

Home Waters

A Year of Recompenses on the Provo River

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polygamy on both sides of my family, I suppose some people would expect me to have been born with a tail. It is a tight constriction, to be sure, but brief, because history is not dropped down some funnel into the bottles of our memory. I didn't want to feel trapped by obligations that are not of my choosing, but I have learned that genealogy does not determine my choices. This is because in being remembered, the past is remade in my image. Memory is a selective and a forgetful thing, after all. There is nothing to be done about this but confess it, and I confess it. Every story wants to be made flesh, but every time I pick up the broken bones and clothe them in costume, the past is betrayed. I must learn to accept this because impatience with the elusiveness of the past only repays with nostalgia and regret.

I think what Elijah teaches is to honor the past but to learn to play house with it since what you really want is to build a home for the future. Seeing relics lie limp and discarded once in a while like old ragdolls helps to keep believing in the past nimble. No matter how much I think I know, my knowledge of the past is based on the broadest of generalities, the shallowest of detail, and hopelessly myopic blurring. Deep affections for place must be nurtured by this humiliation. Because then it becomes obvious that promised lands are never permanently given, only provisionally loaned. Otherwise, like patriotism, such affections go beyond their utility and fuel passions for homelands with well-protected borders, like so many silly gated communities. Those with the "wrong" forefathers, or worse, with insufficient evidence of where they came from, get burned. Turned hearts are soft and malleable.

Fly-fishing has changed the way I see rivers. I wish I could wade them all, to feel that familiar resistance to my efforts to move upstream just as I will resist its will to pull me down. Standing still in the middle of a rapid passage of water, sending out those incessantly hopeful, wriggling lines, there is the temptation to lie down, to give up resistance and float down where the water seems so eager to take me, to finally rejoin the fate of the earth's arteries. But, like so many mossy stones, I have decided that I will steal my chances to hold my ground, to see what I can catch. In so doing, I feel the weight of time and I catch glimpses of its elusive electricity. It comes to me, passes through and around me, and leaves me changed, nurturing the inescapable suspicion that I was never temporary.

DAYS OF MONOTONOUS GRAY LIGHT HAVE STRETCHED INTO WEEKS, DEEPENING in their density to the point where I sense it is unhealthy to go for a run outdoors. I don't know if I noticed it much the first few winters I lived here, but this valley's seasonal inversions have become hard to miss and more distressing with each passing year. When pollutants get caught in the inverted air, aided by the geography of a ring of mountains surrounding the valley, we have air conditions that are among the nation's most polluted. Breathing these spikes of smog over a lifetime is the equivalent of being a lifetime smoker, costing a year or two of our lives.

In my ecstasy at finding myself finally home in Utah, I accepted the almost moral imperative to try to love everything about this place, but it has not always been easy. As I have learned in marriage and in my lifelong membership in the LDS Church, the initial euphoria of commitment can make it easy for disappointments to feel like betrayal. Although baptized at age eight, I wasn't really converted until age eighteen, and it was after a decade or so of service in the church and the proverbial seven years of marriage, I found the unambiguous pleasures of these relationships wearing off. In my neglect of honest self-analysis, I instead noticed the weaknesses of others, whether it was the occasional overbearing or materialistic Mormon or the sometimes emotional distance of my wife, and each seemed like a personal affront to the sacred commitments I had made.

This pollution feels like betrayal, but I am wise enough now to understand that I am no less at fault than anyone else. I might just have to learn to endure. At least these colder winters have portended forgiving snowfall, for which I generally can't complain, but with the colder temperatures of a waning autumn, all it takes is a brief dry spell for inversion to take hold. The first day the light seems a milky blue, slightly dissipated, but as the days pass, the mountains disappear, and we hunker down, conserving emotional energy, awaiting a storm to clear the air again. It is delusional, really, to place all hope in some act of God to wipe our human stains clean as long as we are unwilling to repent. While beauty and bounty are our most ancient desires,

sometimes the recompenses of our own pollution are what we deserve. In a state highly dependent on coal for its electricity and not yet weaned from the automobile, we will pay the price for many years to come for our refusal to move aggressively toward clean and renewable energy.

Everyone here knows that there is nothing quite like what a morning promises after the first snows of autumn. The crags of Squaw Peak and "Y" Mountain spotted in white, the tree tops billowing like low-lying cumulous clouds over the neighborhood, and the glistening streets melting into clarity in the piercing and warming sun. When we are socked in by this kind of hazy man-made light, though, I could be anywhere because the world seems a prison house of stasis. I know I have to get above or away to encounter the sensations of clear light, air, and the singular surface of the world in some remote place.

Necessity is the mother of invention, as they say, so I have taken up some new forms of recreation. I can never forget that December morning a week after intense snowfall had arrived with a fury, breaking the back of the drought. I went with a group of friends up to the top of Squaw Peak, three thousand feet above the valley floor, all of us feeling perhaps the same desperate need to stir the stillness of the soul as the inversion had started to gather.

When we met that morning at five a.m., there was enough light pollution in the valley even at that hour to make the mountains glow in a ghostly white, an effect enhanced by the abundant snow on the valley floor and draped on the crags of the mountain. The west face of the Wasatch generally doesn't remain covered in snow for very long because of the lower elevation and because of the direct light that burns on the mountainside every afternoon. The effect is a season-long shift in color and texture created by the different degrees of snowfall. When the snow is completely melted from the face, you can see the brown earth rising at a startling angle from the basin floor, while behind the ridges, still higher peaks stand ominously in white robes all winter long.

This canyon displays the effect of a split caused by two sinking plates and the work of spring runoff that flows through the mouth and into the pipes in my neighborhood. It isn't the water of the Provo, but it used to join its braids of water on the valley floor in the days of the Indians. Timpanogots, or so the Ute natives of this valley were known, means simply "water emerging from the rocky mouth." Water born of the mouth of stone, and here we stood at the lips about to be tasted by its tongue. The glow refracted off of

the snow and the serrations of the rock face. The effect was a display of faint rust, orange, yellow, and white that made it hard to believe that Rock Canyon was indeed stone; it looked more like autumn leaves on a windy day, or with foreboding black above us, like a violent fire licking air.

I stared at those tessellated teeth of jutting stones held in relief by the surrounding snow. Faint, falling snowflakes pierced the purple shadows like diamonds. We ascended in the dark for some time with headlamps, but it wasn't long before the glowing light of the morning revealed the backside of the mountain we climbed. House of the Gods. For the Timpanogots, at least. We Mormons have a House of the Lord just down the hill. We could see the brightly lit bronze Angel Moroni atop the temple blowing his trumpet behind us just before we made our final turn into the heart of the canyon. But it was all of a piece. The canyon was the reason for the temple's location.

And the reverberation: "These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that I, the Lord God, made the heaven and the earth, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew. For I, the Lord God, created all things, of which I have spoken, spiritually, before they were naturally upon the face of the earth."²⁴ Joseph Smith's revelation about the creation is a re-creation in two senses: the story needed to be told again and the world needed to be created twice. And so chiasmus: imagined before it was spoken. Spoken before it became flesh. Sensation of the flesh inspires words, and words, the life of the spirit. Deeper still in the heart of the temple, the creation of the world is commemorated as a reminder of the care with which the Lord created diversity. And of how our own hands and minds played a role in honoring the world's beauty. And before it is gone, how our hands might still have work to do.

By now our hiking party had gone far enough that looking back to the west we could see the lights of the valley and the peak's strange shadow angling now from a completely different perspective. We would lose sight of it altogether as we climbed up on its back. I can see the peak from my house, and I have often thought I should learn to paint it, like Cezanne's Mont St. Victoire, over and over again in all its seasonal dressings.

When mountains take on iconic form, they are emblems of our sense of place and belonging. Historian Jared Farmer suggests that this isn't an entirely innocent process. When Mount Timpanogots to the north became the favorite peak it is today for the valley's citizens, it was a choice among others

and was a symptom of a whitewashing of history used to forge a white, Mormon claim to a "native" homeland. Mountains as landmarks belie what any hiker—or anyone with the eyes of an impressionist—knows, that a mountain never retains the same shape. There are as many mountains as there are steps it takes to climb them, or as there are angles of the sun and shifts in weather. Would the faith to move mountains include willing feet and keen eyes, since all mountains move, every one? Recreation and art can keep us honest about the contingency of home, to learn to see it otherwise. To give the lie to a static sense of place was the energy behind Cezanne's mania to paint as many Mont St. Victoires as he had canvasses, even if he remained rooted in essentially the same point in space.

No one knows for sure when the Timpanogots arrived but it was several centuries before the Mormons. We know at least that their lives revolved around the water cycles of the Provo watershed (which was initially named Timpanogos after them), that they wintered on its banks and gathered in the springtime to celebrate the end of winter, to dance in honor of their ancestral bear, to catch fish and to begin the great gathering of food that would take them up the canyons and into the mountains in the summer and fall months, hunting big game. Bulrush, pine nuts, Bonneville trout, June suckers, whitefish, rabbit, elk, deer, antelope, mountain goat, water fowl. My bones ache every time I read about the quantity of fish in the river and in Utah Lake, to say nothing of the indigenous population that the Mormons pushed out to make their home. The harshest months were those before the break of spring when the Indians could only hope their winter supplies of dried fish, pressed fruit, and seeds lasted long enough. Living in the mountains means never knowing how long winter will last. Some years I can hike behind the mountains to nine thousand feet and find little or no snow in May, other years I may have to wait until June or July before the ground has cleared.

The name "Provo" had stuck by the time the Mormons settled along the banks of the river in 1849. Some twenty years or so before, a man named Etienne Provost passed through this valley and up into Salt Lake Valley seeking furs. The Timpanogots didn't give his men resistance but when he passed the point of the mountain to the north, he found himself surrounded by Shoshones who were seeking revenge for trappers who had stolen their horses the year before. Unaware of their plot for revenge, he was invited to smoke a peace pipe.

