

John Muir and the Modern Passion for Nature

By Donald Worster

If we follow John Muir very long, he will wear us out with his incessant gab. The man never stopped talking, and he talked with everyone he met—white farmers, black freedmen, women of all ages, hordes of children, ministers of the gospel, a canoe full of Tlingits paddling along the Alaska coast. Mostly, they talked, and talked passionately, about nature.

In the summer of 1877, Muir set out from the dusty plains of Pasadena, California, climbing toward what he called a “little poem of wildness” in the looming San Gabriel Mountains. Along the way he came upon an immigrant from Mexico camped on the banks of Eaton Creek; predictably, Muir struck up a conversation with the dark stranger that lasted well into the night. In halting English his campfire host told about his dream of settling here amidst the oaks and chaparral, irrigating a vineyard and harvesting honey. Since leaving his native land, he had rambled a great deal--hunting, prospecting, and mining throughout the Southwest--but was now ready to make his home in this canyon paradise, to “make money and marry a Spanish woman.”¹

Muir was touched by this man's dream, which so closely anticipated his own. In another three years he would find himself married and settled in a northern California valley, likewise raising children and baskets of fruit. The two men had more in common than a love of talk and a future of money and marriage; Muir sensed in his host a shared passion for mountains, tumbling streams, and beds of wild flowers buzzing with feeding bees.

A passion for nature can still draw people together across lines of race, class, and gender. On any weekend thousands of Californians from all walks of life go hiking up a hundred canyons, watching quail running across the trail, sniffing the tang of sagebrush, searching for stars above the urban haze. Despite their differences, nature provides a common topic of conversation for those people—a world that they did not create but are hungry to experience, a flash of primeval wildness that stirs common passions and dissolves social categories.

Getting back to that nature has become one of the most popular pursuits in the modern world. It has wrought many visible consequences, including, for example, the preservation of Eaton Canyon as a county park and the San Gabriels as a national forest. Preserving nature (a movement that rightly looks to Muir as founding father) has become both a national and a global cause. Scholars have written many words on the history of that movement, but no one has adequately explained the motivation behind it. Is it biology or is it culture that pulls us toward nature? And if it is culture, or learned behavior, what learning do we have in common?

In his autobiographical *My Boyhood and Youth*, Muir claimed that his enthusiasm for nature was present from childhood, deriving, he felt, from a “natural inherited

wildness in our blood.”² Innocent of modern philosophical debates between cognitivists and physiologists, he was anticipating the views of the latter, arguing that he had been born with an instinct that drew him away from civilization, an impulse over which he had little rational control.³

Muir was right in assuming that the human passions, including the passion for nature, are among the least culturally constructed parts of our minds; they can antedate and transcend intellectual fashions or social conditioning. But evolutionary psychology is not ready, I believe, nor will it ever be ready, to give us a complete explanation for those feelings.⁴ Someday science may have more definitive information about that “natural inherited wildness in our blood,” but I doubt that science will ever take us more than halfway toward understanding what drove Muir into nature. We will always have to acknowledge that the natural self, and the human passions, are shaped and conditioned by forces of culture, learning, and history.

My purpose is to examine the influence of cultural forces on John Muir’s passion: particularly, I want to suggest the role that ideas and feelings associated with the rise of modern democracy may have played in shaping his passion for nature. I want to argue that his passion was tied, in ways we have not fully appreciated, to ideas of equality growing out of modern democratic culture. Then I want to suggest that, just as democracy was deeply affected, and compromised, by the emergence of new forms of wealth and power, so Muir’s passion for nature was reshaped in his later years by his personal success within the social order.

