which they are a part. Such a view would treat the nonhuman world not as a backdrop for human activity, as most accounts of a region still do, but rather as an additional set of actors whose interests commingle with our own (see Buell, Hildebidle, and McIntosh).

The individuality of particular organisms is most apparent in the catalogs of botanical observations that dominate Thoreau's notes. Catalogs such as these have appeared throughout American literary history, whether as part of the promotional tracts of early American settlers or in the poetry of Walt Whitman, but they have never been much discussed. Catalogs are not simply "lists," however, but rather ordered lists that have particular functions. The catalog of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, for instance, serves not only to impress the viewer with the number of casualties the war produced but also to memorialize each of the human lives named. A list could thus be seen as a form of collecting that not only indicates abundance but also celebrates each of the individual items it contains. As Rochelle Johnson has pointed out, Thoreau speculated in his *Journal* in 1852 that "Mere facts & names & dates communicate more than we suspect" (Johnson 183). By cataloging the many botanical specimens he encounters, Thoreau creates a kind of "poetry of acknowledgment," in which the items listed have value in and of themselves, rather than for how we might use them. Perhaps more than any other form of writing, the catalog grants a kind of existence value to the objects it names, pointing us to the aspects of those objects that are beyond language. By presenting us with nothing but the name of an organism, the catalog invites us to consider the mystery of its complexity, which we will never be able to capture fully in words.

Thoreau's notes contain more than the names of individual organisms, of course, just as an ecological community identity depends not only on

the individual members of a community at any particular moment but also on the history of that community's inhabitation of place. Thoreau's concern with the history of the nonhuman communities of which each individual organism is a part is manifest in the questions he seems to be asking himself as he travels: What distinguishes one individual from another, one variety from another, one species from another? What behaviors and adaptations do each exhibit? What plants are in flower? What species exhibit the most richness, the most abundance? What relationships exist among plants, animals, environments, and people? Writing of Thoreau's work on *The Dispersion of Seeds*, another late natural history manuscript, Gary Paul Nabhan suggests that, "[m]ore than any other botanist of his time, Thoreau moved past the mere naming of trees—the nouns of the forest—to track its verbs: the birds, rodents, and insects that pollinate flowers or disperse seeds, and all the other agents that shape the forest's structure" (xvi). Thoreau went even further than that, recognizing that all organisms—including trees—are both nouns and verbs, both beings and becomings, as individuals and as parts of communities.

The portion of Thoreau's notes that perhaps best demonstrates the complexities of developing an ecological community identity is his entry for 11 June, in which Thoreau narrates his pursuit of the wild crabapple near Lake Calhoun. In that entry, he first lists some of the "Plants said to be introduced: shepherd's purse, plantain—very common about settlers' yards and on prairie, sorrel—common (on prairie), nettle very common (many by H[amilton]'s ice house[]), catnip common, stickseed very common at St. Anthony & Minneapolis" (MJ 17). Thoreau then follows this catalog with a long entry describing his efforts to locate a specimen of the crabapple near the boarding house at which he was staying. The owner, a Mrs. Hamilton, twice directs Thoreau to the place where she says it grows, but he finds only a thorn and a shadbush. He then consults three other people: a man named "Fitch," the young son of Jonathan Taylor Grimes, and finally Grimes himself, in whose pasture Thoreau eventually locates a cluster of the wild apple trees (MJ 17-18).