They sat in a circle around a fire in the nippy October air. The vast valley of Salt Lake lay to the north in the gathering afternoon light. Mount Olympus towered above them to the east and reflected its gray stones and deep pine strokes in brilliant variegation. The chief signaled that it was against custom to have metal objects near a peace pipe. Did they speak in broken French? English? Or did they communicate with hand signals the best they could? He knew enough about Indians to understand the importance of showing respect for their odd customs, so he immediately ordered his men seated in between Shoshones around the circle to place their guns at a remove from the fire.

"Are you sure this is wise?" one of his men asked under his breath.

"Go on, just do it," he answered.

He looked carefully into the chief's eye in order to detect any dishonesty, but the chief smiled broadly in appreciation. As the pipe made its way around the circle, the muscles in his face and in his back finally began to relax. The chief raised his left hand briefly and in an instant, he saw next to him his friend's neck slit as he fought off an attack from behind him. The cries of dying men filled the air as others screamed, "To the guns! To the guns!" Provost reached his first, shooting one Indian in the leg as he sprinted away from the circle. One, two, maybe three others followed—the accounts differ—as he made his way down the bluff toward what became known by the Mormons as Jordan River to seek protection from the arrows that showered them. One grazed him in the calf. The rest of the party, eight or so, lay in their own blood in the circle Provost had left behind.

Such experiences were perhaps well known to men like Provost, but the sudden and seemingly unwarranted violence of the encounter must have shaken them. He and the other survivors made their way back toward the mountains where they knew a crew of trappers had been encamped. Was it there that he learned of the revenge the Shoshone had sought? Provost would return the next year to Utah Valley, steering clear of the Shoshone. In 1836 the Jordan River appears as Proveau's Fork on a map, but the Mormons would call it Jordan. The name just migrated south to Mount Timpanogos to make room for a more Biblical narrative to the north. Eutaw. Ewtah. Utah. Proveau River. Provo River. Provo City. These names would come with the translations of time. Like all names, they slid into repose by accident, but once accidents become historical they seem as natural as the unchanging canyon walls.

By the time we scrambled through stands of aspen and pine, through deeply buried meadows, and a thicket of scrub oak, we were close to the top, and the sun was nakedly shining. At the summit, the white world around us refracted the slanted, hot light without compromise. The entire valley lay ensconced under the cover of inversion, which looked more like a naturally deep fog than some gaudy human pollution in the land. Out of the haze emerged the ringing horizon of mountains, standing bald and indifferent to the human world they no longer had to witness. My friend Chip brought a thermos of hot blueberry soup, a drink we passed around to each other in congratulations for the effort. For all appearances at this height, a healthy world of mountains, light, frozen water, and satisfied hearts.

One year when I took Paige and her friend snowshoeing at the cabin, the inversion was so bad we had to drive all the way to the overlook over Jordanelle Dam before we were clear of the soup that had enveloped Utah Valley, the entire Provo Canyon, and all of Heber Valley above. It was reportedly worse in Salt Lake, but that didn't seem to provide much comfort. The world was inverted, so instead of encountering colder temperatures as we ascended to seven thousand feet, it grew warmer, hovering just below freezing. When we arrived, we were walking on top of snow almost as deep as they are tall. The girls spilled across the field below the road with abandon, arriving at the frozen ice over the stream by the cabin. The water beneath the ice was only a few inches deep, but it still seemed to them audacious to cross over to the cabin.

Later, as we walked along a stretch of the Provo, we stopped to stare at the surface of the snow, which in many areas in the shade had developed several inches of impeccably symmetrical ice crystals that looked like small fans or wings or church windows. I could run my hands over the top and hear the small shards shattering. The girls compulsively scooped handfuls to eat at every chance, calling these special crystals the "tasties."

We saw evidence of what I had read in the paper about the successful return of the bald eagle—one flew south following the river above us, the first I had ever seen. The girls grew tired from the depth of the snow and rested where a spring still fed green watercress strangely moving in the water like clovers in the wind, surrounded by white stillness. On the drive home, the girls mentioned that a sixth-grader had formulated a project for the

upcoming science fair to test the pollution levels of the snow in the valleys and compare them to those of the mountain snow.

Snow is grace to any westerner. Water experts and farmers alike are known to cry at the sight of deep snow pack. I have learned gratitude for seeing the waters moving slowly, giving off their winter steam, in the stillness of the mountains through the long months of forbearing accumulation. I have seen the source of Noblett's Creek that feeds the south fork of the Provo, a green mouth opening in the side of the mountain, a headspring spilling out of rock and over moss, surrounded by deep grooves of aging snow. In the summer this is bone-chilling water but here it looks like hot lava, melting a gaping hole for its exit into the air.

In the neighboring woods, I have heard the muffled cries of the numerous streams under deep covers of white powder that renders smooth the unruly edges of the earth. As I have searched for the origins of the milk-blood under the high mountain snows, I have been reassured that the small tributaries that gather to feed the Provo don't stop in the cold, still world. This instills hope, against my natural inclinations, because the mountains extend time in winter, which comes earlier and leaves later than it does in the valley. Snow's silent oblivion masks a deep pulse that beats quietly, steadily until the riotous days of spring. I like what Pablo Neruda wrote:

Perhaps the earth can teach us
as when everything seems dead
and later proves to be alive.

Acclimating myself to the cold and escaping inversion before winter officially arrives, I have learned, help to fill reserves of sensation that I will need for the long months ahead. On another such effort, I invited Taylor to explore the watershed behind my father's cabin. Taylor, approaching fifty even though the only sign of age is his white shock of hair, is a former employee in Silicon Valley who retired early so that he could enjoy creative, recreational, and educational pursuits with abandon. We started on a road east of the cabin that follows the "Little South Fork" of the Provo. Directly to the north, the main stretch of the Provo flows from the Uinta Mountains to join forces with these waters gathering from the gentler mountains to the south. We faced a series of small rounded hills covered in pines and bald aspens, disguising the higher ranges behind. At first, the snow was a marvelous light

powder that moved aside and blew through our snowshoes with each step. It hardly seemed possible that winter hadn't quite officially arrived. Underneath we could feel the more firm and dense snow of previous days, but since my poles had no baskets, I frequently found them slipping all the way to the ground, some four feet or more below in places of drift. Eventually we reached the end of a trail that had been created by others before us, so we blazed on by ourselves taking turns in the lead.

It became a moment lived in contrasts, the sun bright and spectacularly clear breaking through the dark green cover, light and dark playing on the surface of the snow, and temperatures wildly fluctuating between the warming, sunlit openings and the bone-numbing pockets of shade and canyon-guarded crevasses, the cold wet of the snow melting on our hot hands and steaming bodies whenever we stopped or fell. An hour passed, then two, as we broke through the trees from time to time to catch a glimpse of the opposite side of the ravine. Eventually the slope seemed to ease up, and we found ourselves walking parallel to Little South Fork, running untamed under the snow and occasionally exposing its dark stains in the open air as it emerged between mounds of snow cover. We could see that the snow was wont to aggressively accumulate here since even the trees appeared stunted by the weight.

In the spring, the earth's thirst would take the first few feet of snow underground but the generous remainder would be runoff for the Provo, for the rest of us. I have seen the violence that this portends at this altitude when the river spews downstream past the cabin in one long shot of water the color of milk chocolate, with the whipped cream of foaming waves twisting and contorting. When the water is that high, I can stand at the edge—where I normally would step down a good six feet to enter the gentle curves of the current—and see the water already pawing at my feet. I can't help thinking about the fish beneath, holding deep and close to the banks, hoping to survive the deluge.

Taylor and I noticed a line in the fresh snow crossing perpendicular to our chosen direction that bore the mark of a heavy, wide-bellied animal and then found bighorn sheep scat at the stream's edge. As my eyes followed the creek upstream, it appeared to dead-end in a ring of hills that surrounded the area, all providing spring water and runoff to the Provo. As we walked up an opening in the trees where a road no doubt passed, the aspens were covered with an offensive display of graffiti, carved by visitors from as far back as the 1970s, according to their mania of recording years,

names, and obsessions. Several of the offenders seemed rather eager to lay claim to this territory on a number of occasions over several years. We must have seen the carved names of "Tip Allen" and "John Lee" and "Rod Fitzgerald," among others, a dozen times or more. There were also a few pot pipes crudely rendered and the repeating motif of a naked female torso. Taylor and I joked that one of the "artists" seemed to prefer a more shapely figure than the other. In fact, his Matisse nudes served for some time as our map to keep us on the path when the clearing and the blue diamonds on the trees had disappeared. I thought, too, of those secret signs for the mother lode of gold that legends say await the happy traveler in the Uintas.

In obscure history books about irrigation, I have seen black-and-white images of men working in the high Uintas, withstanding the intense mosquitoes and horseflies that abound in the ponds and lakes, during the months following winter's demise. In one image, a man stands with fists on his waist, standing proudly in the middle of the lake's stream that pours out into the forest below. They haul out corpses of trees cleared for the construction of small walls of stone. At the top of the wall one sees the headgate wheels that would increase or decrease the flow of water at the dam's bottom by means of a shovel-nosed blade that slid along the pipe's opening. White spume bursts out under the pressure of the swollen body of water.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, dozens of lakes were shored up with these small-scale dams to allow their levels to rise during spring runoff. With each lake's holding capacity increased significantly by some 30 to 40 percent, the mountains became a collective reservoir that farmers all along the Provo watershed could tap during the dry summer months. These elemental irrigation efforts of the early twentieth century compare favorably to the hubris of the later massive dam projects, so it is easy to be bitten by nostalgia's bug. Intoxicating images of the Stratton orchards flourishing on the Provo Bench on the northern end of Utah Valley, for example. Blossoms and bees swarming the air with sweetness and light. Day laborers, usually young men from the valley, hooting to each other atop creaky ladders, and a far cry from the haunting sounds of Utes hooting in the night around the small fort built on the banks of the Provo in 1849.