Muir was born in 1838 in the North Sea fishing village of Dunbar, Scotland. During the decades preceding his birth a powerful cultural impulse began sweeping

through western civilization to embrace wild nature, a movement that has become an enduring part of modern emotions. Historians have tried to explain this impulse in highbrow terms—pointing to the rise of natural science, Romanticism, Transcendentalism, or the search for the sublime.⁵ Or they have pointed to material forces that were changing the way people lived, creating an economy of abundance. Wisconsin's great conservationist Aldo Leopold summed up both explanations in his characteristically pithy way: "Wild things ... [he wrote] had little human value until mechanization had assured us of a good breakfast, and until science disclosed the drama of where they come from and how they live."⁶

Leopold's formula, pointing to the twin modernizing forces of technology and science, seems at first glance to explain Muir nicely. By the year of his birth technological progress and the wealth it made possible had thoroughly transformed his native Scottish Lowlands, so that he never faced any desperate struggle for existence. His parents and grandparents, who were urban butchers and grain merchants, though not wealthy, did not have to worry about breakfast. The boy was set free by material progress to indulge his passion for wild things.⁷

To be sure, the Muir family was neither truly rich nor free of toil. After migrating to a frontier farm in Wisconsin, they put in lots of hard, physical work, and John in particular spent more than half of his life in some form of manual labor. Not until age 42, long after a passion for nature had come to rule his life, did he accumulate any property or wealth. His passion, therefore, did not simply or mechanically derive, as Leopold suggested, from a condition of personal prosperity or from his society's level of economic development.

What about those intellectual influences—the drama of nature revealed by art, philosophy, or modern science? Was it books, scientific and poetic, that awakened his feelings? Again, the explanation is plausible to a point. When Muir entered the Wisconsin State University in 1861 he chose to follow the science curriculum, taking courses on natural philosophy and chemistry. Eventually, through the influence of a fellow student, he shifted toward botany and, during school breaks, went on long hikes to collect prairie plants-- his first adult excursions into nature. Science remained a lifelong hobby, and a curiosity about scientific facts and explanations always attended his feelings for nature. Tellingly, however, Muir rejected science as a profession, fearing that professionals would find his passion too excessive, uncritical, and irrational. He understood himself to be an “amateur” naturalist, first and foremost a lover of nature rather than a gatherer of facts or architect of theories.⁸

We have to look for deeper cultural influences than science or technology, deeper than books or affluence, for less elite and less material influences that have not yet been identified by Muir scholars. A vital clue comes in Muir’s first piece of sustained writing, a journal he kept during the thousand-mile trek he made to the Gulf of Mexico at age 29. That journal vibrates on every scrawled page with feelings of personal liberation. He has freed himself from all career anxieties, all family obligations, and all questions about his national loyalties that plagued him during the American Civil War. Never again, he has decided, will he join any organized religious group; the journal can be read, among other things, as an escape from traditional Christianity, which had long constrained his feelings within conventional biblical doctrines.

Near the end of his journey, while recovering from malaria contracted while crossing swampy Florida, Muir composed one of his most oft-quoted passages:

A numerous class of men are painfully astonished whenever they find anything living or dead, in all God's universe, which they cannot eat or render in some way what they call useful to themselves. ...[T]heir God... is regarded as a civilized, law-abiding gentleman in favor either of a republican form of government or of a limited monarchy; believes in the literature and language of England; is a warm supporter of the English constitution and Sunday schools and missionary societies; and is as purely a manufactured article as any puppet in a half-penny theater.⁹

Note the almost bitter tone in Muir's language. He is attacking smug English conformity and condescending English attitudes toward inferior people (particularly, we must understand, the backward rabble of his native Scotland), and he is linking that English cultural imperialism to an assumed human superiority over other forms of life.

Every species, Muir is beginning to feel, demands respect, and every creature has a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Every form of life, like every group of people, is equal in the eyes of the Creator; indeed, all species *are* in some sense "people"—on this long walk, for example, Muir speaks of birds as "these feathered people."¹⁰ As he walks farther and farther south, he works out his first, youthful vision of nature, and what we find behind it is a profoundly political feeling, one growing out of

a personal rebellion against entrenched traditions of power and social relations, and out of a Scotsman's resentment of English domination.

John Muir's passion for nature emerged precisely at the time when a new spirit of egalitarianism was sweeping across Scotland, England, Continental Europe, and North America—a passion that would not vanish but would spread to the farthest corners of the earth. Seeing Muir as a child of that rising egalitarian or democratic culture is where we must begin in order to understand him and his legacy.

This does not mean that Muir was a political activist in the usual sense. He never established any clear party identity nor left any record of voting in an election. His egalitarianism was more a matter of temperament, an attitude toward everyone and everything around him, than a program or ideology of conventional partisan politics. Starting from a visceral rebellion against power and authority, against fixed class and gender relations, against the subordination of the individual to society, he became an egalitarian advocate for nature.