This particular entry is of interest because it raises the question of what it means to be indigenous or native to a place—a key element in the establishment of an ecological community identity, yet a question without a simple answer. The entry is also one of the few aspects of Thoreau's notes that he was able to incorporate into a published work—in this case, into the essay "Wild Apples," which appeared posthumously in the November 1862 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. Thoreau begins the essay by observing, "It is remarkable how closely the history of the apple tree is connected with that of man" (NH 178). He then discusses three varieties of apple trees: those that are cultivated, those that grow wild from cultivated parents, and the

"native and aboriginal crab-apple, *Malus coronaria*, 'whose nature has not yet been modified by cultivation'" (NH 189). Thoreau indicates that he had been considering a trip to Pennsylvania to see the crabapple, "where it was said to grow to perfection," and also sending to a nursery for it, but he "doubted if they had it, or would distinguish it from European varieties" (NH 190). Eventually, he notes, he was able to see the tree in Michigan, but only at a distance, from his railway car on his way to Minnesota. Finally, he writes, "On arriving at St. Anthony's Falls, I was sorry to be told that I was too far north for the crab-apple. Nevertheless, I succeeded in finding it about eight miles west of the Falls; touched it and smelled it, and secured a lingering corymb of flowers for my herbarium. This must have been near its northern limit" (NH 190).⁴

What is it about the wild apple that Thoreau so cherished? Why distinguish it from its domesticated cousins, and from the plants introduced to the region by immigrant settlers? Thoreau himself seems not to be sure of the answers to these questions, noting in "Wild Apples" that although crabapples are "indigenous, like the Indians," he doubts "whether they are any hardier than those backwoodsmen among the apple trees, which, though descended from cultivated stocks, plant themselves in distant fields and forests, where the soil is favorable to them" (NH 190). Thoreau certainly values nativism, particularly for the historical perspective it provides the human inhabitant of a place. Nabhan, for instance, quotes one of Thoreau's *Journal* entries from 1857: "If a man is rich and strong anywhere, it must be on his native soil. Here I have been these forty years of learning the language of these fields that I may better express myself. If I should travel to the prairies, I should much less understand them, and my past life would serve me but ill to describe them" (xvi). Yet what Thoreau seems to value even more than nativism is the freedom and diversity it represents, which he describes most frequently as *wildness*. If it is to take its cue from Thoreau, therefore, an ecological community identity will need to make room for both native and immigrant, botanical as well as human.⁵

Sayre has speculated that because Thoreau's botanical observations comprise such a large part of his notes, "the story of the indigenous plants and animals and their adaptation or extinction might have dominated any later report of this trip" (198). If this is the case, and I very much think it is, then another part of the task to which Thoreau sets us is to examine just how extensively humans have modified the Minnesota landscape since 1861, keeping a particular eye out for what we have lost. In his 1856 letter to Cholmondeley, Thoreau had celebrated the "great northwest" as the place where "several of our shrubs, fruitless here, retain and mature their fruits properly" (C 436). But in "Wild Apples," Thoreau had already begun to mourn that "[t]he era of the Wild Apple will soon be past. It is a fruit which

will probably become extinct in New England. . . . I fear that he who walks over these fields a century hence will not know the pleasure of knocking off wild apples" (NH 209). Thus, another of the tasks of an ecological community identity is to remember the species—and the people—that have lived here before and to work to preserve those that remain. Just like Thoreau's own botanical catalogs, an ecological community identity should not only acknowledge the presence of diversity but also recognize the potential for its reduction.

Speaking of Thoreau's late natural history writings generally, Robert Sattelmeyer argues that Thoreau believed "that the meaning of nature is dependent upon man, the perceiver, and that natural *history* must indeed have a historical component: To know a natural object—the apple tree in 'Wild Apples,' for instance—requires more than fixing its genus and species and being able to identify its varieties; it involves tracing, as Thoreau does in the beginning of that essay, the history of the apple tree's association with man, giving the sum of its histories, so to speak" (91). This is the task to which several writers working after Thoreau have also set themselves, including (to name only a few) Donald Culross Peattie in *A Natural History of Trees* (1950), Henry Hobhouse in *Seeds of Change* (1986), and, most recently, Michael Pollan in *The Botany of Desire* (2001). All of these writers, as well as Thoreau, are doing more than just narrating the human history of particular botanical species, however; they are also narrating the influence those species have had on us. As Pollan has put it, "We automatically think of domestication as something we do to other species, but it makes just as much sense to think of it as something certain plants and animals have done to us" (*Botany* xvi).