But then consider this. The Utes were friendly enough at the beginning, but their own economic desperation and a series of misunderstandings later cause violence to erupt. The peace of the orchards is facilitated by fiat from

President Lincoln who pushes the Utes east to a reservation in the Uintas. When the settlers get a taste of a river-fed life now that it is vacated by hungry and desperate Indians, their irrigation efforts increase. Now more aware of their dependence on the distant Uinta Mountains, it suddenly looks like a mistake to have ceded so much of the watershed to the reservation. Word had it that the government was growing impatient with the Indians' refusal to learn irrigation on their new reservation and the Mormons thought they might try their hand on higher ground. Even with a shorter growing season at higher altitudes, there was talk of using the idle canals on the reservation and damming the small lakes of the high mountains in order to build up storage for the valley.

August 1905, only forty years after Lincoln agreed to leave them in peace: half of the reservation is opened to homesteading by whites, thousands gather in downtown Provo for a lottery that announces the new homesteaders, the first a lucky Ray Daniel of Provo. The crowd explodes in jealous celebration. Swedes, Icelanders, Danish, and British, these were men less familiar with Indian life than their own fathers and grandfathers who had seen the Indians throughout the valley only a few decades earlier. Opportunity mixed with ignorance has more dire, even if less violent, consequences than direct intercourse with an alien people. Their arrival on the Uinta basin would bring them into contact with Indians soon enough, and most would learn charity and peaceful coexistence. But their march up toward the Uintas was also a march forward for modernization in the valley.

By 1910, high mountain dams are being erected, and some sixteen thousand acres in Utah Valley and to the north in Salt Lake Valley benefit. The Strawberry Project, the Bureau of Reclamation's first in the state of Utah, in 1902, channels the waters of the Colorado Plateau to the south of the Uintas into southern Utah Valley, laying the foundations that would enable the desert to blossom first as an agricultural and then as a suburban rose.

Only recently granted statehood in 1896 because of the end of polygamy in 1890, Utah was eager to seize the prospects for a more Americanized future. Some felt eager to leave the hard-scrabble pioneer life behind for educational and professional opportunities in the East, like my dad's father who became a banker, or in California, like my mom's father who became a soil engineer. But most remained in Utah to modernize the agricultural foundations of the pioneers. I have no small number of distant cousins among them, as became evident when I moved here. "Congratulations," the DMV clerk said behind the counter, as if this were his favorite Utah joke, "you are

the sixth George Handley in the state." I didn't believe him, so to prove it, he swiveled the computer monitor so that I could see the six names flashing in neon green letters. One was my grandfather, but the others? Still haven't met them, except in the mirror.

Utah would remain the heartland of Mormonism despite a conscious shift away from "gathering in Zion" to "building the kingdom" wherever you lived. Joseph Smith's visions of urban development, which Brigham Young tried assiduously to realize, followed in the tradition of Thomas More's Utopia and Jefferson's dream of an America of the small farmer, twenty acres a lot for Smith in close proximity to one another to foster communitarian values and shorten the distance between urban and rural cultures. Brigham Young agreed to explore the Uinta Basin for irrigation potential to help stem the growing tide of urban development in Salt Lake City, which he thought was eroding Mormon values. The report he received was that the Uinta watershed was a "contiguity of waste" and only good "to hold the world together." The Mormons went anyway.

Homesteading on the Indian reservation offered 160-acre lots and encouraged the kind of prospecting Smith and Young seemed to want to control. But if this is the beginning of the dramatic transformation of the watershed, it seems odd that today one sees these few remaining family ranches of the Uinta Basin as swaths of land that do more than hold the world together; they hold the memories of the land that are all but gone in Utah Valley below where suburban blight rules the roost. The distance between the more urbanized Wasatch Front and the rural flavor of these highlands is greater than mileage can measure. I feel it every time I drive by irrigation water spilling across the fields of alfalfa under the Wasatch Mountains to the west and at the feet of the Uintas to the east. Every time I buy gas at a local station and hear the strange sound of my accentless English or feel conscious of my economy-size Japanese car.

Family farming in Utah resisted the industrial pull toward larger-scale production in places like California, as is evidenced by the farms still in operation here at the feet of the Uintas, and agriculture still lays claim to the majority of the state's water supply. But small-scale agriculture is certainly an endangered species, always threatened nowadays by the encroaching demands of suburban housing and recreational homes, everyman's *coin de terre*. But at least at these higher altitudes, suburban spraddle is hard to imagine. Thank goodness.

Farmers aren't extinct, not yet, but it seems you have to interview an octogenarian to know anything of such life anymore. It wasn't long ago that

you could hear the wistfulness in the voices of elder Mormon leaders who would sometimes speak allegories of, say, feeding pigs, or jumping the old irrigation canals, but if Mormonism was going to save traditional values and retain a sense of community, it was going to have to focus on the individual family household. Sermons about the vital connection to land that was presumed to sustain those values went the way of the farm itself. Maybe that's why I feel like a fish returning to the spawning grounds, resisting the downward drag to stasis. It was here in the Uintas where life in the valleys below was made modern. Not an innocent beginning, to be sure, but a beginning nonetheless and a dependence on a watershed that we could stand to relearn.

In my need to explore this watershed, I am not alone. A small number of descendents of early pioneers continue to spend their lives looking in vain for the lost mines of colonial Spanish gold bricks reportedly hidden up in the mountains. Brother Brigham wouldn't approve since he preached frequently against the dangers of the earth's treasures, but legend has it that Young's emissary, one Thomas Roades, was shown gold mines in the high Uintas by the Ute Indians, mines believed to have been created by the Spanish in the 1700s with Indian slavery. The secret to their location is believed to have been buried and resurrected again and again in a series of mishaps, lost maps, premature deaths, accidents, and Indian resistance.

Testimonials of God's hidden purposes abound: perhaps the Mormons couldn't handle such wealth, or, my favorite, maybe Spanish gold fueled the Mormons out of financial misery in the early twentieth century. There was the deathbed map drawn by Roades's son. The maps stolen from Roades's great-great-grandson, Gale, after his death in 1988, and the empty briefcases found on the debauched sofa in his spent trailer home. Gale wasted twenty years blasting through tunnels all over the Uintas, dying divorced, cigarette-sunken, and poor.

Somewhere along the line the missing mines became known as "sacred," at least to those who cared. One man claimed he had found them but couldn't come up with a sufficient explanation for why he continued to work at the local grocery store and drive an old Chevy truck. At gas stations in the Uinta Basin, one can find copies of self-published books about gold mines in the mountains written by modern mountain men. One such book (okay, I confess that I bought one) shows a man dressed in full regalia:

he holds a shotgun on his shoulder and looks wistfully off into the distance (even though he is clearly inside a studio), wearing a chamois and Indian jewelry, with animal skins draping his chair. He writes of secret signs carved on trees and rocks, providing the reader initiation into occult knowledge that will tame the threat of wilderness and provide material recompense beyond all imagining. These are the Harlequin romances of the hard life of ranching country, the fantasies of generations whose fragile existence in the high drylands of the Colorado Plateau never found sufficient stability or trust in a modern government that catered to increasing numbers of professionals.

No doubt that local community is a value, but if it comes at the cost of trust in civic society, the wagons are circled and the world outside turns intolerably strange. Even teenage graffiti of nude women and pot pipes can be imagined as a lost Spanish language of orienteering. Rock art, rather than suggesting a depth of history that should humble the onlooker, becomes an invitation to exploit. Abandoned mine shafts are so many fragments of an unknown past, hieroglyphs whose decoded meaning passes from father to son. Once a source of humility and awe, nature's strangeness is reduced to a cartographic paper-and-parchment deed to genealogical rights of freedom from all cares. This is the pornographic version of Isaiah's promise. Pictures fill the pages of the books, leaving these poor sots and their hapless readers no peace as they fill themselves with toxic nostalgia for the mother lode of the past.

The fragments of the West's past could stand some reassembling but not because a coherent memory makes a man rich. Coherence isn't what's needed—it isn't a coherent history anyway—but rather the imagination to bring the land's strangeness into close familiarity again. The odd east/west trajectory of the Uintas across the Colorado Plateau, their drainage into the Green River and into a dead sea in the Great Basin—this geography was an empty and largely flat space on maps for close to four hundred years, a veritable *terra incognita*. The progression of images from the 1500s starts with a continent that looks like a small embryo, in the shape of a seahorse, morphing into its satellite shape; first sprout the southern regions of Baja, California, then northern Mexico, New Mexico, the Sierras, and the California coastline. Not until the late nineteenth century do we begin to see the geographical reality of the Great Basin.

It was a hard truth to swallow. The space was filled with myths of watersheds flowing to the Pacific, which was the great hope that had chased

Escalante across the southern stretch of the West in 1776 and later Lewis and Clark to the north in 1803. For almost a hundred years in the eighteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, rumors of a great river grow and spread. The Rio Buenaventura, the River of Good Fortune, was believed to extend from the northeast where the Uintas now lie to a large saline lake, the western limits of which were not known. The hope was that the river continued westward to the sea. Was this Good Fortune the Green River? The Provo? The Weber? The Bear? In any case, it did not offer the sought-after passage to the sea. The most mountainous region in the country and yet one of the driest, much of Utah was once a great lake of staggering proportions and before that an ocean. Now we erect civilization on an ancient raft built by silt and floating on disappearing water tables.

The Great Basin would be the promised land to that long line of Mormon pioneers who left the outer limits of the United States on foot to found their own kingdom. It seemed more than mere coincidence that they found themselves in a desert where a river connected a saline sea to a freshwater lake. The world, it turned out, was a mirror, divided by wide seas. New World metaphors would not suffer the existential anxiety of the Old World because this land could hear its own echoes. Let there be Jordan River, and there it was, a reversible world, a dead sea to the north instead of to the south, and let exile be a prodigal return, and they saw that it was good.

Seeing a satellite map of the Great Basin, you notice the lines of mountain ranges that move across its floor like so many waves, pages turning through time, belying times when the earth was still strange, when man didn't need outer space to conjure images of strange beings because home was strange enough. There is something profoundly truthful in these cartographical fictions, these pre-satellite attempts to imagine and name rivers and mountains. But this wouldn't be the first time fiction is more truthful than history. Take enough steps back in time and no river, lake, or mountain range retains its shape, a geological reality refracted in the imagination of mapmakers who, with the ever-changing flow of empirical knowledge, took the clay of the world into their hands like some god on the sixth day and declared the world good, and known.