We can understand Muir better after reading the masterwork of the greatest political philosopher of the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville. In 1835 and 1840 Tocqueville published an English translation of his two-volume work *Democracy in America*. (Those years exactly bracket Muir's birth date of 1838.) A member of the French aristocracy, Tocqueville set out to understand the "irresistible revolution" that was sweeping people like himself from power, breaking down feudal relations, and challenging the privileges of high birth. A broad, grassroots movement to achieve "equality of conditions" is what he meant by "democracy." It was opening a new era to talent, a new era of individual freedom and opportunity.

What democracy implied for the other than human world only briefly occupied Tocqueville's attention, and he did not attempt to unravel its complexities. Traveling in the backcountry of the United States, he observed that ordinary people, given a chance to improve their social status, became an unstoppable environmental force. "The Americans arrived but yesterday in the land where they live, and they have already turned the whole order of nature upside down."¹¹ He at least glimpsed the fact that democracy created a voracious appetite for land ownership, economic growth, and production and consumption, an appetite that would in turn work profound changes in the land.

Contrasting that environmental destruction, Tocqueville, in a seldom-noticed chapter in the second volume, suggested that democracy also encouraged a strong feeling for nature, a feeling that was religious at its core. The philosophical tendency of democracy, he argued, is to tear down the traditional doctrines of Christianity and put in their place a new religion of nature, or what he called pantheism. "It cannot be denied," writes Tocqueville, "that pantheism has made great progress in our time."¹²

For a man raised in the hierarchical institutions of Roman Catholicism, this pantheistic tendency was one of the most dangerous threats posed by democracy. Tocqueville solemnly warned, "All those who still appreciate the true nature of man's greatness should combine in the struggle against it."¹³ He feared exactly what John Muir hoped would happen: the ancient Judeo-Christian barrier between humans and nonhumans might vanish.

Thus, a huge paradox lay at the heart of democracy's relationship with nature. While proving terribly destructive to the environment, democracy at the same time encouraged people to seek in nature, rather than in traditions of church authority, a source

of order, virtue, spirituality, and value. Democracy was in love with nature, and pantheism was its true religion.

Pantheism is the ancient belief that God is not some transcendent person, a bearded lord or patriarch who supervises the world from above. God lives on this earth, within nature—an indwelling power, a creative force, a flow of energy. Pantheism’s resurgence in the early modern period, which was still going on during Muir’s growing up years, was no mere highbrow intellectual fashion (bearing labels like Romanticism or Transcendentalism), a fashion that would soon pass away. It touched all kinds of people. It affected, to be sure, many well read and questing minds—Wordsworth, Goethe, Lamartine, Scott, Burns, Thoreau, Emerson—but also many less well read people, even some of those pioneers deforesting America. It affected particularly anyone who was dissatisfied with the power of churches, clergy, and received doctrines. Disillusioned with established religion, or simply seeking liberation from over-rigid theology, people of various classes and nationalities began turning back to nature.

We left Muir down on the Florida coast, discovering in himself a radical feeling of equality with all of God’s creatures. His rebellious mood would not stop there. Over the next few years it would evolve into a full-blown pantheism, or religion of nature.¹⁴

By 1868 Muir had fetched up in California. He describes himself “walking with Nature on the sheeted plain, along the broidered foothills of the great Sierra Nevada, and up in the higher piney, balsam-scented forests of the cool mountains. In these walks there has been no human method—no law—no rule.”¹⁵ Now he feels liberated from all notions of order imposed imperiously on nature by human rationality. What he finds in the natural world is not the old, feared disorder, Chaos, but an order transcending human

understanding: a godly presence dwelling in the sequoias, in the flowery plains, even in the glaciers that have carved the Sierra. While it was becoming common for his fellow egalitarians to find divinity in the plant and animal world, Muir finds it even in hard grinding ice etching a track across a slab of granite.

