

*WALDEN AND A NEW HOME, WHO'LL FOLLOW?: RECOVERING EVE IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATURE WRITING*

A Thesis by

Victoria Leigh Wynn

Master of Arts, Wichita State University, 2015

Bachelor of Arts, Wichita State University, 2013

Submitted to the Department of English  
and the faculty of the Graduate School of  
Wichita State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

May 2015

© Copyright 2015 by Victoria Leigh Wynn

All Rights Reserved

*WALDEN AND A NEW HOME, WHO'LL FOLLOW?: RECOVERING EVE IN  
NINETEENTH-CENTURY NATURE WRITING*

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in English.

---

Kimberly Engber, Committee Chair

---

Jennifer Tiernan, Committee Member

---

Rebecca Bechtold, Committee Member

## DEDICATION

To Ben and my family

I speak for the trees. I speak for the trees for the trees have no tongues.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor Kimberly Engber for her guidance and support. Thank you also to my committee members Rebecca Bechtold and Jennifer Tiernan for their questions and comments during the development of this project. I also want to thank Wichita State University's English Department for giving me the opportunity to develop professionally and academically.

## ABSTRACT

Canonization of nineteenth-century American authors often separates Caroline Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* into diverse literary genres. Although the authors wrote in different but popular forms during the nineteenth-century, both Kirkland's realist *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* and Thoreau's transcendental *Walden* confront issues of community, partnership, and an environmental ethic. In contrast to authors like James Fenimore Cooper who depicted the recreation of Eden on the expanding American wilderness, Kirkland and Thoreau sought out to rediscover Eden in their respective landscapes. While neither actually considers a complete return to primitivism, both endorse a return to simplicity by actively promoting a partnership with the landscape through the science of observation. For both Kirkland and Thoreau, the earth is an autonomous agent, capable of action. Their environmental partnerships are best interpreted through Carolyn Merchant's theory of the Recovery Narrative, outlined in her book *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. Through this interpretation of natural history and culture, Kirkland and Thoreau rediscover an American Eden within the eco-feminist Recovery Narrative. Additionally, their reciprocal partnerships with the earth suggest that Kirkland's Mary Clavers and Thoreau as the protagonist in *Walden* represent scientific Eves within their existing Edens. Kirkland and Thoreau's recognition of a dynamic earth challenges the fixed, natural order to which many still clung during the nineteenth century. In a world governed by middle-class expectations and rules, Kirkland and Thoreau rediscover an Eden on earth and find that it is willful and independent from human law. The self-governing environments that these authors observe exemplify the changefulness of nature. If nature cannot be controlled or fixed, neither can human nature.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. CAROLINE KIRKLAND’S ENVIRONMENTAL NONFICTION.....	5
3. KIRKLAND, THOREAU, AND THE RECOVERY NARRATIVE.....	8
4. KIRKLAND’S PARTNERSHIP ETHIC.....	12
5. THOREAU’S PARTNERSHIP ETHIC.....	24
6. KIRKLAND’S SCIENTIFIC EVE.....	33
7. THOREAU’S SCIENTIFIC EVE.....	38
8. CONCLUSION.....	41
9. REFERENCES.....	44

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The small area of Walden Pond represented a vast landscape for nineteenth-century American writer Henry David Thoreau. For the author, Walden Pond and its surrounding environment represented a microcosm of nature and community. Thoreau considered nature a close companion and dedicated his life to “speak[ing] a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness” (“Walking” 1). Granting a voice to the voiceless, he advocated for the conservation and respect of a natural environment that he saw threatened by industrialization. Thoreau’s publications inspired generations of female preservationists and women writers who embraced the “Thoreauvian” preservation ideology, the belief that the natural environment should be “observed and revered, and that it was a shared resource that needed to be preserved” as Julie Dobrow explains in “Saving the Land: Thoreau’s Environmental Ethic and Its Influence on Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham” (14). For this reason, it is not unusual to think of Thoreau as the originator of environmental writing. However, as I will argue in this thesis, the earlier writing of Caroline Kirkland offers an alternative literary origin for an environmental preservation ideology.

In his formative work *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*, Lawrence Buell identifies Thoreau’s *Walden* as one of the most significant pieces of nature writing to appear in the nineteenth-century. Buell engages with a much larger conversation about American literature and the environment that began in the 1960s

with Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* (1964)<sup>1</sup> and would continue into the late 1980s through feminist scholars such as such as Nina Baym, Annette Kolodny, and Susan Griffin. Buell addresses issues previously brought forth by these critics and their contemporaries, but rather than separate Thoreau from female nature writers, as many of these critics chose to do, Buell reconnects their works through their preoccupations with nature preservation:

Among early appraisals of Thoreau, I found, unexpectedly--given the predominant notion of Thoreau as appealing more to men than to women--that commentaries by women were more likely to be favorable than those by men. The first posthumous fictional recreation of Thoreau was by a woman, Louisa May Alcott. The first book, to my knowledge, published by an outsider to the transcendentalist circle that celebrates nature as a refuge from hypercivilization with explicit invocation of Thoreau as a model and precursor was written by a woman: Elizabeth Wright's *Lichen Tufts, from the Alleghanies* (1860). The first Thoreau Society was founded by a group of young women (1891); the first doctoral dissertation on Thoreau (1899) was written by a woman, as was one of the best early biographical studies of Thoreau. (Buell 45)

Thoreau's nature writing and philosophy of preservation also connects him to many of his lesser-known female contemporaries such as Mary Austin, Susan Cooper, Elizabeth Wright, and Sarah Orne Jewett (44).

---

<sup>1</sup> Although *The Machine in the Garden* received high praise upon its release, Marx came under fire from critics who considered his work to be too exclusionary for women and minority groups. R.W.B Lewis's *The American Adam* (1955) was similarly criticized.

As Lawrence Buell suggests, a “significant degree of interdependence between the ‘major’ male figures [of environmental writing] and the work and commentary of women writers less well known” existed in the nineteenth century and extended into the twentieth (Buell 44). According to Buell, the nineteenth-century’s acceptance of female “wilderness” romances resulted in an abundance of sentimentalized narratives (45). Attracted by the chance to leave the parlor and venture to the outside world, authors like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Elizabeth Wright, and Susan Cooper wrote narratives ornamented with “decorous floral observation” (45-7).

Weaving analysis of these female nature writers with analysis of Thoreau, Buell demonstrates that men’s and women’s representations of nature mix together so thoroughly that their “distinctions start to seem porous” (Buell 49). But women authors in particular used descriptions of nature and a kind of wilderness romance as a “means of empowerment,” Lawrence Buell maintains. These writers saw the chance for widespread publication and recognition within the “peculiarly feminine...practical pursuit of botany” (44-5). Kirkland invokes some elements of sentimentalism and romance in her novel *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* but departs from more popular forms in an effort to construct a more observational, scientific Eve figure that practices a partnership ethic between humans and nature. Caroline Kirkland’s deliberate use of realism and satire may have prevented Buell from identifying her as a female author who utilized nature writing as a social tool, but her detailed descriptions of nature place her in conversation with those authors Buell does identify. Kirkland’s themes of preservation of and respect for nature deliver a message similar to that of the narratives of female preservationist authors and Thoreau’s *Walden*. In a narrative that combined philosophies of individualism and domesticity within a natural setting, Kirkland provided a counterpart to the

famous “masculine” narrative of the “American Adam,” and proved “capable of questioning the normative values that seemingly regulated it” (49). The “American Adam,” “the robust actor who created a new nature and a new history” transformed the American landscape, corrupting its beauty and mechanizing its resources (Merchant 104). In contrast, nineteenth-century preservationist writers like Kirkland and Thoreau spoke for protection and respect of the environment. In the work of both writers, a more feminine “American Eve” represents the possibility of partnership rather than domination.

