CHAPTER 7

Sacrifice and Celebration

Restoration as a Performing Art

When the Walbiri of central Australia set out to renew the world, as they do annually, they do it through elaborate rituals that have no direct effect on the landscape or its ecology yet have ensured its renewal and well-being through thousands of years of human inhabitation. For us in the West it's the other way around. We go out and inventory the vegetation. We take soil samples and plant trees. We look for results in terms of survival rates and recovering soil profiles. We call what we are doing "restoration" rather than "world renewal," and ritual is the last thing we think about.

It was certainly the last thing I thought about. When I started thinking about restoration I thought first about what my culture taught me to think about—the restored ecosystem itself, the tangible product of the restoration effort. When it occurred to me that the process of restoration had value in and of itself, as a way of studying the landscape or ecosystem being restored, that struck me as a small revelation. It was several years before I got past thinking about restoration in purely "objective" terms and began to consider the value it might have as an experience. And it was another half-dozen years before I made the turn into what I came to regard as a "fourth dimension" of value and began to think seriously about restoration as a performance.

Then in the space of about a year I came across two articles that led me to reexamine some of my own ideas and to begin thinking seriously about performance and the idea of restoration as a performing art. The first was an essay by Frederick Turner titled "Cultivating the American

Garden," in which Turner explored the idea of gardening as a performing art. Since I was already thinking about restoration as a kind of gardening, I found this idea intriguing, so I got in touch with Turner and began a conversation with him that eventually led to the ideas I explore in this chapter.

The other article was a report prepared for the National Park Service by an advisory board chaired, interestingly, by Aldo Leopold's son, Starker Leopold.[1] Published in 1963, the report summarized the board's recommendations on the management of wildlife in the national parks and had played an important role in the development of policy for managing the parks in the years since. Having been told about it by a friend, I was eager to read it because the issues it deals with were not unlike those raised so clearly by the restoration effort at the Arboretum. Besides that, I wondered whether Leopold's experience growing up in Madison during the years when his father was playing a leading role in the Arboretum's development might have influenced his ideas on the management of wilderness areas.

What I found in the report was a philosophy of management that might very well have been informed by the Arboretum experiment. Acknowledging the need for more or less continual management to compensate for "constant changes due to natural or man-caused processes," Leopold and his colleagues prescribed what looked to me like a program of ongoing restorative management for the parks. "As a primary goal," they wrote, "we would recommend that the biotic associations within each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man."

To me, immersed in my reflections on the historic work at the Arboretum, this seemed like a call to extend the idea of restoration beyond the odd tract in an arboretum or ornamental landscape and into the national parks. That made sense to me. But two things about the Leopold committee's development of this idea bothered me: its view of the parks; and the manner in which it proposed the actual work of restoration should be carried out. Treating the parks rather like exhibits in a museum, the committee suggested that each park should be managed as "a vignette of primitive America," providing "a reasonable illusion" of the pre-contact landscape. "This," they concluded, "in our opinion should be the objective of every national park and monument." Thus they conceived of the parks in theatrical terms, as an illusion, like a stage set. But the stage they imagined was a proscenium stage, and the work of creating the illusion was to be carried out discretely backstage by a corps of professional

specialists. They noted specifically that "observable artificiality in any form must be minimized and obscured in every possible way. . . . Management may at times call for the use of the tractor, chain-saw, rifle or flame-thrower but the signs and sounds of such activity should be hidden from visitors insofar as possible."

What troubled me about this was not the idea of nature conceived in theatrical terms. That is where my own thinking was taking me. What troubled me was the *idea* of theater implicit in the Leopold report, and in particular the idea of the relationship between the public and the natural landscape the Leopold committee seemed to take for granted. By keeping the work of restoration backstage, as it were, the committee not only turned nature into an "illusion" for all but a few insiders, it cut the vast majority of people out of the very work that, I was beginning to realize, not only defines what the natural landscape will be but literally *constitutes* our relationship with it. It wasn't the idea of nature as theater that was wrong. That, I now realized, was a powerful metaphor that led into a vast area of human experience that could help me think more clearly about the work of restoration. What seemed somehow off key was the idea of theater as mere illusion, and the idea of the audience—in this case the public—as mere unself-conscious consumers of that illusion. This, I felt, turned the natural landscape into a mere show—a sort of Disneyland.