Muir continues to use the word “God,” but what he means is not what his father or mother had meant, that powerful patriarch in Heaven. In an 1875 journal recording his travels in the Owens Valley, which lies in the rain shadow of the Sierra, he writes: “No synonym for God is as perfect as Beauty. ... All is Beauty!”¹⁶ For Muir that “All” is not a static order created once upon a time by a distant or disembodied mind. It is a world in endless flux. The earth moves, ice flows across the landscape, plants and animals evolve and spread. But always that divine flux is purposeful. Always it expresses some indwelling plan or order. Always it moves toward beauty.

Where do humans fit into this pantheistic view of the world? Every religion offers some criticism of human behavior and sets up an ideal to which our lives and thoughts should conform. So it is with Muir’s pantheism. He viewed himself and his fellow humans as lawless, disorderly forces knocking against the world, lacking humility, needing to learn from and follow nature. To appreciate and to preserve that divine natural beauty became his personal ethic.

By criticizing those who failed to treat the world as a holy place, however, Muir did not become a glowering pessimist about his fellow humans. On the contrary, he regarded every individual as potentially his equal, capable of sharing the same innate feeling for nature that he felt. In that benevolent optimism he included all women, children, and men.

Muir's views of Indians may seem to contradict that universal hopefulness about the human species; those views have sometimes been assailed as anti-democratic, even racist. It is true that, like other white egalitarians of his day, he inconsistently clutched at old hierarchical distinctions between savagery and civilization, or as Muir himself puts it, between dirt and cleanliness. He was repelled by unwashed faces, and especially by the degraded state of California's remnant native tribes. But what his critics have not noticed is that even when Muir recoils in distaste from some of the Indians he encounters, he is apt to recite to himself those ringing egalitarian lines from his favorite poet, the Scottish commoner Robert Burns: "It's coming yet, for a' that, that man to man, the world o'er, shall brothers be for a' that."¹⁷ The young Muir struggled against his era's racial prejudices and never, in any of his writings, published or unpublished, suggested that some people are biologically inferior to others.

Muir's passion for nature burned throughout the rest of his life and made him the most famous nature writer of his day and, following his migration to the West Coast, perhaps the most famous Californian of all time. But in ways that have never been fully analyzed, those feelings for nature narrowed and became more conservative and more compromised over time. He never repudiated his early views, but after the 1870s they went through a period of adjustment, precisely as Muir achieved, along with his Mexican immigrant friend in Eaton Canyon, "marriage and money."

In 1881 Muir married Louisa Strentzel, the only child of a wealthy landowning couple in Martinez, California. Coming down from his exhilarating but often-lonely

mountains, he entered into a warm, settled, and prosperous life of upper-class domesticity. Grateful to his wife and her family, he devoted his prodigious energy to their project of property accumulation and economic production, reinventing himself as an agricultural businessman. His father-in-law gave him a substantial dowry, a part of his own extensive vineyards, and with that stake Muir built up a substantial personal fortune. Because his wife eventually inherited her parents' world--over a thousand acres of land, a large handsome house, a high standing in society—he had little need to draw on his personal funds for the rest of his life. When he died, Muir was worth, in today's terms, over \$4 million.¹⁸

How did that spectacular transformation in status affect his egalitarian attitudes toward other species, his pantheism, or his passion for nature? Muir never asked himself those questions, but it is clear that a slight but definite change occurred. How could it be otherwise as his life grew more and more distant from actual physical contact with nature's wildness? Even after relinquishing the daily management of the Strentzel ranch, he spent most of his late years living indoors and staying at home rather than rambling in the Sierra. He became a genial host for a steady flow of household guests, while upstairs in his study he worked over his youthful essays and journals, patching them together into popular books like *The Mountains of California* and *My First Summer in the Sierra*.

Whenever he managed to return to what he liked to call his true home, the wilderness, Muir no longer made 20-mile hikes with a bag of tea and a loaf of bread tied to his belt; instead, he rode in the substantial comfort of Pullman cars and steamships. He stayed in elegant hotels and in the private residences of a new set of friends, men like

Charles Sprague Sargent, director of Harvard's Arnold Arboretum, or John Hooker, a Los Angeles businessman. With Sargent, he traveled extensively in Alaska, the West, the South, and in 1904 across Europe, Siberia, and China, where they parted company, Muir going on alone to India, Egypt, Australia, and New Zealand. Little of the journals from those trips ever made it into print during his lifetime, as Muir probably realized they were the jottings of a mere tourist, seeing the world from a ship's rail.¹⁹

Caught up in this more affluent mode of life, Muir had fewer opportunities to mingle with the diversity of people he once had met. Even his campfire companions tended to narrow down to affluent white men like himself: bankers, investment brokers, U.S. presidents, and railroad executives. Among such people, Muir felt a shared passion for nature, as he had with the Mexican man on Eaton Creek, but among those later companions the passion for nature had perceptibly changed.