Take the explorer Alexander von Humboldt, for example, who has a river named after him despite his having never stepped foot in the Great Basin. In 1809, Humboldt draws two lakes—a Salt Lake and a Lake Timpanogos

to the north. In subsequent mappings of the region by other explorers, this will change—the Salt Lake will appear to the north and Timpanogos to the south, and sometimes they appear on maps as the same lake. Might Timpanogos be Utah Lake, fed by the Provo? On Humboldt's map, we see a mountain range to the east and the words *Yutas-Tabeguachis Indians*. And then the stunning declaration next to the freshwater lake: "This lake, the limits of which are imperfectly known from the journals of Father Escalante, is perhaps the Teguayo Lake, from the borders of which, according to some Historians, the Azteques removed to the river Gila." Lower, in what is now southeastern Utah, we see the word *Aztlán*. The heartland of the Aztecs in Utah? At the confluence of the Green and Colorado, perhaps—that seems more likely, according to most historians—but Utah Lake, homeland now to tens of thousands of Mormons, homeland to the largest population of Icelanders outside of Iceland, Scandinavians of various stripes, Welsh and English descendents, all contracting skin cancer in the high thin air of the Mountain West at alarming rates? But also the gathering place for one of the fastest-growing Hispanic populations in the country. So why not?

The Dominguez-Escalante expedition coming up from Santa Fe was led by two Indians, a father and son he named Silvestre and Joaquin, who hailed from the shores of Utah Lake. They traveled down what is now Spanish Fork Canyon named in Escalante's honor and contemplated a thriving ecosystem rife with wildlife, fish, and ample freshwater supplies. A few years ago the Mormons erected a Catholic cross on a bluff there to honor the expedition. Escalante thought Utah Valley might sustain a population as numerous as Mexico City. He called it Valle de Nuestra Señora de Merced de Timpanogos. Careening into this new century, we can only hope he had no prophetic gifts. Their expedition was originally planned for July 4, 1776. Spanish explorers aided by Indians honored by Mormons and echoed by the arrival of contemporary Mexicans. Sounds more like Interdependence Day.

Mexicans and other Latin Americans who come to these Edenic shores today arrive too late to witness its wild offerings of 150 years ago, but they still hope for a Promised Land, a blossoming desert as their recompense, and perhaps belatedly fulfill Escalante's broken promise to return within the year. The fictions of history suggest that their arrival in Utah is a homecoming. If the Aztecs migrated from a territory to the north prior to their establishment of the city of Tenochtitlan in 1325, it suddenly seems more than coincidence that Anasazi ruins throughout Utah and the Southwest indicate a disappearance at some time roughly corresponding to an Aztec migration.

In Mexico City, I have seen the sacred codex that depicts the migration, a figure of a woman carrying a wrapped cloth on her back that grows into a child, while small footprints move relentlessly from left to right. A large tree is chopped down, and underneath its roots protrude small, anthropomorphic feet. That the Ute and Hopi languages appear related to Nahuatl has given some credence to this theory. How far north the migration began remains a mystery, but, who knows, it might have been Utah Valley, the Great Salt Lake, or the Uinta Mountain range.

So I wonder how a Promised Land can be a land for everyone. Armando Solórzano, a Mexican sociologist at the University of Utah, posits the idea of "Aztlán-Zion," a hybrid imaginary that connects the mythology of origins for Mormon, Mexicans, and Native Americans. This seems like a step in the right direction. The default solution so far has been to wish history away, especially any history that is not part of your own genealogy. But if genealogy teaches anything, it is how narrow and contingent our understanding of kinship is. The stories of Native Americans, Hispanic immigrants, the tales of Mormon pioneer faith and suffering, and many more deserve an equally compassionate ear. Disinterest in the human dignity of one group of people in the interest of the dignity of others hardly seems an adequate response.

Perhaps the lives wasted in pursuit of lost treasure can serve as a warning. Their treasure seeking is a manic search for deep, singular belonging that will be complete by answering the riddles of the land and of ancestry simultaneously, not to mention the freedom from responsibility to community that the treasures will purchase. The riddles of the human past are more interconnected than we often remember, but even more importantly, the riddles of the land belong to everyone who drinks the water of these mountains, and they will not be solved within the limited scope of any one particular tribal memory.

Like spawning fish pushing our way up our distinct tributaries, the water will eventually bring us to the same genesis. One has only to consider what happens when the whole landscape is turned into a hieroglyph of the story of one's exceptional liberation, when the land is a veil hiding the materialization of one's individual wishes. As much as I might try, I cannot convert these mountains and this Provo River into a sign of history I think I want to honor. What rides on these waters is the stuff of the past, to be sure, and it arrives on banks under my feet, but their refractions are

too innumerable for me to ever be sure of where I really am. And that's the peace they afford.

Taylor and I had turned to the east and were looking for another turn to the north to form a loop around the mountain, but it occurred to us at some point that we had not seen a tree carving for some time and had lost the trail altogether. We turned to the left again, rose up to the top of what felt like a mesa, and headed toward where we believed our car would be. We did not anticipate how the increasing cloud cover would scatter the light indistinctly in all directions nor how the undulating hills and turning ravines would defy our confidence in knowing where we had already been. Of course, we knew that we could always follow our trail back exactly as we had come, but we had reached the point of no return, since going back would likely get us to our car after dark. Snow began to fall heavily, erasing any hope of human memory in the landscape.

I pulled out my compass to orient us, hoping to overcome the mountains' deceptions. It was deep enough on this mesa, I told Taylor that for all we knew the snow was covering the Matisse nudes that had been our guide. "Good," he said, "it was bad art anyway." I didn't disagree, but it would have been nice to know someone had come this way before, that this was not unmapped, unclaimed. At one point, the snow beneath us suddenly shifted and we froze looking for a telltale crack somewhere around us, as if we might begin surfing at any moment. We weren't on a steep incline, so there was no immediate danger of an avalanche, but the varying density of snow layers beneath us left the ground unstable. The movement was accompanied by a loud hissing, as if a large and gaping air pocket in the middle of the snow had just expired through some small hole somewhere. This happened several more times as we crossed the top of this small mountain, each time stopping us in our tracks and making our hearts race.

Eventually the ground beneath began tipping downhill as we had expected. The descent was steep, dropping at some forty degrees through a dense forest of pines. Fallen trees hid themselves beneath the snowpack at unpredictable intervals. "Be careful," said Taylor. "A friend of mine snapped his leg on one of those skiing." After taking a few more seemingly eternal detours left and right, we were rewarded with the trail that runs along Little South Fork at the mouth of the canyon. The bad news was that it looked like we

were a good hour from the car, and my legs had nothing left. Taylor seemed eternally chipper, and as we climbed some of the last hills, I told him I could no longer converse until we were on the final descent.

We finally arrived, of course, but significantly later than we had hoped, and all of a sudden my evening's obligations fell heavily on my mind. I drove frantically to a phone to excuse my absence from dinner and from some church obligations I had that night. Amy didn't seem bothered, but then again, I had learned that didn't always mean she wasn't. She was determined to be supportive of my need to explore, but I had to worry if it was starting to take a toll because it was unlikely she would tell me in time to make needed adjustments. We had hiked for over seven hours in deep snow, and I had seen far more evidence of the power and depth of mountain precipitation and had experienced far more sensation than I had bargained for. Maybe it was my Mormon propensity for domestic guilt, but when I returned home to Amy—busy and unreadable as usual—and my house abuzz with the usual evening activities of piano and violin practicing, chores, and bedtime routines, I couldn't escape feeling selfish both for the pleasures I had experienced and for my utter exhaustion. At least I knew that I had purchased some emotional fuel to push me through the coming onslaught of December's long dark. That night Amy and I were both too tired to talk much, but lying next to her warmth in bed, I could still feel my blood flushed to the edges of my skin, healing the muscles, warming the extremities, and working to assimilate my deepened awareness of the snowpack.