This was a minor theme of the Leopold report, but I found it provocative, in part because it touched on my own, at the time rather vague, ideas about the value of restoration as a kind of performance, forcing me to think them through more carefully. It was in doing this that I found Fred Turner's ideas and those of his parents Victor and Edith Turner, indispensable.[2] Beginning with their pioneering research in Africa in the 1950s, Victor and Edith Turner had extended their work into other cultures and performance traditions and, by the time of Victor's death in 1983, their work was widely regarded as constituting what their colleague Ronald Grimes has called a kind of reinvention of ritual. It had become the foundation for a whole school of research on ritual, with implications far beyond anthropology in areas such as theater, criticism, history, and the social sciences. Fred has built on his parents' work in his own highly interdisciplinary research in literature and cultural criticism. Reading the work of the Turners and, eventually, other students and practitioners of performance and ritual such as Grimes, Roy Rappaport, Richard Schechner, and Tom Driver, I began to develop a clearer idea of the nature of performance and ritual and the crucial role they play in dealing with the tensions and ambiguities inherent in relationships.

I also realized that the act of restoration represented such a point of tension and ambiguity in the relationship between nature and culture and that, far from devaluing restoration, this actually opened up a whole dimension of value that I had so far overlooked. While the Turners' work was concerned mainly with relationships among humans, I was struck by its relevance to the "practice" of relationships in a more general sense, and also by how restoration fits neatly into the pattern by which Victor Turner came to believe ritual, and ultimately theater, arise out of the inevitable tensions of social life. Life in any society, Turner wrote, naturally gives rise to disagreements and disputes. These lead to what Turner called *social dramas,* which he saw as working themselves out in four stages: crisis, breach, redress, and resolution, which may be either the restoration of a relationship or the formal recognition of a permanent breach between the parties involved. Ritual, Turner suggested, emerges from the third stage in the process, the stage of redress in which the argument is brought into court, so to speak, where a third party acts as an arbiter, and the issues are to some extent objectified and dealt with performatively and reflexively. He writes, "ritual and its progeny, the performing arts among them, derive from the subjunctive, liminal, reflexive, exploratory heart of the social drama, its third phase, where the contents of group experiences . . . are replicated, dismembered, remembered, refashioned, and mutely or vocally made meaningful."[3]

Turner and his students applied this idea to the interpretation of a wide range of social phenomena and historical events. For our purposes, the important point is that the work of ecological restoration represents precisely that third stage in the social drama of relations between nature and culture, the stage of redress, that gives rise to ritual. Besides this, our ideas and experiences of nature certainly are reflexively "replicated, dismembered, remembered, refashioned, and . . . made meaningful" in the process of restoration, as I have tried to show. Thus Turner's concept of social drama and its relationship to performance and ritual lends support to the idea that the work of restoration offers a suitable occasion for the invention of rituals of relationship with nature. Indeed, in a concluding comment Turner links this pattern explicitly with the work of restoration, understood as world making: "The cosmology has always been destabilized, and society has always had to make efforts, through both social dramas and esthetic dramas, to restabilize and actually *produce* cosmos."[4]

Encouraged by these ideas, and also by Rappaport's suggestion that ritual, because it entails both word and object, combining form and substance, contains a "paradigm of creation," I began to think seriously

about the development of restoration as a performing art—not the alienated theater of illusion implicit in the Leopold report, but a theater in which the audience is not only fully aware of what is going on backstage but also participates in the performance and even in the writing of the script. What I eventually came to envision was not a shift from one form of theater to another—from classical to experimental theater, for example—but a shift from theater to ritual, and from the conception of the public as an audience to a conception of the public as making up a *congregation* that actively participates in the performance and is not merely informed or even edified, but is "actually" transformed by it. Stepping back in this way to consider restoration as a performance takes us beyond technical, scientific, and even merely personal considerations to ask fascinating questions about what the *act* of restoration expresses or means, or—more accurately—what meanings might emerge from it if we were to take it seriously as an expressive act and to develop it as a context for the exploration and creation of meaning and other values. One way to approach these questions is simply to ask what the work is about and what sort of relationship with nature it implies.