What his later friends, many of them newly enriched by American economic growth as he was, tended to want from nature was not sympathetic or egalitarian feeling across species barriers or glimpses of the divine spirit dwelling in nature. Instead, they sought beautiful scenery to adorn their lives and therapy to soothe the cares and nervous prostration brought on by their intense work habits. The need for both scenery and leisure they satisfied through a movement that began in the late nineteenth century of creating national parks and forest reserves and saving them from commercial development. Such preservationists were also often collectors of fine art; they collected the finest of man's works and of nature's works, preserving both in museum-like settings. Nature now appeared to them to be less a world suffused with divinity than a spectrum of aesthetic expressions, ranging from the grand to the mundane; only the best of those

expressions needed to be appreciated, valued, and preserved. And in all those beautiful places that they tried to collect and preserve, they expected hotels, railroads, and the physical comforts of civilization.

Muir was no advocate of hotels in parks, but along with his new friends he too learned to channel and redirect his feelings for nature and, like them, he began to value in nature mainly in its most beautiful expressions. California's Yosemite Valley stood highest in his hierarchy. He devoted his late years to getting that valley back into federal hands and expanding it into the nation's second national park. Other California environments that ranked high on his preservation list were Kings Canyon in the southern Sierra Nevada and the sequoia and redwood groves.²⁰

To promote environmental preservation Muir helped found the Sierra Club, one of those voluntary associations that Tocqueville described as characteristic of democratic societies.²¹ The Club, it should be said, included many individuals for whom nature still offered the most intense source of religious feelings, including college professors and members of the more liberal Protestant denominations. But the Club also attracted many nature connoisseurs whose passion for nature had become selective and exclusive. Under their influence the Club set out to save the best of the Sierra Nevada, but not of the Central Valley. They honored those "noble kings," the sequoias, but not more ordinary trees. They wanted to save habitat for an elite class of mammals like elk, bison, and moose, while lesser species were ignored. Those so-called higher forms of life and beauty, club members began to argue, were the "crown jewels" of the nation.

While Muir and his Club allies worked to save the last best places, a wholesale destruction of natural habitat was going on all across America. The continent was

becoming an immense factory for producing wheat, oil, automobiles, city skyscrapers, sprawling suburbs, grandiose estates with lovely manicured gardens, elite universities, and galleries of art.

In 1909, when he was nearly seventy years old, Muir hunkered down for several months at the railroad executive E. H. Harriman's summer place on the shores of Klamath Lake, Oregon, a rustic resort surrounded by towering pines and oaks. He went there because Harriman insisted that he come, knowing Muir had difficulty writing anything new. Muir's friends were especially eager for him to write an autobiography that would inspire others with the story of a lad rising from social obscurity to high priest of the national parks.

Harriman had acquired his idyllic retreat while seeking to extend his railroad empire from California into the Pacific Northwest.²² Klamath Lake offered both a place to hunt and fish and a base from which to oversee that expansion and make more money. In 1905 the federal government had launched a large reclamation project to convert the nearby lakes and marshes of the Lower Klamath and Tule Lake into irrigated fields; the farmers on that project, Harriman quickly realized, would need his railroad cars to carry their commodities to market. Creating that new agricultural wealth required destroying one of the most important habitats for waterfowl in North America. Eventually, 75% of those wetlands would be destroyed, and one half of its bird population lost.²³

What was Muir's reaction to that environmental destruction aided and abetted by his generous friend and host, the nation's leading railroad executive? He said not a word even in his private letters or journals. While he sat on Harriman's veranda trying to remember his first impressions of "a paradise of birds" in his boyhood Wisconsin, he

paid no attention to an appalling loss of bird life and bird habitat going on only a few miles away.