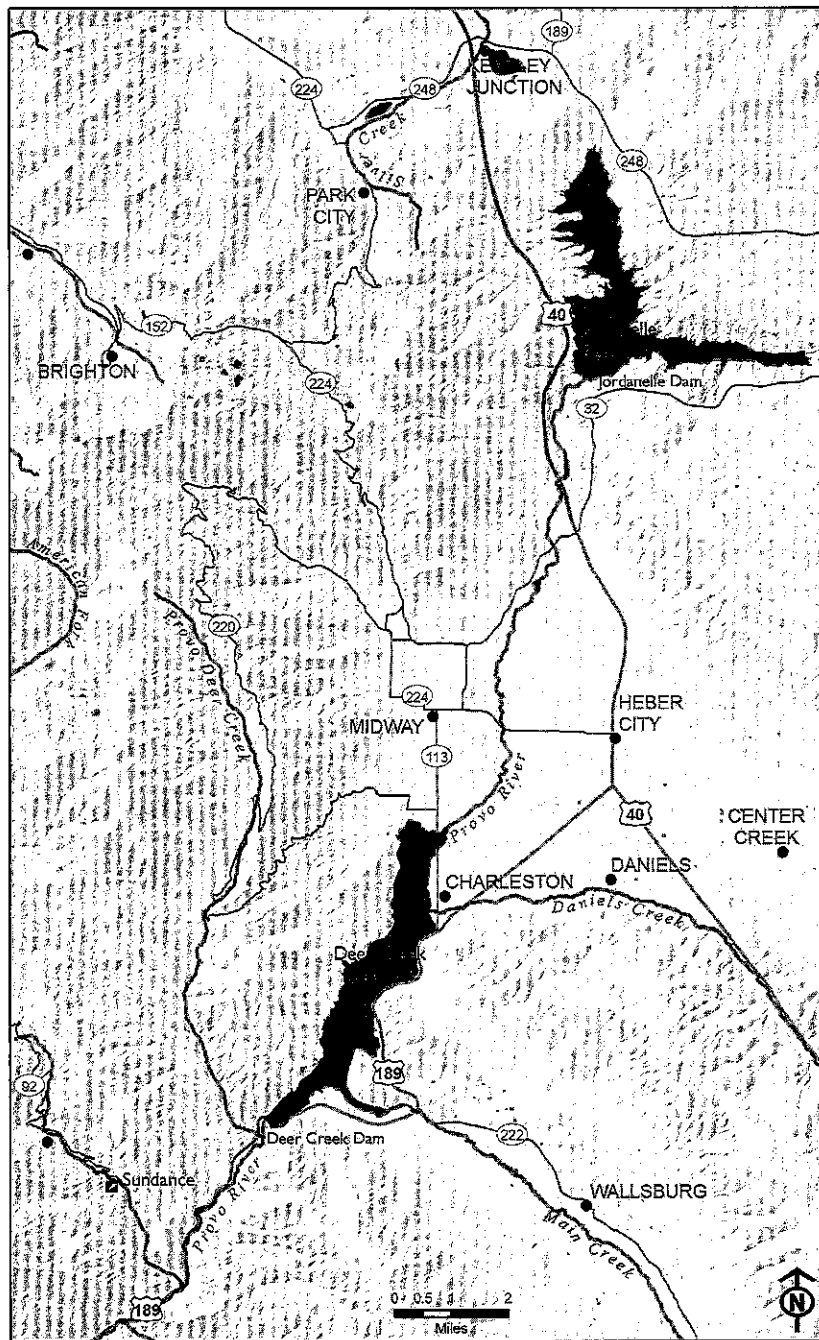
Interlude



I HAD BEEN PRETTY METHODICAL ABOUT MY TRIPS, WORKING MY WAY down from the upper reaches of the Provo River watershed to my home in Utah Valley, but I couldn't resist an invitation to move in the opposite direction and drive in the depth of winter out to Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* on the north shore of the Great Salt Lake. This would be an opportunity to compare the heights of the watershed in winter with its ultimate culmination at the depths of this New World Dead Sea. The goal was to arrive at the site by dawn, so my friend Tom and a scholar from the Getty picked me up before five a.m. This was my first descent, since moving to Utah, to the shoreline of the Salt Lake, and I was eager to see the saline stillness of the water that begins on the western half of the north and south slopes of the Uinta range and gathers force from the Wasatch Front.

On the drive, we discussed the deep inversion we have been trapped in for a few weeks, a topic on everyone's lips these days. I mentioned one expert's claim that depression at this time is not due to seeing gray, polluted light and breathing dirt for days on end but simply to the longer nights of winter. Suffering myself from an unprecedented and growing suffocation, I mention that it seems like insisting on the technicality that it was pneumonia, not cancer, that killed the patient ravaged by chemotherapy.

After more than two hours of driving, we left the highway and started west until we arrived at Promontory Point. Glances in all directions revealed no sign of people anywhere, just open space surrounded in the far distance by rings of mountains. From there we ventured south on a ranching road for what seemed like an hour, driving over rough terrain in what appeared to be about two feet of snow. The sky above us was already glowing from the dawn light, and the car indicated that the temperature outside was hovering around zero degrees, at one point reaching as low as six below. Fortunately we were in a Jeep that managed the snow well. We hit patches of intense fog on and off as we drew nearer to the lake, never having the assurance until we finally arrived that we would be able to see anything at all.



THE MIDDLE PROVO RIVER IN HEBER VALLEY

LIGHT CASTS SHADOWS ACROSS THE WHITE SURFACE OF THE TABLECLOTH, giving the appearance of weight to the cooked flesh of some fowl, life to the juicy grapes in the basket, and fluidity to the undisturbed water poised in the goblet. Caravaggio's beardless, almost adolescent Savior raises his hand in a declarative that seems to say, Here, now, this moment of the flesh is the eternal substance, the restored life of things, everything as it once was, as it will always be.

On a university stint in London, I found myself transfixed by this invented image of the supper at Emmaus, hanging on the wall of the National Gallery, a fictional representation of a story repeated through the centuries of a meal shared with the resurrected Lord, the moment of revelation, this "here, now" as restoration after our patient waiting. Luke says that the Lord ate with two men but Caravaggio adds a third, a man standing over Christ's shoulder in the shadows who seems intent on fixing his eyes on Christ, trusting that his senses will eventually tell him how to react to what he has seen. The disciple seated to the left pushes off of his elbows from the impact. His gaze is focused on the food as if the event has transformed his relationship to the task of feeding himself. The man seated on the right throws his arms out as if to try to take in the whole of it, staring indirectly at the entire scene of this Immanuel at this small table. Caravaggio will spend the few years that remain for him still making the attempt, I think. I wonder if art gives substance to dreams or if divine revelation confirms the reality of illusions. The senses mark the bodily limits of our knowing but perhaps, too, they are the portals of contact with the spirit.

Mormonism is a religion of restoration, not reformation, which is a bit like saying that its motion is not with but against the grain of the ripples of water a pebble stirs. It seeks to go back to that moment of impact when spirit first moved upon the face of the waters. This is the faith of all forms of knowledge, the trust in what Marilynne Robinson calls the "law of completion." It is to believe that moving water can tell the story of its rocky origins, that somewhere in the microcosmic structures of its flowing particles,

somewhere in the play between the sound of its splashing surface and its gurgling undertones beneath, is the genetic code of the cosmos itself. It is to believe that stillness wants motion, and motion wants stillness, that sands and silt as broken shards are already and always the stuff of the whole, still earth.

If Christ is the cornerstone dropped in the pools of time, restoration becomes a reckoning with the fragmentations that his earth-shattering contact with the human and natural realm of this life has caused. It is to be about the business of gathering the broken mirror of human experience in order to imagine in its rough assemblage the face of the divine. If there is no thought that remains forgotten and all things ever imagined some day will come to remembrance, revelation is a restoration of what was always known. This is, anyway, the hope of art and the faith of religion.

The man looking on is mesmerized by the glistening sweat of the grapes, by the way the circle of light refracts through the carafe of water, spills onto the tablecloth, and reflects again onto the glass, the way the surfaces of all things refuse opacity. All this in the presence of a God in the flesh. He is struck, as I am, by the oxymoron of eternal transience. It is the work of restoration to have the eye of a William Blake, in his "Auguries of Innocence," a poem I return to again and again:

To see a World in a grain of sand,
And a Heaven in a wild flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an Hour.

And I wonder if this feels like a kind of repentance, an awareness that time inevitably runs short. Perhaps what blinds us is a homing desire for stasis, control, for nature as commodity, a refusal of atonement. As Blake puts it simply:

A robin redbreast in a cage
Puts all heaven in a rage.

The scarcity of water makes home vulnerable, of course, but as the most fluid of nature's offerings, water is also the most defiant of attempts to hold it still. Red canyon walls throughout the deserts of southern Utah are stony, palpable memorials to the invisible, sculpting hand of the water that has

escaped. Everything I see is really only a museum to a great ocean floor, shells crushed into stone at seven thousand feet of elevation. Arid country requires an imagination of the not-there-anymore, but once the scales fall, cascades drop before the eyes and tremulous, aching arteries quiver beneath every step. Then it becomes a matter of keeping your head above the water.

It is certainly a lot easier to remember the rule of water after an intense winter storm. Winter semester was a few days off, the kids were restless, and we had just received a spectacular storm on New Year's Eve. The next morning presented a chance to explore Heber Valley and the Middle Provo. Assembled into the car first thing in the morning, we drove the forty minutes to Midway to rent snowshoes near Wasatch State Park where we could hike in the deep powder. Amy and I had only been snowshoeing a few times before, but it was a first for all of the children. We were most unsure about how Sam, just days away from turning five, would handle it. But the store had snowshoes of all sizes, some small enough, it seemed, to fit a large doll, and Sam was game.

The sky was a mix of departing storm clouds, hovering mists wrapped around the foothills, and cobalt blue expanses with bright sun piercing the clouds and radiating on the intense white surface of the snow. Large billows of snow hung heavy on tree branches drooping into the street, its surface finally warming and melting after a seemingly unstoppable storm had shut down the area's residents for the past two days. Portions of the air filled with still-falling snow wherever darker clouds still lingered, creating the impression of Turner's sublime brushstrokes of white density falling from a dissipating threat in the sky.

The eastern face of Timpanogos towers over this valley from the west, and yet it was shrouded almost entirely by the clouds, only hinting at its presence. I had been in this valley many times, but it looked entirely new and strange, which is the paradox, of course, of intense snowfall, since the monotonous sameness of white can spread across the world and make it seem reborn and perpetually strange.

We stopped in a plowed clearing where a handful of cars were already parked near the entrance and put on the shoes. As we entered the park, we immediately found ourselves in deep powder, deep enough to exhaust the hips from the high stepping such snowshoeing requires. We went in order of weight and height, I first, then Amy, Eliza, Paige, Camilla, and Sam in the

rear, so that the snow would be increasingly packed down for the smaller kids. Even so, the snow was so dry and light, as it often is in this climate and at this altitude, it felt as if we were just temporarily clearing downy feathers. Although we made several efforts at a formal fight, snowballs were virtually impossible to make. The cold was unrelenting, the kind that pierces the lungs, burns the eyes, and aches in the bones, but as the trail began to ascend in the deep powder, our bodies exerted enough energy to warm us up.

By the time we had gone only a quarter of a mile or so, we were shedding coats while steam seeped through the edges of our clothing, off of our necks and faces, and into the winter light. The kids groaned a bit at the beginning, so Amy and I worked up a few games to keep them distracted. We formed a starting line and I timed foot races. Everyone paired up against everyone else, running until we were exhausted and giddy. Occasionally, we ventured away to explore ravines, willow groves, and the protection of large pines that could be shaken to create the stage effect of a blizzard. We pulled a sled to provide a break for anyone who needed it.

Amy and I had drifted to the back as we watched the kids tumble their way down the back side of the loop we had taken. After a teenage life of meandering passions and questionable choices, an abrupt shock at age eighteen with the loss of my brother and my awareness of my mortality, and some prolonged soul-searching and repentance, I finally found myself living a life of faith and by my early twenties in love with this woman. The self-disgust and frustration with my imperfect self-control has never entirely left me, and it remains a temptation to sink into despair at the thought that real change—a new creature with a new heart—might be an illusion. But now I have four children, new lives brought into the world, and an entirely new set of human horizons to worry about.