I have already pointed out several such meanings. Restoration expresses caring for nature by deferring to it, by nurturing it, and by giving back to it. It is a form of reenactment and an experiment in the reversibility of time and of change. It turns technology back against itself, since it is carried out for the explicit purpose of making the signs of technology disappear from the landscape. It is a way of achieving intimacy with ecosystems and with the plants and animals and objects and processes that make them up and it enacts a positive relationship with the landscape being restored. They are by and large positive experiences through which the restorationist achieves both familiarity and intimacy with nature at the level of the low-key rituals of etiquette and courtesy.[5] Restoration, however, is also problematic, involving a wholehearted attempt to defer to nature while at the same time accepting a measure of responsibility for and—inseparable from that—dominion over the land. This ambiguity is at the heart of the environmentalist's wariness about restoration. Yet it is precisely because of this ambiguity that restoration provides an occasion for the higher rituals of reparation, initiation, and communion.

Coming at restoration as performance from another direction, we can explore performative traditions and genres that might be expected to resonate with the work of restoration in various ways, and that might provide useful comparisons and contrasts with it. These, it turns out, are easy

to find. Restoration is elemental work, related in various ways to the work of reconciliation, for example, or to redemption, and to a wide array of performative traditions. Here I consider four performative or artistic genres that offer especially useful or suggestive parallels with the work of ecological restoration: festival and comedy; initiation into community; rituals of world renewal through sacrifice (and the closely related artistic genre of tragedy); and finally, stepping outside the domain of ritual proper into the closely related domain of the arts, the art of literary pastoral.

Restoration is an occasion for comedy and festival simply because it brings people together in work—or play—that has positive value and seems to call for celebration. Comedy has been traced in the West to celebrations of fertility, and indeed the word "comedy" is thought to derive from the name of the god Comus, a god of fertility in the Greek pantheon, and a symbol of eternal life achieved through perpetual rebirth. Philosopher Susanne Langer writes,

> Comedy is an art form that arises naturally wherever people are gathered to celebrate life, in spring festivals, triumphs, birthdays, weddings or initiations. For it expresses the elementary strains and resolutions of animate nature, the animal drives that persist even in human nature, the delight man takes in his special mental gifts that make him the lord of creation; it is an image of human vitality holding its own in the world amid the surprises of unplanned coincidence.[6]

Restoration is "comic," we may say, because it entails reproduction and engagement and all the uncertainty, ambiguity, and opportunity for misunderstanding that naturally accompany these life processes. It also lends itself to festival and feasting because it brings—or can bring—people together to celebrate life and even, without taking it too seriously, their role as lords of creation, as Langer notes. Community-oriented restoration projects have in fact given rise to festivals and, in at least one case, even to outright comedy, in the form of a musical comedy, *Queen Salmon,* that restorationists working in the watershed of the Mattole River in northern California created a few years ago, first to celebrate and then to draw attention to their work.[7]

Such experiences and events are invaluable because they provide something that has been rare in environmentalism, especially the environmentalism of the past few decades—an occasion for celebrating our participation in the ecology of a classic landscape. Besides this, they add a social and communal dimension to the more or less solitary and per-

sonal experience of the naturalist or observer. For both these reasons they are an indispensable first step toward a healthy relationship with the classic landscape.

But one of the benefits of taking restoration seriously as a performing art is the critical perspective this provides. Seeing comedy as both universal and unpretentious, writer Joseph Meeker suggests that comedy provides a basis for an environmental ethic and a relationship between nature and culture generally. In particular, Meeker is attracted by the figure of the picaresque character who, like Thomas Mann's confidence man, Felix Krull, makes his way by trickery and by appealing to the vanities of others but does not—in contrast with the tragic hero—take himself too seriously. The picaresque hero is an opportunist who acknowledges wickedness and whose politics are "machiavellian," but who is motivated by love as well as self-interest, and whose ultimate objective is to accommodate himself to the world.[8] Underplayed in Meeker's account, however, is the dark side of comedy and its close relationship to its theatrical counterpart, tragedy. Meeker notes that, unlike comedy, tragedy is not a widespread genre, as comedy is, but is peculiar to a few Western cultures, notably those of ancient Greece and Elizabethan England. He sees it as the expression of a peculiarly alienated sensibility, rather than as a high artistic expression of the experience of alienation and difference that is part of the human condition. But, as Langer points out, if comedy is the image of fortune, then tragedy is the image of fate; the two together make up destiny. While one celebrates the truth of human oneness with the world, the other explores, without rejecting or downplaying it, the tragedy of human otherness. Taken together, they represent, Joseph Campbell notes,