## CHAPTER 2

### CAROLINE KIRKLAND'S ENVIRONMENTAL NONFICTION

A critical inattention to nonfiction pushed Kirkland's call to action to the margins of an environmental literary canon. Lawrence Buell argues that "American nature poetry and fiction about the wilderness experience have been studied much more intensively than environmental nonfiction" (8). Works that romanticize the natural environment have traditionally drawn more attention from critics than realist fiction and nonfiction titles. In Buell's estimation, not much had been done with environmental nonfiction until the early nineties; however, ecocriticism of both fictional and nonfictional texts has enjoyed a steady rise in popularity over the last twenty years.<sup>2</sup> This critical approach creates a framework for a reconsideration of Caroline Kirkland, and, in light of Kirkland's work, a reconsideration of Thoreau.

Originally labeled as "sentimental" and tossed to the "literary rubbish heap," only a few decades after publication, Caroline Kirkland's work has gained popularity in more recent American literary studies (Zagarell xi). Rather than publish sentimental works of fiction that primarily aimed to arouse feeling and teach a moral lesson, Kirkland issued a literal warning to future frontierswomen, as Annette Kolodny argues in *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers (1630-1860)*. Kirkland hoped to warn these women of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Buell reminds modern critics that "students of American environmental writing ought to count their blessings" (9). Due to the work of earlier scholars, current students of environmental writing and criticism no longer have to fight for critical recognition of the genre. Owing in large part to ecofeminists like Carolyn Merchant and Vera Norwood alongside popular ecocritics like Lawrence Buell, ecocritics now bear witness to published anthologies, courses dedicated to environmental fiction and nonfiction authors, and conferences dedicated to their writing.

dangers of romanticizing the West: “Precisely that impulse to protect others from her own ‘sentimental’ expectations (as she called them) provided the impetus for what was to become the first realistic depiction of frontier life in American letters” (Kolodny 133). This realistic depiction of frontier life would eventually become *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?*. Kirkland charged her readers with a certain amount of responsibility while reading her work. She expected them to receive and consider the lessons she had learned. Well acquainted with nineteenth-century readers who were “bred on sentimental novels,” Kirkland also chose to include short, romantic story lines in *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* that would often end in an important lesson in preparedness for future frontierswomen (134). She warned that these sentimental, female readers could “afford neither their innocence of experience nor their literary delusions” (145).

Kirkland’s nonfiction is dominated by the theory of a personal relationship with nature. The moment the Clavers family sets out on the frontier, they begin to develop an ethic of partnership with nature. The quest to settle frontier Michigan is transformative for Mary Clavers, Kirkland’s “autobiographical projection” (Kolodny 145). As Clavers increasingly partners with nature, she becomes increasingly critical of urban society. Kirkland was no stranger to challenging popular form and opinion. Her publications often delivered biting cultural commentary and criticism on the “sociocultural conventions and codes prevailing in both the eastern and the western United States” (Zagarell xi-xii). As a novel writer and as a magazine editor, Kirkland confronted Victorian constructions and expectations of gender by occupying “a position unusual, though not unheard of, for antebellum literary women” (xx). Kirkland’s “full-scale cultural commentary [and] satire” of gender roles found in *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* run counter to moments in the novel that display Kirkland’s snobbery and unwillingness to divorce herself from many middle-class expectations of conduct (xx). Often mocking their lack

of propriety, Kirkland satirized the citizens of Pickney, the Michigan town on which the fictional Montacute is based. The novel was so critical of Kirkland's Michigan neighbors that after its original publication in 1839, the novel caused extreme tension between the author and the town's citizens. According to Kirkland's critics in Michigan, the characters, settings, and plot lines of the novel unfairly characterized and attacked Pinckney's citizens. Michigan's backlash over the publication of *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* did not prevent Kirkland from continuing to publish. Her second novel, *Forest Life*, continued her discussion of life in the settlements, although "In 1843, in one of the few direct statements we have about her sense of herself as a writer, she identified *A New Home* as uninhibited in a way nothing else she wrote would ever be" (Zagarell xvii). Although she began to exhibit a separation between her public and private thoughts in subsequent publications, Kirkland continued to challenge nineteenth-century norms in other ways. Kirkland occupied various positions of power for women during this time while actively participating in the political and literary circles of her day (xx).

## CHAPTER 3

### KIRKLAND, THOREAU, AND THE RECOVERY NARRATIVE

The auto-biographical *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* and *Walden* represent primary concerns in nineteenth-century America as the new environment was settled and industrialized. From James Fenimore Cooper in the early nineteenth-century to Willa Cather in the early twentieth, the strange American wilderness posed real and imagined challenges. Yet, many authors depicted the American wilderness as an American Eden. The United States provided a vast landscape onto which new settlers could create sprawling cities and winding railways. The search for an American Eden seemed to demand the recreation, ownership, and eventually mechanization of the land. Such attempts to recreate an Eden within the United States depended on a masculine, re-creationist figure, whose economic power can be represented through the domination of the environment. The archetype of this “American Adam,” identified by R. W. B. Lewis in 1955, provided the ideal figure of domination. Lewis traces this archetype throughout the nineteenth-century American canon, identifying some of its origins in Thoreau’s *Walden*. According to Lewis, the premier example of the American Adam, or the “new world’s representative man, was given by Walt Whitman in *Leaves of Grass*” (Lewis 28). Lewis’ “American Adams” would recreate an Eden through industrialization’s dominance of the landscape. Still, some authors challenged the theory of recreation by suggesting that Eden need only be rediscovered. For these authors, Eden provided a chance for exploration, not control. An alternate American narrative depicts a feminine, preservationist figure who works side-by-side with nature. Kirkland and Thoreau write within this new American narrative by practicing a partnership ethic with the environments they inhabit. Rather than attempt to recreate an Eden, both authors rediscover a relationship with the landscape. For both Kirkland and Thoreau, the

earth has an agency which allows for a partnership. Their partnership with an active earth, combined with their admonishment of recreation and promotion of recovery and self-reliance, is best interpreted through Carolyn Merchant's theory of the Recovery Narrative outlined in her book *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*.

What began as a search for an Eden that might be reinhabited, the westward expansion of the United States became the reinvention of the biblical garden. Archetypes like the "American Adam" provide the protagonists for the dominant Christian recovery narrative that justified expansion and settlement. As the science, technology, and capitalism of the nineteenth-century began to reshape the United States, some nature writers identified this perceived "progress" as detrimental to the relationship between humans and nature. Their alternative version of the recovery narrative places man, woman, and nature on equal ground, suggesting that a mutually beneficial partnership would reinstate the American West as the ideal Eden (Merchant 94). Carolyn Merchant terms such recovery narratives "ecofeminist" and demonstrates how the figure of a scientific Eve "question[s] the established order and [initiates] change" (23). The ecofeminist recovery narrative challenges the justification provided by the "American Adam." Merchant identifies certain images and themes common to ecofeminist recovery narratives, and I will use these as a starting point for my analysis. First, the characters in the text must express a "partnership ethic" with the landscape: "A partnership ethic is a synthesis between an ecological approach based on moral consideration for all living and nonliving things and human-centered (or homocentric) approach based on the social good and the fulfillment of basic human needs. All humans have needs for food, clothing, shelter, and energy, but nature also has an equal need to survive" (Merchant 226). The understanding, appreciation and fulfillment bred through a partnership with the landscape is often expressed through ideas of preservation or the

identification of nature as female either through its description as a virgin, mother, or both. This characterization addresses nature as an “intimate companion” (118). Second, the recovery narrative must include an Eve figure, typically featured as the protagonist who acts as observer and scientist (245). When a narrative contains these defining features, it participates in Merchant’s ecofeminist recovery narrative.