There is redemption in this work and play. It is not that I couldn't have had different children and a different life or that no other happiness would have been possible for me, but I tried haltingly to express something of my gratitude for the particular life we had forged together and for the particular joy of these children here in front of us, all of which was made possible by her willingness to love someone who had been off the beaten path of traditional Mormon clean living. I reminded her of the conversation we had when we were dating that had pierced me to the bone. Many years ago now, she was telling me about a conversation she had with two of her girlfriends when they were in their teens. One of them had taken a rather dogmatic

view about former sins she would never tolerate in a future husband, and Amy and the other friend had tried to soften her attitude.

"Even if he fully repented?" Amy had asked.

"Yes, even if. I just don't want that baggage."

"Then you don't really believe in the Atonement," the other friend responded. Amy told me this story before she knew of my particular past mistakes, and it was a godsend. It gave me the confidence to believe that even though repentance doesn't make things exactly as they could have been, it is only by forgiving ourselves and others that we give change a chance.

Stopped by a tree where she could trace animal tracks in the snow, Camilla announced:

"I want to be a biologist, or a veterinarian. I think it would be fun."

"You would make a good one. You are always gentle with animals," said Amy.

We both remembered a similar moment when she was even younger, squatting down and pouring red sand through her fingers in southern Utah on a family hike. "I love the desert," she had said, all of five years old and sounding like a monk in meditation. She has always been a quiet, reflective child, one given to moments of surprising verbal clarity. For her sake, I wish pets and farm livestock were not all that remains of human/animal relations in a hemisphere that saw no pigs, horses, or cattle until the advent of Spanish explorations in the sixteenth century. These waters provided sanctuary for elk, moose, bobcats, and lions, and sustained native whitefish, Bonneville cutthroat, mottled sculpin, and other fish with histories that dwarf any of our documented human ancestries. The big game have adapted to the higher reaches of the surrounding mountains, and the waters are now overrun by brown, brook, and rainbow trout, smallmouth bass, carp, and a host of others; these are the species introduced from other areas of the Americas or Europe that mirror the majority of the American population's deep history of transplantation.

There is an inescapable feeling of having been cheated or of intentionally cheating myself whenever I have caught introduced trout in high mountain lakes and streams. Helicopters fly over the high Uinta range and drop fingerlings into the lakes for fools like me seeking their Edens. A hatchery lies just a few miles from where we were snowshoeing. Their fish are recognized most often by one clipped side fin. But only 1 percent of all stocked fish are dropped in the high Uinta wilderness and 6 percent into the streams; 93 percent go to the reservoirs which are increasingly the recreational attraction.²⁶

While the majority of these fish are not native to Utah, without the hatcheries, no protection of native species would occur at all. These kickback benefits come from strange parasitical branches of the government, quietly trying to undo the damage of reclamation. These hatcheries have the difficult task of cleaning up after the government as a government entity, protecting endangered species while trying to meet the demand for sustainable recreational opportunities. It's not exactly a politics of moral purity, but then again, what is? Ever since we decided in favor of Gifford Pinchot's model of management over John Muir's notion of preservation, we have worked in the interest of commercially defined species and separable territories and made the task of restoring the well-being of systems a steep mountain of repentance we need to climb.²⁷

I like to think that such repentance is happening right here. From above Heber Valley that day, Amy and I could see the Provo wending in uneven and dark braids across the white surface of the valley floor. Although it appears wild, it is the careful work of bulldozers, engineers, biologists, and landscape architects, a kind of ecologically sound version of the English landscape style of Capability Brown. What is so moving about these restoration efforts on the Middle Provo is not the prospect of a perfect restitution but a performance of re-creation. Unlike continued recreational pleasure at the expense of a sense of place, of which there is no shortage in these parts, these performances are a turning back against the tide of our oblivious tendencies, an imperfect but respectful learning of what our presence in this place has meant and an acknowledgment of the dynamic force of autonomous life systems.

Science is our best source of information, but we all know it is insufficient. We wouldn't act on science without faith, faith that acting self-consciously and according to good principle even with incomplete knowledge is still the right thing to do. This is not what it means to dismiss science in the interest of religious dogma. It is to admit that we act on the basis of what we think we know, knowing also that we take human, moral risk. Better to discover our humanity in the effort of restoration than to insist on a humanity defined by its deafness to the cries in the wilderness.

A restoration in Christian theology is also deeply eschatological; it signifies the end of all things, the great gathering and reconstitution of the broken body of the earth and of each living thing. It is a shame, really, how abused this concept has been with regard to environmental degradation. It is as if some Christians anticipate and welcome the destructions prophesied

in the Bible, as if it is their Christian duty to hurry along the end of things with their own destructive behavior. God has promised a new earth, a new heaven, so no point in preserving what we know is destined to die, or so the logic goes.

But there is a shifting tide in Christianity—Baptists, Lutherans, Catholics, Evangelicals, and others joining the conservationist chorus—which would suggest that eschatology does not have to cause apathy. The prospect of an end to things might instead imbue the physical world with a deep and abiding ambiguity. The world *is* but it is also *not yet*, and to believe in an end dictated by a Creator is to see that nature's particulars flirt with what could be, which is not the same thing as arguing that nature is a microcosm of the foretold fulfillment. Nature is not yet perfect, not always beautiful, always just beyond our full understanding, and it might benefit from our best efforts to restore it. A going back, a repentance, is also a going forth, a movement toward fulfillment whereby we remake the fragments of experience into a quilted whole. Anticipated endings help to give our actions moral meaning. That is the paradox of what Blake means when he writes of an "eternity in an hour" or of Caravaggio's Christ eating among us.

Deep in the visions and translations of the seer, Joseph Smith, even many Mormons have missed the implications of the belief that the new earth and new heaven would be this earth, this place here, now.²⁸ Brigham Young at least understood him: "The earth is very good in and of itself, and has abided a celestial law; consequently, we should not despise it, nor have desire to leave it, but rather desire and strive to obey the same law the earth abides.... We are for the kingdom of God, and are not going to the moon, nor to any other planet pertaining to this solar system.... This earth is the home he has prepared for us." The theology of such a restoration promises that the very stuff of our mortal lives will become the stuff of our heavenly existence. This has to mean something more than obliterating our mistakes. It seeks to make strengths out of our weaknesses. There is no room in such a theology for nihilistic anticipation and hope for the coming destruction of the earth. This is a philosophy of hope, hope that mundane, physical life, when properly cared for, might become the stuff of eternity.

This is what Joseph perhaps had in mind in his 1843 revelation: "That same sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy."²⁹ God and his angels are not outside of space and time but in a particular space at a particular moment. They contemplate the past, present, and future because

they stand on a globe like a sea of glass and fire; heaven is an earth that has become a great seer stone, which means that nothing, no one person, brother, sister, son or daughter, no animal or stone, is lost. A cosmic move is in store for this earth, too, which God will inhabit after it will similarly be made "like unto crystal."³⁰

Somewhere along the way as Amy and I drove the family down Provo Canyon after snowshoeing, we slipped inside of the canopy of inverted and dirty air. The mountains around us lost their clarity and the density of the air ahead was palpable, visible. The inside of our van was still steaming from everyone's sweat, and there was the sound of proud accomplishment in the way the children were laughing. I caught glimpses of new housing developments cropping up like weeds where orchards once abounded. Upon their incomplete wooden frames hung the drooping snow. I have seen the green-filtered images of real estate porn, air-brushed pictures of white stucco homes with giddy children playing on deep green carpets of pleasure, the billboards promising heaven on earth. "Eight children. All daughters. 120 pairs of shoes. HUGE walk-in closets." Sounds like Nirvana, to some perhaps. But if Christianity teaches that we shouldn't pretend to know when or how nature's end is coming, we also can't afford to build false Edens.

The more extreme and sometimes more vocal folks—doomsday environmentalists and militant millennialists—seem to be offering the same package of despair and the same refusal to try to live up to the challenge of having to act with incomplete knowledge. Their tenets include a bottomless nostalgia for a world we cannot recover, a fundamental rejection of the gifts of life, and a paranoid distrust of the vast majority of humanity, and neither group seems to have cornered the market yet on these symptoms of hopelessness. Intended or not, the implication of their arguments can become the same: stop acting in the interest of the whole of humanity and get yourself your own slice of paradise before someone else takes it away.

An unsettled feeling surfaced like the vestiges of a suppressed but still-raging inner battle. A battle of what exactly? A battle, perhaps, between the intensity of pleasure I experience in this place, its remarkable beauty and quality of life, and the nagging feeling that it won't last, that we have already done too much damage. I am undeniably happy to live here, but there is always a part of me that feels for those who never have been. I still remember John's words about never feeling fully accepted. Was that his neurosis or our failure?

I thought, too, of how this place has irrevocably shaped my relationships: my oldest brother who left Connecticut and came to college at the University of Utah just at the onset of deep, clinical mental illness and who is now buried in Salt Lake City; my other brother, who shares my love for Utah's landscapes but does not share my religion; my parents, who were more comfortable in church in the diversity of Connecticut and Miami than here in Utah where they have retired; Amy, who sometimes struggles to understand my emotional intensity and keeps searching for her own. And perhaps most importantly, our children who seem so well adjusted and so happy compared to me when I was their age that I can scarcely believe their happiness is real. I think, too, of my grandfather's first vacation on the river, his banking success in New York, his big house and live-in nannies on Long Island, such a far cry from his brick-mason father; and James Stratton's triumphant peach orchards shortly after the eviction of the Indians from Utah Valley.

Sometimes it feels as if even the beauty of this place will never be enough to draw me out of this inner world of my mind where I am haunted by these paradoxes. Worse still, although this place remains beautiful, its occasional ugliness is often enough to destroy my inner life altogether. My joys seemed to wither at the palpable sight of the substitute paradisiacal world I could see from our van, this world we have built for ourselves and this civilization that values and delineates unique lives but not life collectively, which is to say no life at all.