> the terms of a single mythological theme and experience which includes them both and which they bound: the down-going and the up-coming . . . , which together constitute the totality of the revelation that is life, and which the individual must know and love if he is to be purged . . . of the contagion of sin (disobedience to the divine will) and death (identification with the mortal form).[9]

This is achieved, he points out, not by denying evil but by achieving an "all-sustaining love" that sees "an immanent, imperishable eternity," even in the "dreadful mutilations" of violence and death. Thus, the way down is the way up. Death and pain and the knowledge of shame must precede resurrection and the delights of comedy with its promise of eternity. Before the festival and the feast must come the killing. And, Campbell writes, "it is the business of mythology proper"—and, we may add,

of performance generally—"to reveal the specific dangers and techniques of the dark interior way from tragedy to comedy."[10]

Here again we encounter the realization that the knowledge of shame is the pathway to communion. In the end (like those in Lewis's party of Hope) the picaresque hero is alone and isolated, succeeding in his quest for individual advantage only at the expense of intimacy and community. The hero, for both Meeker and Campbell, is best and most fully represented by the figure of Dante, who passes through the pain and alienation of Hell to achieve the bliss and transcendence of Paradise. In its way restoration can be redemptive too, but only if it is tightly linked to the acts of destruction that make restoration necessary—the movement downward that both necessitates the movement upward and makes it possible.[11]

An important point here is that, while the pattern of redemption, the movement of the soul through "the worst" in order to achieve "the best," may be universal, the conditions and terms of this journey change in the course of cultural evolution. The idea of progress is currently unfashionable because, being part of creation, progress always comes at a price and entails an intensification of shame. One way of dealing with this is simply to deny the reality of radical change: if there are no metaphysical frontiers, then there is no need for means of dealing with the metaphysical crisis of crossing them. This is psychologically convenient: if nothing has changed, then the psychological/spiritual tools that allowed, say, the Australian Aborigines or the Plains Indians to achieve a more or less satisfactory relationship with their environment should prove adequate for an industrial or postindustrial society.

In this spirit Meeker proposes the rejection of the tragic in favor of the picaresque hero. And similarly, Gary Snyder notes that landscape poetry is an invention of civilized peoples, implying that if we lived properly we could do without it; Paul Shepard idealizes the rituals of the hunt and rejects sacrifice (and along with it agriculture and history); and the trickster figure of myth gains popularity as an appealing alternative to such troubling figures as Job, Oedipus, Lear, and the crucified Christ.

What these observations and proposals have in common is what I referred to earlier as a kind of creationism—a belief that the world is, or ought to be, as we found it. Implicit here is a rejection of radical change, of an evolution that entails real loss and generates real novelty, greater difference, and deeper shame but at the same time opens up possibilities for deeper levels of communion. Going hand in hand with this is a diminished conception of ritual, which is seen as a way of dealing with the old,

comfortable shame of the hunt or of coming of age, say, but not with the new shame of agriculture and genetic engineering. Sacrifice, tragedy, and pastoral art may indeed be absent in archaic societies: agricultural and urban culture invented them to deal with psychological crises associated with new technologies and new ways of life. But what these new modes of performance reveal is not the failure or decline of culture, but the power of the imagination to generate values such as beauty and community out of the deepening shame of creation. What is called for, then, is not a return to the old ways, but, as before, the invention of new ways of dealing productively with the new frontiers of shame opened up by the deeper alienation of science and the new technologies and economies it makes possible. The failure to do this can have catastrophic consequences. Consider, for example, the consequences we face as a result of having treated pesticides and antibiotics as mere tools, rather than having dealt with them sacramentally.