Kirkland and Thoreau’s representations of reciprocal partnerships with the earth demonstrate an Eden of equality in which Eve is not a passive derivative of Adam. Instead, Kirkland and Thoreau’s Eves foster action, curiosity, and independence; through partnership, they act as the first scientists (Merchant 23). Previous critics have identified a link between Kirkland and Thoreau. In an extended discussion of Kirkland’s *Forest Life*, Karen Kilcup argues, for example, that Kirkland “responds to Emerson’s philosophy” and “anticipates Thoreau’s *Walden*” (Kilcup 116). This positioning suggests that Thoreau improved upon Kirkland’s philosophies. Thoreau’s *Walden* does expand Kirkland’s introduction of a “version of ‘simple living’” by “discarding unnecessary belongings, emphasizing spiritual development, and behaving respectfully toward the environment” alongside the philosophies of other female writers at the time, as Kilcup maintains. However, the development of the scientific Eve is more important to Kirkland and Thoreau’s discussions of partnership and preservation than previous critics have acknowledged. Rather than merely anticipating Thoreau’s philosophy, Kirkland’s *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* should be considered his forerunner.

Kirkland and Thoreau’s anxieties about maintaining and preserving a partnership with the earth lead them to create an alternative recovery narrative to that of the dominant practice of capitalism and industry. Both Kirkland’s *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* and Thoreau’s *Walden* provide readers with isolated experiments that challenge a more dominant Christian recovery

narrative. Through the utilization of partnership through observation, the authors characterize themselves as scientific Eves within a rediscovered American Eden. These Eves challenge the patriarchal narrative of a dominating Adam that reconstructs Eden through the mechanization of the landscape. Their alternate Eden empowers nature by granting it agency. Rather than oppress and control the environment, the scientific Eve figure treats nature as an equal, active partner. For the scientific Eve, neither humans nor the natural environment supersede the other. Simply, Kirkland and Thoreau's recovery narratives uphold the equality of all natural living things.

## CHAPTER 4

### KIRKLAND'S PARTNERSHIP ETHIC

In Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*, Mary Clavers hopes to quickly domesticate the landscape, creating a comfortable Victorian home for her family. Inspired by domestic and romantic stories of wilderness by "Cooper" and "Miss Sedgwick," Kirkland's preconceived notions of frontier life fit nicely within what she considered the sentimental genre (Kirkland 103). As the narrative begins, Mary Clavers' first introduction to the "Michigan mud hole" shatters these illusions of loveliness and grandeur she long associated with the wild (5). While she admits that a complete change in her "philosophy was of slow growth" (40), Clavers is almost immediately forced to recognize that urban domesticity has no place within nature. After stepping into a ditch "filled with water and quite too wide to jump over," Clavers destroys her "paper-soled shoes--sensible things for the woods" (6). Clavers' attempt to maintain a domestic standard through her clothing is obstructed by the natural elements. As she reflects on her first few moments in the woods, Clavers now recognizes the futility of her clothing. Kirkland mocks her mistake and warns future frontierswomen of the small, but important, adjustments women must make when returning to nature.

At the start of *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*, stories of nature's challenges dominate the narrative. In one of her first nights in the wilderness, Clavers' patience and bravery are tested during a storm:

If I could live a century, I think, that night will never fade from my memory.

Excessive fatigue made it impossible to avoid falling asleep, yet the fear of being devoured by wild beasts, or poisoned by rattlesnakes caused me to start up after every nap with sensations of horror and alarm, which could hardly have been

increased by the actual occurrence of all I dreaded. Many wretched hours passed in this manner. At length sleep fairly overcame fear, and we were awakened only by a wild storm of wind and rain which drove in upon us and completely wetted every thing within reach (43).

Through her “fear,” “horror,” and “alarm,” Clavers experiences a sense of powerlessness in relation to the natural environment around her. Within this new nature, Clavers is unable to maintain a domestic space as she has been taught. Nature invades the domestic space figuratively through Clavers’ imagined fears of “wild beasts” and “rattlesnakes” and literally through “a wild storm of wind and rain” which dampens their possessions. Within Clavers initial domestic space, nature proves to be unavoidable and uncontrollable. Previous sentimental stories had prepped her for an experience in which an “American Adam” could control and subdue this nature. Yet nature reveals itself to be “wild, savage, and vindictive” towards this type of control (Merchant 136). Human’s inability to dominate the natural environment creates possibilities for a scientific Eve that observes, recognizes, and respects nature’s agency.

Rather than fight against nature, Clavers recognizes her own weaknesses within the Michigan wilderness and chooses to learn and adjust to her environment: “Difficulties began to melt away like frosty rime after this. Some were removed, but to many we became habituated in a far shorter time than I could have imagined possible” (Kirkland 46). Becoming comfortable within a simplified domestic space continues to challenge Clavers. She admits that until she experienced life on the frontier that she had not “realized fully what ‘living’ all in one room’ meant” (49). Despite her initial apprehension, Clavers adjusts her ideas about domesticity to the wilderness: “My ideas of comfort were by this time narrowed down to a well-swept room with a bed in one corner, and cooking-apparatus in another--and this in some fourteen days away from

the city! I can scarcely, myself, credit the reality of the change” (44). As her domestic lifestyle changes, Clavers interactions with the environment change as well. Clavers’ fears begin to subside leaving her time to form a relationship with nature.

After experiencing her first winter on the frontier, Clavers excitedly begins “making something like a garden” (78). This creation of a garden helps foster a partnership ethic with nature. The act of gardening itself helps Clavers relate to the earth in deeply personal, seemingly sentimental terms. Clavers begins to identify sprouting bulbs as “lovely children of the sun” whose beautiful colors remind her of her six month old son’s “rosy cheeks” (79). Comparing the blooming life to that of her own children connects Clavers to the earth through the role of a caring mother, perhaps attempting to evoke certain sentimental responses in her readers. However, this personification does not create a dependent relationship. Clavers does not place herself above the garden by assuming she is its caretaker. Rather, she recognizes its importance and self-governance. For Clavers, her “rosy flowers,” “posy-pots,” and “yaller lilies” are not expected, but are “dearly-prized gifts of Flora” (79). After caring for the garden, Clavers is rewarded with beautiful blooms. The relationship between the earth and Clavers is mutually beneficial: “Nobody can deny that our soil repays whatever trouble we may bestow upon it...Enrich it properly, and you need lack nothing...” (81). This relationship is symbiotic: nature and Clavers work together to create plant life. Nature is uninhibited by human domesticity in this passage. It is able to grow and flourish through the assistance of human hands.

While Clavers does recognize nature’s “use value,” she also possesses an “appreciation of its aesthetic value” (Merchant 246). Although Clavers hopes to convey a realistic account of her frontier life to her audience, moments within her garden inspire a more sentimental tone. She describes her love for her flowers as “enthusiastic,” while recognizing that many view this love

as “absolutely silly or affected” (Kirkland 79). This reflection may be Kirkland’s own criticism of sentimental literature. On the other hand, these criticisms do not stop Kirkland from including moments of romantic description, often through quotations of her own favorite authors. While on a business errand, Clavers reflects,

The drive was a charming one. The time, mid-summer, and the wilderness literally “blossoming as the rose.” In a tour of ten miles we saw three lovely lakes, each a lonely gem set deep in masses of emerald green, which shut it in completely from all but its own bright beauty. The road was a most intricate one “thorough bush-thorough brier,” and the ascents, the “pitches,” the “sidlings” in some places quite terrific. (73)

These words, selected from Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, display Kirkland’s willingness to evoke romantic terms when describing the beauty of nature. The aesthetic value of nature is transformative for human beings. Kirkland argues that the “sour-faced grumblers” who emerge from the “refined indulgences of civilized life” are “transformed by a year’s residence in the woods” (183). Although time within civilization turns humans “proud, selfish, and ungrateful,” nature’s aesthetic provides a natural cure for the human spirit. Merchant acknowledges that a key component to a partnership ethic is a human beings ability to understand and appreciate earth’s “aesthetic value” (246). Kirkland believes nature to be both aesthetically pleasing and valuable for human life.