It didn't take the early Mormon settlers more than a few years before they fell into a spiritual stupor. A wave of repentance swept across the region, inspired by the preaching of church leaders, which led thousands to be rebaptized in a show of recommitment. Like successful marriages, rituals of renewal are needed to come close again to that original moment of rediscovered innocence, or else the complexity of life will destroy the union. I decided it was time for a visit to the temple again. The temple provided for the early Saints the forum for a ritualized restoration of the very foundational moments of the Earth's creation, and it is still my chance for renewal. Something about the growing ease and familiarity of a place or a relationship fosters a complacency that you must struggle against through re-creations of the primordial. As I looked at Amy while she drove and listened to the children in the back, I thought that if I am not careful, the very things and people I love can become virtually unknowable.

Not all auguries renew moral strength. The reading of signs in the heavens or in the entrails of rodents and birds was an old science of escaping the necessity of faith and moral judgment in order to minimize the risks of living, much like psychics, horoscopes, or life insurance plans today. We want to know which battles to fight, whom to trust, how to proceed with hope in the moral murkiness of a politically, culturally, and socially complex world. Like Oedipus, what we would most like to read are signs that ensure both our staying power and our innocence, but if his fate is any indication, the desire for innocence must not outweigh the willingness to accept accountability for judgment and choice. True auguries point to the promises you can trust in but they also outline your responsibilities. Returning again to Blake's "Auguries of Innocence," I am reminded that I must start by uncaging nature. His couplets do not urge upon me merely an agenda of returning to natural purity and rarity, but an ethics of accountability:

A dog starved at his master's gate

Predicts the ruin of the state

.....

Kill not the moth nor the butterfly

For the Last Judgement draweth nigh.

I never know if I should feel elation or despair when I look upon these mountains rising above the crowded and scarred valley floor with such staggering beauty. Blake's poem would suggest that a recovery of innocence is achieved by learning to balance and commingle despair and hope:

Joy and woe are woven fine,

A clothing for the soul divine,

Under every grief and pine

Runs a joy with silken twine.

This is the singular meaning of a weeping and triumphant Savior, a God in the flesh. He isn't the promise of delivery from our sorrows but rather of joy in and through them. Maybe in the age of global environmental degradation, we have fallen out of our humanistic trance and we can't look at the works of our own hands any longer in categorical admiration. This growing distaste for our mistakes, however, is no reason to disparage ourselves. We never should have wanted auguries of human innocence in the first place.

Our discovery of the magnitude of our mistakes is part of our journey from ambivalence to acceptance regarding our own irrevocable humanity. Love that does not separate humanity from the creation is love that focuses on the one person, not the ninety-nine, and that notices the sparrow's fall. This is the only love capable of accepting that our actions, no matter how well intended, may always require contrition and restoration.

Despite the dirty slush splashing up from the side of the van and the dull winter grayness that had settled over the valley, my mind returned to the Middle Provo. The first time I was able to witness the beginnings of the restoration work was with John. I was more experienced by that time and in little need of his help, but I still appreciated his occasional coaching. It was never stifling, especially since his gift was generous praise. I didn't know much about the restoration at the time. All I knew was that John had been telling me about the blue-ribbon waters of that stretch of the river and was eager to show me around. As we wandered among the stone-covered riverbanks of the Provo, I felt that perpetually adolescent excitement in turning a bend and fishing another new stretch of the river. It was late in the fall and the cottonwoods had lost almost all of their brilliant yellow leaves, but enough remained in the slanted light and the hard autumn air to provide a canopy of brilliance. The sky was unpredictable all day, posturing as winter with sudden drops of temperature and then suddenly permitting the warm breath of the sun on our backs.

We fished below Jordanelle, taking turns on holes, congratulating each other on our successes and admiring the beauty of the river. Underdressed as usual, I was shivering from the sudden gusts of wind in the shadows of the cold, dark water. At one point, after having caught a brown trout and releasing it at my side, I found my line curling around my legs in the water. My reeling in was sloppy, since I opted to strip the line in by bare hand instead of using the crank on my reel. I didn't want John to see the mess I was in. Fighting an impulse to feel impatient with the tangle I created for myself and frustrated that it had begun to rain lightly, I turned downstream to see where we had fished.

Small diamond sparkles of rain dropped from the sky like threaded beads in the angling light; the yellows of the cottonwoods stood in proximate contrast to the dark woods to the south enshrouded in clouds. As the raindrops hit a bed of large, worn river rock, lying on the north bank like loaves

of bread, the stones turned a brilliant pink as if polished into great glass erratic. I have never seen the faces of the dead and only in dreams or in my mind have I thought I heard their voices, but I believe in the simultaneity of place I have learned since a child: this planet is my home away from home, my desired future heavenly home, and the way station for the dead awaiting the day of transfiguration.³¹ Turns out this planet is more crowded than most know. Something in the opening of the pores, the chill of the bones in mountain water, makes me believe in the nearness of the long absent, ringing in the heart-thrumming of my own veins.

This strange transmutation of time, this restoration of breath and palpitation to the still stone, I had hoped it all might last. I could hear John upstream saying something about the fish, but the rush of water and wind mingled all sounds as one. I called to him to point out the river we had just passed through. After I gathered my line in, I turned again to soak in the brittle mood behind me, but it was gone. The quickening mountain air had changed again and the blushing stones had rolled back into a flushing span of indistinction. I stepped out of the river to gather some warmth from the stones and watched while John continued casting patiently upstream. I began to compose a fragment of a poem in my mind:

hoping perhaps to rewind us
since memory of light starkly
upbraids the course of time behind us.

John is no longer here and yet that moment, like a singular shard of broken crystal, remains fixed in my memory. I could see that moment through my window pane and through the snow as my family and I made our way home. And I could hear John's voice mingling with the sound of the water. The senses are what help to maintain that clarity against the erosions of time, but I suppose it stays with me too because it was that day that John announced with only the most cryptic of explanations that he would be leaving for Madison and I began to understand that there were things in John's life he hadn't yet forgiven himself for. I am not sure how many more times we fished before he left, but it seems that it is my last, purest memory of him in the water. He still can't bring himself to step foot in this state or in the Provo again.

If the general rule of nature is its opacity, religion and science beg us to dream otherwise. The temptation is to want to resolve this tension prematurely, which is why I need the patience of metaphor. Like but unlike, nature offers glimpses, promises, of a future fulfillment and reasons for hope, but in this free and forbearing universe I can see what has been engineered, distorted, beautified, bought and sold and no one yet struck dumb by avenging angels who have come to warn of the coming burning. But action with impunity is the illusion of those fools who are offended by the strangeness of the physical mystery. The great poet Pablo Neruda's atheism led him at the end of his life to stare at shells and stones. The closer he looked at the flotsam and jetsam of the sea and the broken material of geology, however, the more he found himself staring into the abysses of eternity and the more his existentialist certainties began to resemble the uncertainty of religious faith:

to be that which I love, the naked
presence of the sun on the boulder,
and that which grows and grows without knowing
that it cannot stop growing.³²

Which is another way of saying that to see nature is to look at eternity through a glass darkly. Both mirror and window, it is the physical border of our imagination and the beginning intimations of the infinite. To capture its time-bound glimpses of the timeless in images or words is the abiding of faith, hope, and most importantly, charity...the holding forth, the forbearance. Great art, like great religion, is born out of and seeks to encompass contradiction without recourse to facile reconciliations. To attempt to rewind and defy time is the stated desire to go back always again to the beginning, to trace our human steps, which are also missteps, in the sand. It wouldn't hurt to remember that just because we are facing a global environmental crisis does not mean that we are the first generation of humanity to learn that nature is a promise that teaches us to repent before it is too late. The key is not to be the last.

The twentieth century has gone down in history for a number of ignominious as well as heroic events, but certainly one of its more troubling legacies is its treatment of rivers. As agriculture gave way to industry and massive development of cities, water was victim to an increasingly private and individualistic conceptualization of property. Consequently, rivers suffered greater transformation than in the previous ten thousand years. They

were straightened, diked, and dammed, and where I live water was transported from less populous areas and fed into the Provo, all to provide more space for homes, more safety from floods to homeowners, and reservoirs to ensure the perpetuity of modernization. And as Donald Worster reminds us, the Mormons played no small role in this harnessing of water's wild and unpredictable ways, seeing dams and dikes as the way of the Lord.³³ Several small hydroelectric dams were built on the Provo early in the century, and then two major dams were built, one in the 1940s and the other in the 1990s.

Within a century of the arrival of the white man, 95 percent of the native species in the river and of Utah Lake went extinct, this despite the fact that it had been the meat of the native fish of the river and lake that provided for humans for thousands of years and saved the lives of the pioneers in those early, hunger-ridden years of settlement. But this is only the most overt and measurable of consequences. Aquatic species worldwide are going extinct at much faster rates than terrestrials. When the fish go, that means the invertebrates, zooplankton, plants, and whole swaths of life go, too.

Rivers are unruly by nature, of course, especially when they are subject to the ebb and flow of snowpack in mountain wilderness and when they drop quickly and sometimes with crushing violence. In the case of the Provo, what was once a meandering, braided series of cuts and turns that increased in variety, biodiversity, and breadth as the river fell from high elevations and spread across each flatland with increasing strength, is now what my colleague and local restoration ecologist, Mark Belk, described to me as a "moving bathtub," a straight shot of water with decreasing biodiversity.

In the middle of the century, the Army Corps of Engineers did their level best to teach the river to behave with a series of dikes that rippapped it like some intransigent adolescent who, accustomed to slouching at the dinner table, is forced to wear a back brace. This was done perhaps not out of any overt malice but in profound ignorance of what a river is and what it does. We now know its health must be measured in terms of the entire watershed over the course of its dynamically changing shape through time, upstream and downstream, from the surface to the subsurface, and by its relation to the riparian communities it spawns alongside.

A river is water, yes, but it is also soil, plant, and animal life—a watershed. Seeing it requires something more than merely historical or aesthetic lenses. It requires the poet's eye. Zooplankton, invertebrates, fish, mammals, vegetation, fowl, all respond to and even depend on a river's unpredictable and

uneven flow, its fluctuations in temperature, and its moods of violent overflow, as well as its vulnerability to drought. So, too, the invisible and larger supply of groundwater beneath our feet. Variety in contour is the rule of water left to run its own course as it spills over rocks, carries dead wood and plant life, turns back and braids itself around slight elevations. Its life, in other words, depends on chance, even chaos. This enhances the differences in temperatures, velocity, and volume of flow that provide habitats for a broad diversity of life.