In *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), Leopold argued eloquently that "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members, and also respect for the community as such" (204). Thoreau's notes on the *Journey West* offer us a model for how to put Leopold's land ethic into practice, not unlike *A Sand County Almanac* itself. By attending not only to the history of a place but also to the means by which that history can become morally meaningful through story—by attending, that is, both to the facts of history and to the ways those facts may one day flower into truths—Thoreau provides a particularly "fruitful" guide to the establishment of an ecological community identity. Part of an emerging "literature of place," Thoreau's notes deserve more attention than they have received up to now, not only from residents of Minnesota, but also from Thoreau scholars and other readers interested in making connections between human and natural history, between individuals and their communities, between the present and the past, and between the eastern and

midwestern landscapes of North America. Thoreau approached his journey west with an attitude of curiosity about, and respectful engagement with, the landscape, inhabitants, and history of the places through which he was travelling. The least we can do is reciprocate that gesture with our own sense of curiosity and respect about the only substantial document from that journey he was able to leave us.

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Notes

¹Subsequent references to Walter Harding's *Thoreau's Minnesota Journey* will be made parenthetically in the text as *MJ*.

²Subsequent references to Walter Harding and Carl Bode's *The Correspondence of Henry David Thoreau* will be made parenthetically in the text as *C*.

³To be precise, the essay originally began as two essays—"Walking" and "The Wild"—that were written separately and then combined in 1851. Three years later, Thoreau revised his ideas and separated the essays again. In 1862, after Thoreau's death, the essays were recombined and published in the June 1862 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The quotation is from Thoreau, *Natural History Essays* 105. Subsequent references will be made parenthetically in the text as *NH*.

⁴Harding mistakenly claims that Thoreau picked "one withered flower on a recently transplanted tree" for his herbarium (*Days* 448), and both Robert F. Sayre and Richard Lebeaux repeat the error. Lebeaux interprets it as a sign that "even on the frontier, pure wildness was becoming increasingly difficult to find" (357). In fact, as the 11 June entry from Thoreau's notes shows, the "withered flower bud" was from a different group of trees than those Thoreau located in Grimes's pasture (*MJ* 17-18). Whether the trees in the pasture were transplanted is unclear, although Thoreau's treatment of them in "Wild Apples" suggests that they were not.

⁵Thoreau's comments about his trip to Redwood to witness the annual payment of the Dakota support this interpretation. As Sayre summarizes, "while Thoreau sympathized with the Indians when he said that their speeches had 'the advantage in point of truth and earnestness, and therefore of eloquence' and that they had reason for their dissatisfaction with the white man, he also had a sympathy with the white men among whom he was traveling. His Indian sympathy was moral, but his white sympathy was broader, more spontaneous, and fraternal" (201). My point is not that we should condone the treatment of the Dakota by white immigrants, nor that we should disregard the elements of savagism present in Thoreau, but that we should attempt to redeem those attitudes and actions with our own, recognizing that we cannot relive the past. Michael Pollan says as much in a botanical context in his article "Against Nativism," in which he calls for a "multihorticulturalism" that recognizes that "migrations of species by whatever means is an abiding part of natural history; in any event, they're almost always irreversible. Turning back the ecological clock to 1492 is a fool's errand, futile and pointless to boot. It seems to me we gardeners would do better to try to work with the mongrel ecology we've inherited—to start out from here. . . . Wouldn't a more cosmopolitan garden, one that borrowed freely from all the world's styles and floras, that made something of history rather than trying to escape it—wouldn't such a garden be more in keeping with the American experience?" (52). In *The Ecology of Eden*, Evan Eisenberg responds to Pollan's argument, agreeing that "[p]arallels can be drawn between natural and human diversity," but warning that "they should not be pushed too far. Humans are one species" (557).

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