Clavers also expresses a personal relationship with nature through her characterization of nature as a mother. For Clavers, nature becomes a human necessity to relieve the “subdoing method and spirit-breaking confinement” of civilized society (Kirkland 148). Those “transplanted” from the “forests of chimneys” found in the city to the real forests will “soon

learn to think nature no step-mother” but a real mother instead (148). For Kirkland, city dwellers may consider nature a mother figure, but this figure is distant. Those in the city find their relationship with a natural mother “dulled by civilizations” (148). Here, Kirkland idealizes nature as a mother figure. Kirkland appeals to sentimental notions of motherhood that privilege natural mothers over step mothers. Those in the city find a relationship with nature as strange and unsettling as a relationship to a step-mother. An urban-dwelling way of life and association of nature as a “step-mother” deeply contrasts with Kirkland’s own philosophy regarding nature. Kirkland’s nature is deeply personal and holds a sort of “compensating power” over civilization and provides a “universal home” (Kirkland 148-9). According to Merchant, Kirkland’s personal relationship to nature contrasts “many earlier American writers who had supported commercial enterprise and had described nature in exploitative terms” (Merchant 149). For Kirkland, nature is an equalizer, a “constant and mutual harmony,” a reflection of her idealized relationship between mother and child (Kirkland 149).

The personal relationship that Kirkland forms with nature inspires Clavers to act as its protector. Again participating in a partnership with the land, Clavers attempts to preserve its beauty. Early preservationists during the Romantic period in the United States recognized that “Soil, forests, rocks, water--all the parts of nature that humanity had left undisturbed--were worthy of their admiration...As America’s rich soils became exhausted or as forests were denuded in the rush for profits, the preservationists lamented the losses and championed restoration” (Merchant 135). Kirkland displays her own anxieties about disrupting the virgin environment in moments throughout *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?*. In the early days of Montacute’s construction, Mary Clavers hopes to protect and preserve pieces of the natural landscape: “The public square, the water lots, the value *per foot* of this undulating surface,

clothed as it then was with burr-oaks, and haunted by the red deer; these were almost too much for my gravity. I gave my views, however, as to the location of the grand esplanade, and particularly requested that the fine oaks which now graced it might be spared when the clearing process commenced” (Kirkland 11). Kirkland’s emphasis on the words “per foot” highlights her distaste for placing an economic worth on nature. This description, given by the men with whom she is conversing, contrasts her own descriptions of the environment as “undulating,” “clothed,” “haunted,” and “fine.” For Clavers, there is already value in existing nature, but for the men, who wish to industrialize the area, nature’s value only exists in the future. Kirkland chooses to use romanticized language to display an intrinsic value within the area.

Although Clavers recognizes this inherent and aesthetic value, the commercial goals of the men in the scene take precedent. Clavers can only hope to save “the fine oaks” (11). This hope parallels the conservationist message of the Romantics, Kirkland’s contemporaries, and the actions of the preservationists that followed (Merchant 137). This movement motivated women of the late-nineteenth-century to protect America’s natural environments from the rise of industrialization:

The women who helped save parks, forests, and birds did so not only to preserve middle-class lifestyles, but also for reasons of deep personal engagement with nature. Women joined hiking clubs, birdwatching clubs, and garden clubs. They entered the parks and wilderness in groups and alone. Some did so for aesthetic reasons others for religious reasons, and still others for the sake of recreation, health, and healing. (Merchant 140)

The preservation of the middle-class lifestyle appeals to Kirkland; however, the author distances herself from this reason to preserve nature through her characterization of the Montacute men.

Kirkland underscores the middle-class, commercial relationship the men have to nature when they state, “Oh, certainly, mem!...a place that’s designed for a public promenade must not be divested of shade trees!” (Kirkland 11). While Clavers hopes to preserve areas of the landscape, the men only consider their commercial worth within society by considering how the shade trees will help maintain a middle-class lifestyle. Here, Kirkland challenges Montacute’s “American Adams” by suggesting that parts of nature be spared regardless of their commercial worth. Sadly, Clavers is not victorious in her fight to save the trees. Even after their promises to leave the trees untouched, they are quickly cut down. For Clavers, these trees represent the “first ‘Banquos’ at Montacute” (11). Again, Kirkland personifies aspects of nature, simultaneously sentimentalizing her narrative and granting agency to nature. The men are not only removing the trees from the “grand esplanade”—they are murdering them (11).

While men are often preoccupied by commercialism and industrialization within *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?*, the men of Montacute are not entirely absent from the partnership ethic. The narrative of novel focuses on the construction of community within the new wilderness. After Clavers has constructed a domestic space surrounded by an unfamiliar natural world, Clavers must reconsider how she will remain a community member while rejecting ideals of a more sentimental community life. Caught somewhere between the fiercely independent settlers of her new Montacute community and the civilized, Victorian life she left behind, Kirkland’s novel promotes a dialogue between independent and communal life. While she has broken from a Victorian community, Kirkland recognizes the dangers of complete community rejection throughout her adventures in Montacute. In a warning to future frontierswomen, she writes: “In fact, however we may justify certain exclusive habits in populous places, they are strikingly and confessedly ridiculous in the wilderness. What can be more absurd than a feeling of proud

distinction, where a stray spark of fire, a sudden illness, or a day's contre-temps, may throw you entirely upon the kindness of your humblest neighbor?" (Kirkland 65). While Kirkland's move to the Michigan frontier is a break from the conventions of "populous places," she remains a member of a community. Kirkland recognizes the importance of these human connections, especially for the purpose of safety. By maintaining a connection to the community, both Kirkland recognizes that active partnerships between humans nature fulfill basic human needs while respective nature's need to survive (Merchant 226).

Kirkland explores an equal partnership ethic between men and women. Mary Clavers considers her relationship to her husband progressive and argues that their relationship breaks down gender boundaries constructed during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

One has so much to do in the country. The division of labour is almost unknown. If in absolutely savage life, each man is of necessity 'his own tailor, tent-maker, carpenter, cook, huntsman, and fisherman;'—so in the state of society which I am attempting to describe, each woman is, at times at least, her own cook, chambermaid and waiter; nurse, seamstress and school ma'am; not to mention various occasional callings to any one of which she must be able to turn her hand at a moment's notice. And every man, whatever his circumstances or resources, must be qualified to play groom, teamster, or boot-black, as the case may be; besides 'tending the baby' at odd times, and cutting wood to cook his dinner with. If he has good sense, good nature, and a little spice of practical philosophy, all this goes exceedingly well. (Kirkland 73)

Here, Kirkland attempts to equalize men and women's roles within the natural setting of Montacute. Each member of a functioning community within nature must, at all times, be able to

fill in for any need your life may present. Nevertheless, the varied roles each individual is expected to adopt still adhere to the gendered expectations of the nineteenth-century. Although their roles vary, women are still expected to maintain a domestic position. A man's role within the community allows him to cross into domestic responsibility during "odd times." For Kirkland, it is only the "too proud" and "too indolent" men who are unable to sacrifice for the greater good of the community, suggesting that gendered roles present problems on the frontier. While the variety of roles each individual is required to play on the frontier allows room for equality, Mary Clavers and the citizens of Montacute do not challenge these to the fullest extent.