Initiation is the ritual process by which a community admits new members, provides instruction in the knowledge and ways of the community, engages initiates in the social contract, and provides passage across the psychological barriers between childhood and adulthood. Significantly, the process of coming of age and of joining the human community has often been problematic in America. In a study that picks up where Lewis's *American Adam* leaves off, the literary critic Ihab Hassan identifies a characteristic feature of the American sensibility as "radical innocence," which he defines as a neurosis of arrested development and "a regressive force that prevents the self from participating fully in the world," leaving the hero trapped between the backward-looking ideal of Eden and the forward-looking one of Utopia. The result is an unresolved view of one's place in the world that, Hassan argues, both puritanism and the transcendentalism of the Emersonians failed to resolve.[12]

Radical innocence finds expression in fables of initiation that more often that not fail, leading to victimhood and alienation. As a result, in American literature figures like Huckleberry Finn, Henry Fleming in Crane's *Red Badge of Courage,* Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby,* or the young characters in Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio,* who fail at integration of the self into some version of the human community, far outnumber characters like Hemingway's Nick Adams or Faulkner's Ike McCaslin, who more or less succeed.

Hassan's interpretation of literature is supported by the experience of the millions of young persons who, left to shift for themselves in this crucial matter, invent bizarre and often dangerous rituals of initiation for themselves. Considering our society's failure to provide means of initiating people into the human community, it is hardly surprising that it has failed at the task of providing means for initiation into the larger community that includes nonhuman species. Only recently have psychologists, teachers, guidance counselors, and scholars begun to take steps to remedy this situation by working with young people to invent coming-of-age and initiation rituals. These frequently involve experiences in the natural landscape, often modeled on the traditional vision quests of Native American peoples, and it seems likely that the work of restoration might easily be incorporated into efforts of this kind.[13]

In his book on reinventing rites of passage, Ronald Grimes offers a list of elements that appear in rituals of initiation in various cultures.[14] Perhaps not surprisingly, many of these—for example, instruction, ritual humiliation and displays of subservience, ordeal, the revision of values, and the assumption of new responsibilities—are a commonplace of initiation into any kind of community, as when a person enters a military unit or joins a profession or trade, a fraternal society or service club, a religious community, a gang, or any form of association that functions as a community in the tougher sense, as distinct from a neighborhood, say, a club, or even a society. What is striking here, if we think of restoration as a context for initiation into the land community, is the opportunities it offers for the kinds of experience Grimes and other anthropologists identify as common elements in rituals of initiation in traditional societies. Perhaps the most obvious of these is the self-abnegation, the setting aside of the will in deference to the interests of the group, that is implicit in the work of restoration. In traditional initiation rituals this is dramatized (and ritually effected, or realized) by acts of self-abasement imposed on the initiate. I see this as similar in a way to what the restorationist does by accepting the responsibility of copying—not imitating, but copying—the model system.

Also on Grimes's list are ordeals—demanding tasks, routines or vigils, often involving fasting and other kinds of deprivation, which, together with tattooing and ritual mutilation, dramatize the authority of the group over the individual. These in effect domesticate the initiate and also bring about physiological and psychological conditions conducive to the experience of *communitas,* and they do this in part by simulating what we might call necessity—the often demanding encounter with the basic facts and demands of life in a "state of nature." Since such experiences must originally have been what drove humans through the barrier of

shame into community, it may well be that *communitas* itself is part of the hard-wired reward evolution has provided for this effort, as Fred Turner has suggested is the case for beauty.

Another key element of many initiation rites is acceptance of responsibility, and the recognition of the role humans play in the ordering of the world. Among the Walbiri of Australia, for example, children are taught to believe that the well-being of the community and the environment depends on spirits, and the initiation rites themselves include elaborate effects attributed to these spirits and designed to terrify the naive initiates. Their discovery, in the course of the ritual, that these effects are actually stage managed by the adults is a dramatic introduction to human responsibility for the ordering of the world. This is what Géza Róheim means when he writes that, for the Aborigines, "this is a man-made world."[15] It is, of course, precisely this kind of radical responsibility for the classic landscape that environmentalists have found so difficult to accept.