The young Muir had discovered beauty wherever he walked, and all of it he embraced as divine. The old Muir, in contrast, tended to think of wild nature in terms of a few spectacular national treasures. There, and only there, was nature to be saved, while elsewhere nature could be sacrificed for farms or mines or whatever men and their industrial civilization thought was most useful.

The young Muir had gone into nature without much money, wearing rough and tumble clothes, camping with anyone he met, regardless of their skin color or social standing. The old Muir dressed in dapper three-piece suits, occasionally puffed on a large cigar over a glass of port, and kept company with the nation's most affluent gentlemen. The old love of conversation and thirst for friendship did not disappear, but now when he talked and talked and talked it was, ironically, to "civilized, law-abiding gentlemen in favor either of a republican form of government or of a limited monarchy."

We should not dismiss Muir's efforts to save Yosemite or other places of astounding beauty as misguided. Surely we are all better off for having saved such places from economic development. Inspired by his example, Americans have gone on to expand the national park system to nearly 400 sites, and over time we have radically expanded our sense of what in nature is worth preserving; many of those sites added during the 20th century were far from "Nature Sublime"—places without mountains, scenic grandeur, or charismatic megafauna. A more egalitarian spirit in preservation has evolved since Muir's day to include state parks, city and county parks, open spaces, river walks, and wildlife refuges. Most radically, we have extended protection to every

endangered species, even the lowliest and most unprepossessing—the Furbish lousewort, the snail darter, the desert pupfish, the spotted owl. All those efforts at nature preservation, protecting the high and the mighty, the low and the ordinary, the obscure and the charismatic, flow out of the worldview of modern democracy. We have not only sought to preserve Nature in all her forms but also to open those preserved places to any and all human beings, regardless of class or ethnicity, far more so than our universities, country clubs, or gated communities. In that democratic preservation movement we have acknowledged that we have a moral obligation beyond the human species. Americans, in short, have followed Muir's youthful trail of passion towards a more comprehensive egalitarianism in our relations with the earth.

Through knowing John Muir better, we can see how the modern love of nature began as an integral part of the great modern movement towards democracy and social equality, which has led to the pulling down of so many oppressive hierarchies that once plagued the world. We come to realize that fighting to save the great whales, the tropical rain forests, or even a single acre of prairie has been as much a part of that movement as any protest over toxic waste or the exploitation of a minority neighborhood. Environmental justice is not simply about achieving equality in race, class, and gender terms; it has been historically linked to a broader passion for nature, a linkage that can be traced back to Burns, Wordsworth, Thoreau, and Muir and has its origins in Tocqueville's "democratic revolution."

Muir's followers as well as detractors need to understand that historical linkage and also to track those changes of feeling and perception that Muir went through during his lifetime. We should remember his burning passion, his role in preserving parks and

wilderness, and his daring extension of the democratic ideal to all of nature. But we should also remember him as one who never fully confronted the contradictions in his own life and in modern democratic society—the conflict between the dream of equality and the rising power of money, between materialism and virtue, between human wants and human responsibilities. Those conflicts still plague democracies, and we may be no closer to resolving them than was Muir or his generation. Knowing John Muir better, however, may help us confront those contradictions in ourselves. As we listen to his wonderful gab, we should remember what he sometimes forgot or failed to say.

¹ “The San Gabriel Mountains,” *Steep Trails*, vol. VIII, *The Writings of John Muir*, Sierra Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 147-148. The identity of Muir’s fellow camper is unknown, although some years later a party found at the camping site a hermit dead in his cabin who may have been the hopeful immigrant. Another possibility is Carlos R. Cruz, who one month after Muir’s hike in the canyon bought a cabin in the area; Cruz, however, was from Monterey, California, and was already married with two children. See *A History of Eaton Canyon Natural Area and Adjacent Ranches* (Pasadena: County of Los Angeles Department of Parks & Recreation, n.d.), 6-7; and *Pasadena Star News*, 24 Feb. 1923.

² *My Boyhood and Youth*, vol. I, *Writings of John Muir*, 4.

³ For an introduction to this debate see Robert C. Solomon, ed., *Thinking about Feeling: Contemporary Philosophers on Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴ A provocative beginning toward this goal is Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, eds., *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington: Island Press, 1993).