While Mary Clavers and her husband are successful in placing gender roles to the side in favor of equality and community within nature, others are not so progressive. While on a day's trip with her children, Clavers stumbles upon the home of Mr. B, a prideful man who possessed a great fortune through birth and marriage before he chose to settle in to "a charming spot for a gentlemanly residence" (Kirkland 77). Mr. B and Mrs. B. are unwilling to forget their privileged lifestyle after they enter the wilderness. As a result, their land goes uncultivated and the family struggles to feed themselves: "[Mrs.] B labored with all her little strength for the comfort of her family. She had brought up five children on little else beside Indian meal and potatoes; and at one time the neighbours had known the whole family live for weeks upon bread and tea without sugar or milk; Mr. B sitting in the house smoking cigars, and playing the flute, as much of a gentleman as ever" (77). The B family's unwillingness to work the land and leave behind their strict gender roles results in a difficult way of life for the small family. Again, Kirkland chooses to educate and warn her audience of these hardships, warning her reader's "against indulging in certain habits which darken the whole course of country life" (78).

Much of the community recognizes the value of the partnership ethic between men and women, especially when confronting nature's dangers. As the Montacute community begins to grow, Clavers' garden begins to expand as well, necessitating the involvement of many community members. At the height of the garden's growth, Clavers and the community notice a large prairie fire threatening their "Eden" (79). Together, men and women of the community try to fend off the flames. Here, Kirkland utilizes non-gender pronouns in reference to the community. Each member works together to create a unified "we," regardless of their gender. Men and women fight alongside one another to protect the community they created through a partnership ethic. The garden is eventually destroyed in the fire, but blame is evenly distributed to all those involved: "I sat gazing out of the back window, watching the gradual blackening of the remains of our stores of hay--scolding the while most vehemently, at myself and every body else, for having been so stupidly negligent" (Kirkland 113). In this instance both action and blame are placed on the shoulders of every community member equally. In an attempt to protect their developing partnership with the environment, men and women in Montacute come together and practice equality of the genders within the community.

Unfortunately, not all members of the community recognize the value of the partnership ethic. The equality of the sexes is still very much up for discussion. During a scene at the Montacute Lyceum, two men debate "the comparative mental capacity of the sexes." The president of the Lyceum announces this conclusion:

He gave it as his decided opinion, that if the natural and social disadvantages under which woman laboured and must ever continue to labour, could be removed; if their education could be entirely different, and their position in society the reverse of what it is at present, they would be very nearly, if not quite

equal to the nobler sex, in all but strength of mind, in which very useful quality is was his opinion that man would still have the advantage, especially in those communities whose energies were developed by the aid of debating society. This decision was hailed with acclamations... (Kirkland 105)

While the actions of the Montacute community frequently depend on the flexibility of gender boundaries, this debate highlights the town's unwillingness to abandon all gender stereotypes. It is encouraging that the community at large does recognize the "social disadvantages" that women undergo through their position in society and lack of education, but their belief in the "natural" advantage of men undercuts their attempts to equalize men and women.

The men of Montacute utilize biological difference to argue for a man's advantage over a woman, inherent in both their mind and body. According to feminist historian Joan Scott, this belief in "biological determinism" is essential in conversations dividing men and women by sex (1054). Although the town of Montacute celebrates the conclusion of the debate, it is clear that Clavers does not agree with the outcome. Kirkland immediately makes it clear to the reader that this is not the opinion she holds as she places ownership on the shoulders of the president of the Lyceum. It is "*his* decided opinion" (Kirkland 105, my italics). It is in this scene that Kirkland demands the reader play a more active role. She asks the reader to recognize the absurdity of this claim by utilizing irony in the scene to undercut the quality of the debate. Simon Jenkin's shop, where the Lyceum is held, is decorated by a "candelabra of scooped potatoes" while the president sits on "the head of a barrel" (104). Kirkland draws her reader's attention to these aspects of the scene to highlight the low quality of the debate. When discussing the community members in attendance, her tone becomes increasingly sarcastic: "The attendance of the ladies was particularly requested; and the whole fair sex of Montacute made a point of showing

occasionally the interest they undoubtedly felt in the gallant knights who tilted in this field of honour” (104). Her overblown descriptions of the debating men mocks the purpose and quality of the debate. It is clear that Kirkland considers the Montacute Lyceum constructive and interesting for the women of the town.

## CHAPTER 5

### THOREAU'S PARTNERSHIP ETHIC

Similar to Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*, Thoreau's narrative of his time at Walden Pond combined actual experiences with romantic and philosophical reflections. Thoreau also expected that the knowledge acquired from his time at the pond would educate his nineteenth-century readers. This education did not dictate conventional themes of morality; instead, *Walden* illustrated a process of morality through a partnership ethic. Thoreau's text would act as a philosophical instruction manual. Unlike Kirkland's work of nonfiction, Thoreau claims his narrative as his own rather than choosing to use a "pseudonymous protagonist" (Kolodny 145). Still, *Walden* is not entirely a work of nonfiction. Thoreau has long been recognized for his narrative that seamlessly brings together aspects of fiction and nonfiction, challenging our understanding of both genres. Thoreau takes artistic liberties with his nonfictional account. As Edward Hoagland notes in his introduction to the Paperback Classics edition of the book, "Walden is not fiction, yet, during the seven-year period when he drafted and revised it, Thoreau shaped his experiences for careful effect, almost as if he were composing a novel" (Hoagland xi).

Thoreau's practice of a partnership ethic begins in his construction of a domestic space on the shores of Walden Pond. Throughout the chapter "Economy," Thoreau describes his experience building a home in great detail, including itemized lists of supplies and detailed descriptions of his technique: "I have thus a tight shingled and plastered house, ten feet wide by fifteen long, and eight-foot posts, with a garret and a closet, a large window on each side, two trap doors, one door at the end, and a brick fireplace opposite" (Thoreau 41). Thoreau's

description of his home highlights its simplicity. He immediately separates himself from what he describes as the “so called comforts of life” (14). These, Thoreau states, “are not only indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind,” specifically the elevation of the mind (14). For Thoreau, the mind’s growth depends on the simplicity of a domestic space. In order to become like the “great philosophers,” individuals must divorce themselves from luxury and adopt “voluntary poverty” (14). This voluntary poverty requires Thoreau to remove himself from middle-class civilization, where comforts and indulgences are hard to avoid. The image of Thoreau’s cabin in the woods, Buell argues, supplies a list of “ingredients” for the “cultivation of self-improvement”: “reduced material wants, rustic habitation, [and] self-sufficiency at every level” (145). These specific goals Thoreau expresses through his construction of domestic space within a natural habitat.

The accommodations that civilized life offers initially distract Kirkland’s construction of the domestic in *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?*. It is not until she recognizes and respects nature’s agency that she can adopt simplicity and foster a partnership ethic. Conversely, Thoreau’s partnership ethic is improved by the immediate creation of a simplistic, domestic space. Although he suggests that a more primitive lifestyle brings about philosophical, religious, and moral growth, he eventually recognizes that a domestic space, or shelter, has become a “necessary of life” (Thoreau 24). A man hoping to become a philosopher must be simply “fed, sheltered, clothed, and warmed” (14). Anything that lies outside providing for these most basic human wants are items of abundance. Shelter, clothing, and other basic domestic needs must be obtained and sustained through the simplest means since the modern improvements of civilization do not improve the human psyche (29). Thoreau admits that “it is certainly better to accept the advantages...which the invention and industry of mankind offer [such as] boards and

shingles, lime and bricks...” (34). As a result, the dirt floor and plastered walls of his cabin at Walden Pond reflect Thoreau’s theories of simplicity and plainness while allowing him space for philosophical development. Thoreau begins his practice of the partnership ethic established by Kirkland only after he recognizes the importance of simple domesticity in nature.