But tolerating a river's unpredictability is like tolerating the bald facts of mortality itself. Consider the two meanings of Isaiah's recompenses: God's gift of grace of a blossoming desert—the earth as home, as paradise—and God's vengeance on a wicked world—the earth as exile, as wilderness. It would seem necessary to learn tolerance for the fact that we are never far from either one. We need an imagination of deep time, but try selling the merits of deep time to the homeowner on a floodplain or to the politician running for election on a platform of economic progress.

It was only thirty years ago that some Utahns entertained the proposition that the Provo River could deliver its water more effectively if it were piped underground, which is sort of like deciding to forsake food in order to get your daily nutrition intravenously or with pills. It took the work of Robert Redford and Sam Rushforth, an ecologist at BYU at the time, and others to convince people of the shortsightedness of the proposal, not to mention its aesthetic impoverishment. But this new practice of environmental repentance, the deep art of ecological restoration, is more than preservation; it reshapes rivers to their complex serpentine forms, allows life to go about its business of promoting habitat diversity, and mitigates against the effects of climate change. A way of saying, no, not yet, not here. Mark Belk, for one, believes it is not merely his scientific duty but his Mormon stewardship to be, as he wryly puts it, "out to save the world, one trash fish at a time."

Human developments have also placed limits on the progress of such efforts, but ecological restoration at least signals a penitent response to Malachi's threats. Repentance begins with recognition of sin but ends when self-loathing is overcome by love. If every species is a living creative response to a particular environment, protecting species is protecting the integrity of a system as it moves through evolutionary time. Ecological restoration, unlike the work on the Sistine Chapel, is not a scraping away of time's effects on the surface of a static work of beauty; it is instead a stepping into the flow of time and watching the diversity of life our restitutions

spawn. It is a fundamental recognition of ongoing creation, something unimaginable within a theology of an *ex nihilo* creation.

Creationists, in their shallow temporal reckoning, cry foul since a seeming snap of the fingers is enough to explain the young and static world around us. Not for Joseph Smith whose understanding of the creation as organized matter accrues in potency with increasing understanding of the emergence of a world of complexity, extravagance, and beauty in deep time: "The pure principles of element are principles which can never be destroyed; they may be organized and re-organized, but not destroyed. They had no beginning and can have no end."³⁴

The audacity of the prophet Joseph is his claim to have restored an original form of Christianity, and that would have to include Christianity's original ecological understanding. Was there an ecological apostasy? Are we perhaps just beginning to understand the ecological principles he restored? If the creation bears witness to a creator, it would seem that even the eternity of God and his works are inherently temporal. Spiritual work this is, this patient assent to what is. A working back along the path that first led us away from this ticking earth. Healing the earth, yes. But a restoration of ourselves, too.

In the reclamation politics of the Colorado River and the struggle for state autonomy, Utah politicians worked to arrange what became known as the Central Utah Project (CUP), a means to assure ample water supplies for the Wasatch Front and the state's many agricultural industries. After siphoning water from the Strawberry Valley, farmers in Heber Valley had reduced the middle stretch of the Provo between Jordanelle and Deer Creek to little more than a canal. But on the hillside of Wasatch State Park, what Amy and I witnessed was a winding stretch of water through a wide swath of vegetated landscape that looked more like the riparian community the river once fostered. Federal mitigation funds for CUP provide a tithe on the costs of human engineering of water sources in Utah to help restore the river to its snakelike form and the riparian vegetation that once provided home to animal life.

The only reason ecologists were able to determine our effects of disturbance was because of a homeowner along the river who, when approached by the Army Corps of Engineers, refused their services. He was emphatically determined to leave his stretch of the river untouched, even if it made him vulnerable to floods. With these government funds they were able to compare the diversity of life in this native, serpentine stretch with the rest of the

river and begin buying up surrounding property to create a corridor wide enough to mimic the ecological integrity they found there.

As one walks along the riverbank now one sees shapes formed by the turning river, banks of planted native vegetation of willows, cottonwoods, and cattails, bogs artificially created to the side of many of the steeper turns, and uneven dikes built up to look like carved floodplains of old, backwaters and small streams breaking free of the river and joining up downriver. All signs show that wildlife is returning. I have crossed meadows of high grass while black field mice scurried underfoot and an osprey looked on, perched in his nest atop a dead cottonwood. I have witnessed a snake holding a small fish in his mouth at the riverbank, waiting for us to pass before he emerged out of the water and slithered over the rocks into the brush.

Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* is a fixed endpoint that obtains its visual effect by marking the last sign of a watershed's dynamism: the rising and falling of the Salt Lake. This earth art of the river, on the other hand, aims not for visual but for ecological effect. It seeks to restore the integrity of the watershed itself, to place human labor within an autonomous system of life. It is re-creation. The river will never be the same, of course, and something of the newness of the cuts in the soil and the hints of human hands in the not-yet-thickened vegetation, like transplanted hair follicles on the bald pate, tells you that this is a performance, a moving if incomplete gesture of penitence. Like much modern art, it leaves enough evidence that it is a pretense, a staged and cagey re-creation of the world as Adam might have first known it, an as-if Eden complete with offstage scaffolding still visible from the theater seats. But at least it requires an abdication of the narrower concept of property, that a river is just so many acre-feet. As Brigham Young taught: "[T]here shall be no private ownership of the streams that come out of the canyons, nor the timber that grows on the hills. These belong to the people: all the people." Donald Worster argues that this abdication of property was just a clever ploy to allow Mormon control over water in the kingdom of Deseret, but if that is the case, why do these words chastise us with their utter common sense?

The environmental history of Utah is no different than many areas of the New World in at least one respect: one has to dig far back into history to recover a knowledge of what was native before the arrival of the Europeans. Leathersides, Redsides, Mountain Suckers, the long-nosed dace—these are among the native species no fly-fisherman will ever care about, but the

browns and brookies create predation problems for these bottom dwellers. Mark Belk tells me he thinks the river could be designed in such a way to make it possible for native and nonnative species to get along, but we may never have the patience to test the long-term effects of proposed changes. The browns are like so many Mormons in Utah Valley, nonnatives who thrive in a transplanted New World to the point where native elements and diversity of cultural life are squelched. Fisheries keep plopping more sport fish into Utah waters, which isn't the worst of all possible worlds, but it can create what some ecologists call the "Frankenstein effect." Predation results, diversity shrinks, and the health of watersheds declines.

The shape of the river may be the key to a moderated respect for native life forms as well as those, like so many of us humans here, who have been transplanted from other climes. Not enough, some anarchists are saying. Blow up the dams, they say. Destroy the Death Star of civilization, which from time immemorial has been ravaging the land in the interest of human survival. Something there is in the anarchistic impulse that says to the heart: too few have felt this bold for too long and the result is the wheel of damage we keep reinventing. And as long as we lack the political will to seek the path of repentance, it is tempting to assume this kind of opposition.

But we are not a poisonous, invasive species, worse than the tamarisk trees first introduced as windbreakers that now drink voraciously and choke virtually every major riverbank throughout the Colorado Plateau. Of course, neither are we Midas, turning everything we touch to gold. We will not solve our problems by believing we need to pull up the disease-spreading roots of humanity or by insisting stupidly that our current path of destruction is both inevitable and virtuous.

It is a suicidal impulse to wish to sweep people and history aside, to act as if there is nothing worth salvaging from the transformation of land forms, vegetation, and wildlife that has resulted from the Old World's crossing, nothing worthy of admiration in the people who lived that history, who of course are, among others, *us* in our contemporary environmental wisdom. There is no guarantee or enough time in one human generation to know that our best efforts at restoration will make sufficient difference. There is no guarantee that efforts to stem the effects of global climate change will be enough or in time, but to wait until we can act with certitude and with absolute impunity is the similarly suicidal impulse of the adolescent sinner, trusting blindly in his inherent innocence and immortality.

Which is only to say that the good news is nothing new: what we need is faith, hope, and charity. Paul's trinity of values is a fire kept warm by the caretakers of civilization, the poets, prophets, artists. These are they who always seem to find reasons why worn-out trappings can be recycled, renewed, and restored to avoid their abusive results. These are not the Pharisees of civilization, the dogmatists of tradition, who think of civilization as a rock, but those who understand it as a river that connects us to a vast host of neighbors. We have too often mistaken repentance for loud human self-loathing. Already hating ourselves, we make ourselves vulnerable to the pimps who hijack and sell our oldest values to the highest bidder and to fear mongers who suggest reasons to distrust everyone but ourselves. We don't need less humanity. We need it more than ever.

Provo holds one of the largest Fourth of July celebrations in the country, filling a stadium of sixty thousand to listen to conservative talk show hosts emcee a parade of nationalistic fervor. Homeland. Vaterland. Patria. A long history of converting all of nature into property and leaving no space for the indigenous, the aliens, strangers, and foreigners. At a recent political caucus in Provo, one delegate said with a straight face that Satan was bringing illegals to our country. Anti-immigration fervor is at a fever pitch. Among local politicians there is talk of overturning the so-called "anchor baby" clause of the Fourteenth Amendment that grants citizenship to anyone born on U.S. soil. Which tells me that love of land can pull you out of time and seize you with the illusions of rootedness in place, an unchanging and fixed past, and the existence of unambiguous lines of territory. rivers as borders.

But what if what you thought you loved was fluid, elusive, complex beyond any reckoning, connecting you to the headwaters of the past and to the outflows of the future, to what lies beneath you, around you, and beyond your vision, placing you in time's flow? What if you must confess that you are perpetually engaged in a process of becoming placed, that love makes you vulnerable, that it is an affliction? Is not this a chastening love of the mystery of finding yourself on this earth, in this place, in this body, at this moment of time? It makes you as strange and as strangely welcome to the scene as anyone else. rivers as home waters.