⁵ See, for example, Marjorie Hope Nicholson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (1959; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997 rpt.); Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of the Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon, 1983); and Peter Coates, *Nature: Western Attitudes since Ancient Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 125-139.

⁶ Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949; New York: Oxford University Press, 1987 rpt.), vii.

⁷There is no satisfactory history of Muir's boyhood life in Scotland, from 1838 to 1849; the best available accounts are Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir* (1945; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973 rpt.), 3-23; Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours* (New York: Viking, 1985), 16-27; John Warfield Simpson, *Yearning for the Land: A Search for the Importance of Place* (New York: Pantheon, 2002), 23-33; and Muir's own account in *My Boyhood and Youth*. Also see T. C. Smout, *A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950* (London: Collins, 1986); and Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (New York: Crown, 2001).

⁸ Muir's years in Wisconsin, including his days at the state university, are thoroughly described in Steven J. Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 39-113.

⁹ *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, vol. I, *Writings of John Muir*, 354-355. The original version, which here differs little from the printed one (he capitalizes "Republican"), can

be found in *The Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers*, published by Chadwyck-Healey (1986), reel 23, frame 111.

¹⁰ *A Thousand-Mile Walk to the Gulf*, 353. Other species, he argues, “are earthborn companions and our fellow morals” (357).

¹¹ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Mayer, trans. George Lawrence (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1969), 554. Tocqueville’s traveling companion, Gustav de Beaumont, marveled at how hostile the pioneers of upstate New York seemed to be toward “the trees, their enemies.” Quoted in George Wilson Pierson, *Tocqueville in America*, abridged ed. (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1959), 124.

¹² Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 451. See the very brief chapter 7, vol. II, “What Causes Democratic Nations to Incline Toward Pantheism.”

¹³ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 452.

¹⁴ For other analyses of Muir’s religious development, see Mark Stoll, “God and John Muir,” in Sally M. Miller, ed., *John Muir: Life and Work* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 65-81; Dennis C. Williams, *God’s Wilds: John Muir’s Vision of Nature* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2002); and Donald Worster, “John Muir and the Roots of American Environmentalism,” in *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 184-202. Also see, for useful background, Thomas R. Dunlap, *Faith in Nature: Environmentalism as Religious Quest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004).

¹⁵ Quoted in Linnie Marsh Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 2. For the original journal

see *Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers*, reel 23, frame 152. The best account of Muir's intellectual development in California is Michael P. Cohen, *The Pathless Way: John Muir and American Wilderness* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

¹⁶ "Additional Notes... High Sierra," 19 June 1875, in Wolfe, ed., *John of the Mountains*, 208. The original journal can be found in *Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers*, reel 24, frame 1160.

¹⁷ *My First Summer in the Sierra*, vol. II, *Writings of John Muir*, 220.

¹⁸ According to the San Francisco *Examiner* (25 January 1916), Muir's estate was worth \$250,000 when he died late in 1914, \$184,000 of which was cash deposited in San Francisco and Martinez, California, banks, the rest being the market value of his land holdings. In today's dollars that would be equivalent to \$4,584,666 (<http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppowerusd/>). See also Arno Dosch, "The Mystery of John Muir's Money," *Sunset*, 36 (Feb. 1916): 20-22, 61-62.

¹⁹ Michael P. Branch has recently published the journals from Muir's 1911-12 international travels, *John Muir's Last Journey: South to the Amazon and East to Africa* (Washington: Island Press, 2001).

²⁰ The effort to set aside Yosemite Valley and its surroundings as a national park is told in Holway R. Jones, *John Muir and the Sierra Club: The Battle for Yosemite* (San Francisco: Sierra Club, 1965); and Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990)

²¹ Michael P. Cohen, *The History of the Sierra Club, 1892-1970* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 1-37.

²² William J. Cadman and LoEtta A. Cadman, *History of Rocky Point, Oregon* (n.p., 2002), chap. 10; Klamath Historical Society, *Klamath Echoes* II (1965): 21, 48, 68. See also Maury Klein, *The Life & Legend of E. H. Harriman* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

²³ See Nancy Langston, *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 83-87; and William Kittredge, *Balancing Water: Restoring the Klamath Basin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 54-55.