Early in this same chapter, Thoreau shows how the need for a simple, domesticated space within a partnership ethic like Kirkland’s was born from necessity. In a section discussing early concepts of shelter and domestic space, Thoreau states,

Adam and Eve, according to the fable, wore the bower before other clothes. Man wanted a home, a place of warmth, or comfort, first of physical warmth, then the warmth of the affections. We may imagine a time when, in the infancy of the human race, some enterprising mortal crept into a hollow in a rock for shelter. Every child begins the world again, to some extent, and loves to stay out doors, even in wet and cold. (Thoreau 24-5)

Here Thoreau proposes that even basic instances of domesticity connect individuals to nature. Before clothing, Adam and Eve wore natural elements for protection. The same nature that would craft their domestic spaces also clothed and protected them. Nature provided a safe domestic space for humans after The Fall through shelter and clothing. This partnership between humans and nature, Thoreau states, has continued for generations but has been tainted by industrialization: “From the cave we have advanced to roofs of palm leaves, of bark and boughs, of linen woven and stretched, of grass and straw, of boards and shingles, of stones and tiles. At last, we know not what it is to live in the open air, and our lives are domestic in more sense than we think” (25). Thoreau’s return to nature is a return to the simplest form of the domestic. Domesticity should not be defined by luxury. Instead, domesticity is maintained by a relationship

between humans and nature. Industrial advancements have complicated this relationship, preventing a partnership between the two.

Walden Pond provides the ideal environment in which Thoreau creates a personal relationship between himself and nature. Drawing from descriptions of Eden, Thoreau reconnects himself to the simple domestic, recreating the partnership ethic and placing himself within the nature's care: "Perhaps on that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden Walden Pond was already in existence, and even then breaking up in a gentle spring rain accompanied with mist and a southerly wind, and covered with myriads of ducks and geese, which had not heard of the fall, when still such pure lakes sufficed them" (Thoreau 146). For Thoreau, Walden Pond was in existence during the time of Eden. Walden Pond was a place that could provide a simple domestic space for Adam and Eve. Thoreau gives agency to the landscape by describing its life before the interruption of humanity: a time when nature existed only for itself. Here, it remains untouched by human hands. The virginity of nature around Walden Pond encourages him to protect the space. Thoreau hopes to preserve the environment around Walden Pond for itself, where the "pure lakes [suffice] them" (146). Here, Thoreau challenges the narrative of the "American Adam" who hoped to cultivate and tame virgin land. Similar to Mary Clavers in Kirkland's *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*, Thoreau supports the observation and admiration of the environment. While nature protects Adam and Eve by providing simple domestic needs like shelter and clothing, humans may also protect nature through observation and preservation. In his description of Walden Pond as an Eden outside of Eden, Thoreau exemplifies the partnership ethic.

Thoreau's characterization of nature as virgin is not one-sided. Thoreau respects nature's changefulness. Aside from being described as pure, Walden Pond is also characterized as a

seductive, alluring, and dangerous by Thoreau. During a wild and unpredictable storm, Kirkland's Mary Clavers reaches the conclusion that she is powerless when facing nature's surprising strength. Thoreau too feels powerless to nature. However, Thoreau explains his weakness through continued images of the Garden of Eden. The area around Walden Pond and its vegetation provided "wild forbidden fruits, too fair for mortal taste" (Thoreau 163). Thoreau characterizes himself as an Eve, "dazzled" and "tempted" by his natural surroundings (163). The dangers of nature in *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* are quite literal, while Thoreau uses metaphor to describe humanity's vulnerabilities within nature. Although Walden Pond may provide a safe haven, its power and subsequent dangers must be revered and respected.

According to Kirkland and Thoreau human inability to respect and revere nature prevents a partnership ethic. Through the course of *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* Clavers learns to respect and revere nature, eventually communicating that lesson to her readers. Thoreau, on the other hand, enters into his experiment at Walden Pond with a great deal of respect for nature. *Walden* does not include a narrative of Thoreau learning to respect nature. Instead, his purpose in the text is to lecture the reader over their incomplete relationship with nature: "Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her. The birds with their plumage and their notes are in harmony with the flowers, but what youth or maiden conspires with the wild luxuriant beauty of Nature? She flourishes most alone, far from the towns where they reside" (Thoreau 162). Here, Thoreau acknowledges that humans inhabit nature. The natural world provides a home in which humans may construct domestic space. However, humans do not appreciate the natural world as is and wish to change it through mechanization and industrialization of the landscape. Rather than "[conspiring] with" nature and practicing a partnership ethic with the land, nature is subdued by human presence. She can only "flourish" far away from human contamination.

Nature's other inhabitants, like the "birds" and the "flowers" appreciate the home the earth provides. Through appreciation and respect of the environment, humans may then begin their practice of the partnership ethic.

Aside from lecturing his readers on the importance of the partnership ethic, Thoreau provides examples from his own time at Walden Pond. Carolyn Merchant finds evidence of Thoreau's equal partnership with Walden Pond in his characterization of his garden in positive, personal terms (Merchant 136). Within his famous bean-field, Thoreau practices the partnership ethic:

Meanwhile my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed they were not easily to be put off. What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antæus...What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work. (Thoreau 126)

Much as Clavers uses the community garden in Montacute, Thoreau uses gardening to reconnect himself to the environment. He too uses the sentimental to relate to the earth in personal terms. Thoreau learns to "love" and "cherish" the beans and they become undeniably "attached" to one another. This echoes Clavers' relationship to her garden. Both Clavers and Thoreau act as a mother for their growing garden, though the garden is not entirely dependent on them for life. Instead, their gardens illustrate a mutually beneficial partnership. Thoreau's partnership with his

bean-field renders positive results for nature and man. Thoreau recognizes the agency of the beans, who “[attach him] to the earth” and give him “strength,” while he cares for them.

Thoreau takes Kirkland’s partnership ethic a step further in this passage by masculinizing and feminizing himself in relationship to his beans. In Clavers’ garden, she acts only as a mother to the blooms, which is expressed by Kirkland’s gesture towards sentimental imagery. In addition to this sentimental imagery, Thoreau equates his work with the beans to the heroic labors of masculine Greek figures. These figures also construct a personal relationship with the earth. For Thoreau, tending the beans is a “small Herculean labor” that is also “steady and self-respecting.” The beans provide a steady challenge for Thoreau, leading him to respect himself and respect the beans and aiding in a partnership ethic. Additionally, the beans grant him “strength like Antæus.” a strength that only results from being “attached...to the earth.” Here, Thoreau learns steadiness, self-respect, and respect for nature through his relationship to the beans. In Clavers’ garden, humans and nature are equal partners. In Thoreau’s bean-field, nature acts as a teacher. Thoreau suggests that the partnership ethic established by Kirkland can be taught by nature.

Thoreau’s personal relationship with nature is even further improved by his recognition of nature as a mother. At times throughout *Walden*, Thoreau references the care and protection afforded him by Nature or the “mother of humanity” (Thoreau 248). Thoreau’s relationship to nature as a protected child challenged the more hostile narratives of settlement that preceded him, contrasting the commercialization and exploitation of the natural world. Early in *Walden*, Thoreau criticizes this exploitation:

I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than

got rid of. Better if they had been born in the open pasture and suckled by a wolf, that they might have seen with clearer eyes what field they were called to labor in. Who made them serfs of the soil? Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? (6)

The men of Thoreau's town suffer from their disconnection from the natural world. Rather than form the personal, respectful relationship to nature that Thoreau encourages, these men labor on the fields. Thoreau finds joy and respect in his labor, because he acknowledges the partnership that this admiration fosters. Thoreau sees with "clearer eyes" the purpose of environment. The townsmen's relationship to the soil is founded on the industrialization of the soil; they have "inherited" the narrative of the "American Adam." The earth becomes a place of control and toil, exemplified to their relationship to it as a "serf." The environment is a grave rather than the Eden they hope to find.

Thoreau's concerns about the partnership ethic extend past his own relationship with nature. Like Kirkland, Thoreau also reconsiders how he will maintain his connection to a community while rejecting communal life. Although some might argue that Thoreau breaks from community in general, Buell argues that "the break is not total"; instead, Thoreau "remains always in dialogue with and to that extent [is] always a member of the community whose norms he rejects" (Buell 49). When Thoreau begins building his home at Walden Pond, he finds that he must rely on community members to help him construct a domestic space:

Near the end of March, 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth, for timber. It is difficult to

begin without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. (Thoreau 34-5).

Thoreau not only forges a connection with a community member through borrowing, he improves upon the exchange by sharpening the man's axe. A partnership ethic between community members begins Thoreau's adventure at Walden Pond. Thoreau appears apprehensive about this exchange initially but recognizes its worth in the construction of domesticity. It is in this way that Thoreau begins a partnership with his community.

## CHAPTER 6

### KIRKLAND'S SCIENTIFIC EVE

The Christian recovery narrative and the dominating narrative of the “American Adam” inextricably linked Eve with natural imagery: “While fallen Adam becomes the inventor of the tools and technologies that will restore the garden, fallen Eve becomes the nature that must be tamed into submission. In much of the imagery of Western culture, Eve is inherently connected to and associated symbolically with nature and the garden” (Merchant 22). Within this concept of The Fall, Eve poses challenges for Adam and requires management. The Adams and Eves of Merchant’s alternative recovery narrative identify an existing Eden within their surroundings. Eve takes a greater role and acts as a “prototypic scientist” who “hold[s] the key to recovering Eden through a new science” of observation and experimentation (23). Kirkland and Thoreau identify Edenic spaces through a partnership ethic. At the same time, these authors construct Eve figures that practice partnership as a science. Through observation and experimentation, these scientific Eves hold the key to recovering an Eden.

Kirkland’s characterization of Mary Clavers as the scientific Eve grants the character more agency than previous critics have allowed. In her article “The Literary Legacy of Caroline Kirkland: Emigrants’ Guide to a Failed Eden,” Annette Kolodny argues that Kirkland’s novels *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* and *Forest Life* act as cautionary tales for frontierswomen who entertained sentimental ideas about the West. Kolodny identifies the beginnings of an Eden in the garden which Mary Clavers cultivates. Drawing from Clavers’ self-identification as an “Eve,” Kolodny argues that Kirkland’s use of the Eden story was only included to appeal to nineteenth-century audiences (147). The use of Eden and Eve in Kirkland’s narrative made attractive additions for sentimental, Victorian readers. While Kolodny admits that the

employment of the story of Genesis depicts an “attractive, familiar, and above all, *responsible* role” women play with nature, Kolodny’s reading of Kirkland’s *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* suggests that Kirkland’s only objective was to encourage the eventual domestication of the Michigan frontier (140). In Kolodny’s reading, Mary Clavers and the citizens of Montacute act as “American Adams” who hope to cultivate and transform Michigan’s landscape.

When we consider Mary Clavers’ enactment of the partnership ethic between herself, the environment, and the Montacute community, Clavers cannot be characterized as a figure of the “American Adam.” Clavers does encourage a domestication of the landscape; however, this domestication requires simplicity and a respect of natural surroundings, participating in the partnership ethic and challenging the dominant narrative of the “American Adam.” In this way, Kirkland’s Mary Clavers experiments with ideas of partnership, observing its successes and failures within a natural setting. The partnership Clavers demonstrates requires respect and understanding of the natural environment which is accomplished through scientific observation and experimentation. Through partnership, Mary Clavers is a much more scientific Eve than Kolodny admits.

During her time in the community garden, Clavers demonstrates the importance of a scientific Eve in the narrative of settlement. She discusses Mr. Jenkin’s aptitude for odd jobs in a “long digression,” and she notes that she is “wandering like another Eve from my dearly beloved garden” (80). This “dearly beloved garden” represents partnerships Clavers maintains throughout the text. First is the partnership between Clavers and the community garden in Montacute where she experiments with soil fertility and successful plant life. Here, she observes and records the success of plants for the benefit of her readers: “A bed of asparagus--I mean a dozen of them, should be among the first cares of spring... Then, what majestic palm-leaf

rhubarb, and what egg-plants!” (81). Kirkland’s reports on plant growth included in *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* are part of her experiment with a partnership ethic. As she records her more successful attempts to encourage plant growth, Clavers acts as a scientific Eve who understands and partners with nature.

Clavers’ “dearly beloved garden” also represents the partnership Clavers cultivates and maintains with the reader of *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?*. Kirkland experiments with form in the novel by crafting a nonfiction work hidden behind a pseudonymous protagonist while gesturing towards moments of sentimental fiction. The “garden” from which Clavers often wanders is the instructive narrative of her story, or the nonfictional aspect of Kirkland’s text. The knowledge she promises to her readers through her nonfictional creation forms the basis of her partnership with them. Because *A New Home, Who’ll Follow?* was constructed from Kirkland’s own letters on the frontier, Kirkland’s initial partnership with her reader relied on a regular correspondence. As these letters become a novel, Kirkland experiments with this partnership by separating herself from the narrative through the character of Mary Clavers. Clavers often “wanders” from the garden of Kirkland’s nonfiction, and the partnership between author and reader changes. In order to create a new partnership with her readers, Kirkland must experiment with form. Here, Kirkland acts as a scientific Eve in the narrative of *A New Home Who’ll Follow?*. As Merchant requires, she changes the “established order” of events within her narrative and “initiates [its] change” through the inclusion of Mary Clavers (Merchant 23). A partnership is then cultivated between Clavers and the reader.

Knowledge drives the partnership between Clavers and the reader. Clavers acts as a scientific Eve that experiments with forms of observation. While she acknowledges that a scientific understanding of the environment is beneficial, she also recognizes the worth of a more

poetic relationship to the earth. Clavers practices her partnership ethic with nature through observation and communicates lessons to her reader through these observations, often influenced by more romantic authors. Early in *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*, Clavers recognizes the beauty of the Michigan's natural landscape. While observing the fields surrounding her family, she writes:

The wild flowers of Michigan deserve a poet of their own. Shelley, who sang so quaintly of “the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,” would have found many a fanciful comparison and deep-drawn meaning for the thousand gems of the roadside. Charles Lamb could have written charming volumes about the humblest among them. Bulwer would find means to associate the common three-leaved white lily so closely with the Past, the Present, and the Future—the Wind, the stars, and the tripod of Delphos, that all future botanists, and eke all future philosophers, might fail to unravel the “linked sweetness.” We must have a poet of our own. (Kirkland 5)

In this section, Clavers places the poet's understandings of nature above that of the botanist or philosopher. Noting botany and philosophy's failings to capture the “deep-drawn meaning” of the natural world, Clavers demands the publication of a frontier poet. Here, Clavers suggests that a partnership driven by appreciation and observation of the landscape leads to a better understanding of the earth than traditional science.

As Clavers' partnership to the earth strengthens, so does her understanding of nature as a system. Clavers observations of nature become more scientific as the text continues. When discussing the consistency of soil in Montacute, Clavers notes:

One begins to wonder that the soil is so fertile. My own private theory is, that when the peninsula was covered with water, as it doubtless was before the Niagara met with such a fall, the porous mass became so thoroughly soaked, that the sun performs the office of rain, by drawing from below to the rich surface, the supplies of moisture which, under ordinary circumstances, are necessarily furnished from the aerial reservoirs. (112).

Clavers crafts a hypothesis from her observations of Michigan soil. Rather than claim sentimental authority through romantic description, Clavers gains scientific authority through the less emotional retelling of her tried experience on the frontier. Through observation and partnership, Clavers characterizes herself as a scientific Eve.

## CHAPTER 7

### THOREAU'S SCIENTIFIC EVE

Initially, it may be tempting to identify Thoreau as a figure of the “American Adam” because of his perceived gender, but Thoreau’s establishment of a partnership ethic paired with his eagerness to experiment suggests that Thoreau is better understood as a scientific Eve. In her discussion of the “American Adam,” Merchant argues that Adam figures are “reborn” through their engagement with nature (Merchant 103). Furthermore, these Adams hoped to “*recreate* the garden in the forest” (103, my italics). The dominating, Western recovery narrative of an “Eden to be improved” is exemplified by the Adams’ recreation of Eden (94, 104). Critics like Leo Marx, R.W.B Lewis, and Annette Kolodny have connected Thoreau’s *Walden* with this narrative. However, if Thoreau’s practice of a partnership ethic is considered, the observational narrative found in *Walden* can no longer be considered the story of the “American Adam.” Instead, Thoreau argues for the preservation of the environment in *Walden* and does not support its remaking. Thoreau uses partnership to connect himself to the earth. Furthermore, Thoreau practices partnership as a form of science to better understand the landscape he inhabits.

The general expansion of knowledge through partnership is Thoreau’s primary goal within the text of *Walden*. As Thoreau enacts his partnership ethic with the environment and his community, he acts as the scientific Eve of Walden Pond. Thoreau often refers to his time at the pond as an “experiment” (Thoreau 10). His time at Walden Pond offers the chance to experiment philosophically and scientifically. In the “Conclusion” to *Walden*, Thoreau states, “I learned this, at least, by my experiment; that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours” (260). Through the application of experimentation, Thoreau

practices his partnership with the earth. Thoreau, like Kirkland, uses observation and experimentation to practice partnership. When he feels that he has fostered a constructive partnership with the earth and has “lived deliberately” within it, his experiment has ended (74).

Thoreau’s practice of observation strengthens his partnership with nature and thus his philosophical and observational knowledge. In a famous passage from the chapter “Brute Neighbors,” Thoreau observes an ongoing “battle” between ants:

One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum*, but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black.

(Thoreau 185).

In this passage, Thoreau reveals the similarity of men to insects. The “war” between the red and black ants, Thoreau observes, is not different from the wars of men (186). Through observation, Thoreau recognizes similarities between all living things within nature. Here, his observations of these insects strengthen his partnership ethic with the earth. By acknowledging the moral similarities between human and insects, Thoreau equates them. He states, “I was myself excited somewhat even as if they had been men. The more you think of it, the less the difference” (186). Through observation, Thoreau reinforces the idea of nature’s equality to men, improving the partnership ethic. Building on Kirkland’s establishment of partnership as a science, Thoreau’s observations improve human’s relationship to the earth.

Through Thoreau's science of observation, he also improves his partnership with humanity. Thoreau, acting as a scientific Eve, reconnects himself to the earth by recognizing similarities in the ethics of nature and of man: "What I have observed of the pond is no less true in ethics. It is the law of average. Such a rule of the two diameters not only guides us toward the sun in the system and the heart in man, but draw lines through the length and breadth aggregate of a man's particular daily behaviors and waves of life into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height or depth of his character" (234). Here, Thoreau's observations of the pond have led to philosophical growth and understanding of human character. Thoreau recognizes the similarities between the morals of nature and man, equating man's varying personalities to the changing "waves," "coves," and "inlets" of water. If we first form an understanding partnership with nature, we may then construct a partnership between men. Thoreau acknowledges: "Perhaps we need only to know how his shores trend and his adjacent country or circumstances, to infer his depth and concealed bottom" (234). In order to gain a meaningful understanding of humanity, Thoreau argues that unemotional observation is necessary. Thoreau leads readers through the process of scientific observation in order to construct a strong relationship to the earth. Thoreau observes nature's agency and ability to act of its own accord. By identifying this agency, Thoreau creates the possibility of an equal relationship between human actors and the natural world.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

Through their observational experiments within the wilderness, Kirkland and Thoreau demonstrate a mutually beneficial relationship to the earth through the science of partnership. The time Kirkland and Thoreau spend within their respective natural environments ends with their return to civilization, although their experiments with partnership do not. Kirkland's autobiographical projection, Mary Clavers, does not indicate to the reader that she has left the Michigan frontier. Kirkland deliberately leaves this return out of the narrative in order to maintain her partnership with the earth. Kirkland uses conventions of the book to communicate that her experiment is ongoing. The construction of an autobiographical projection allows Kirkland to communicate an idea rather than a reality. For the character of Clavers, the partnership with the earth is an ongoing, endless process. By communicating her construction of a partnership through the medium of literature and purposefully avoiding her return, Kirkland ensures that her experiment with the earth endures even today. Kirkland's personal narrative in *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* continues to instruct readers on the importance of a connection to and a respect for the environment. Each time the novel is read, the experiment is reenacted.

Thoreau's famous narrative at Walden Pond has placed him almost endlessly within nature in the minds of his readers. Thoreau is rarely detached from the shores of Walden Pond in both memory and criticism even though he does communicate to the reader his reasons for leaving: "I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one" (Thoreau 259). Thoreau leaves the shores of Walden as a continuation of his experiment. Thoreau goes to

Walden Pond “to live deliberately” and “learn what [the woods] had to teach” (74). Although he leaves the Pond, Thoreau does not end his education from the environment. Instead, he says that he has “several more lives to live” in which to receive his environmental education. Thoreau recognizes that the earth teaches and changes human nature—nature is not fixed. Thoreau’s relationship to the earth through observation constructs a dynamic system that changes and improves each member. In his own life, his relationship to and education from the earth could not end. This constant and enduring partnership has connected Thoreau to the environment of Walden Pond indefinitely.

Kirkland and Thoreau’s recognition of a dynamic earth challenges the fixed, natural order to which many still clung during the nineteenth century. In a world governed by middle-class expectations and rules, Kirkland and Thoreau rediscover an Eden on earth and find that it is willful and independent from human law. The self-governing environments that these authors observe exemplify the changefulness of nature. If nature cannot be controlled or fixed, neither can human nature. These authors force us to reconsider how our relationship to the earth changes the landscape, but also how this relationship changes us. In this way, Kirkland’s narrative of partnership and observation in *A New Home Who’ll Follow?* challenges nineteenth-century understandings of natural order. Unlike previous Eve figures, Kirkland’s scientific Eve challenges tropes of the dominant Western recovery narrative that characterized her not as Adam’s equal, but as his lesser counterpart in the garden. Kirkland’s enactment of this figure predates the preservation ideology normally attributed to Thoreau. Thoreau is no the originator of these ideas and figures; rather, Thoreau expands upon Kirkland’s challenges to the Western recovery narrative and nineteenth-century understandings of natural order. Their nonfictional accounts of their time within nature provided an instruction manual to their nineteenth-century

readers on the importance and necessity of partnership. Preserved in *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* and *Walden*, their experiments that highlight respect and admiration for an independent earth continue today.

## REFERENCES

## REFERENCES

- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995. Print.
- Dobrow, Julie. "Saving the Land: Thoreau's Environmental Ethic and Its Influence on Mabel Loomis Todd and Millicent Todd Bingham." *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 277 (2012): 5-6. *Literary Reference Center*. Web. 31 Jan. 2015.
- Hoagland, Edward. "Introduction." *Walden*. By Henry David Thoreau. New York: Penguin Group, 1991. xi-xx. Print.
- Kilcup, Karen L. *Fallen Forests: Emotion, Embodiment, and Ethics in American Women's Environmental Writing, 1781-1924*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2013. Print.
- Kirkland, Caroline. *A New Home, Who'll Follow?* New Jersey: Rutgers, 1990. Print.
- Kolodny, Annette. *The Land before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, (1630-1860)*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984. Print.
- Lewis, R. W. B. *The American Adam; Innocence, Tragedy, And Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955. Print.
- Merchant, Carolyn. *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Scott, Joan W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 1986: 1053-75. *JSTOR Journals*. Web. 2 Apr. 2015.
- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden*. New York: Penguin Group, 1991. Print.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "Walking." Red Wing: Cricket House, 2010. Print.
- Zagarell, Sandra. "Introduction." *A New Home, Who'll Follow?*. By Caroline Kirkland. New Jersey: Rutgers, 1990. xi-l. Print.