As Grimes points out, it is dangerous to generalize across cultures when discussing initiation practices; he notes that even the three-part pattern many scholars have used in interpreting ritual is a theoretical construct that fails to take into account the complexity and variety of initiation as it is actually practiced. He would be pleased with the work of Ed Collins and his colleagues at the McHenry County (Illinois) Conservation District. This group has systematically and self-consciously developed its large-scale prairie, wetland, and river restoration projects as contexts for initiation both into the group and into the landscape. In fact Ed has developed his own van Gennepian system of stages in this process—in this case seven, which he calls epiphany, struggle, annealing, transformation, recollection, triumph, and transmittal.

Some cultures, Grimes notes, do not initiate members at all, and some readers will object that in emphasizing the more harrowing aspects of initiation I am exaggerating the emotional difficulties involved in entry into community. These, they might say, reflect a high level of tension between the individual and the community, and it would be more appropriate to seek models of community in situations that reflect something closer to harmony. This, however, is a mistake. As I noted earlier, different cultures find different occasions for confronting shame, and if we are serious about the task of building community or achieving communion with the rest of nature, the place to look for ways to do this is not in situations where tension is absent, or where it has been dealt with so successfully as to have become more or less invisible, but in less harmonious situations

where underlying tensions reveal themselves most clearly, either directly or in practices designed to resolve them.

In any event, the relevance of all this to restoration and its role in the task of building community and joining the land community is obvious. As my friend Walter Rosen has pointed out, restoration entails the loss of innocence, and it is for just this reason that its acceptance as *the* paradigm for the conservation of classic landscapes represents nothing less than the coming of age of environmentalism.[16]

Here, though, the question is whether community and adulthood provide plausible or even relevant models of relationship for a postindustrial society such as that of the modern (or postmodern) West. Adulthood may be obsolete in a society that worships youth, one in which, I sometimes feel, children no longer really aspire to grow up. Society in general provides few rites of passage of any kind, and those that adolescents create for themselves are commonly—and understandably—curiously inverted—expressions of defiance of adult authority rather than of submission to it.

Perhaps this is yet another threshold of radical change in the trajectory of cultural evolution suggested by the neoteny, or delayed development, characteristic of humans and also by the "juventocracy," the revolt of the young men against the authority of the old that Fred Turner suggests occurred at some point in the course of cultural evolution. If so, then the sooner we face up to this and start figuring out how to derive value from it, the better.[17]

Of all the performative traditions and genres, restoration is perhaps most obviously related to ancient institutions of world-renewal, or fixing the world. These reflect an awareness that the conceptual and psychological ordering of the world achieved by culture is always running down and requires periodic renewal by a deliberate human effort. Being directed at the soul, this effort is not literal but figurative, involving rituals that do not affect the landscape directly, but do renew the conceptual, psychological, and spiritual structures on which the health of the landscape quite literally depends.

Thus, in archaic and premodern tradition these rituals commonly involve a sacrifice that reenacts the violent act of creation, providing a passage through the shame of creation to communion with it.[18] Eliade notes that many American Indian groups commemorate a mythical deluge that, like the biblical flood, put an end to all human beings except a mythical ancestor. Similarly, the New Year rites of the ancient Babylonians in-

cluded a reading of the account of creation and a reenactment of the combat between the god Marduk and the sea monster Tiamat, from whose torn body the god ultimately created the cosmos. And in Christian belief the sin of Adam and Eve is expiated and humanity is redeemed through the sacrificial killing of Christ, often identified with Adam. As is the case with any ritual, sacrifice can mean many things and can be read in many ways. Most pertinent here, however, is the idea suggested by Turner that in the art of sacrifice we reenact the primal murder and in doing so declare our solidarity in crime with the rest of nature.[19]

Looking at the act of restoration in light of these traditions, we can see striking parallels and resonances, suggesting the value of restoration as a context for confronting and dealing with the contradictions at the heart of creation. Like rituals of world renewal, restoration reenacts history. Like them, it also commonly begins with a killing—first, the killing and destruction of the ecosystem, an act of violence that implicates the restorationist in the very act of attempting to reverse it; and second, the killing associated with restoration itself, to clear exotic vegetation, for example, or eliminate or control populations of exotic animals. Not surprisingly, people often find this troubling. Public objections to such activities, especially when they involve killing animals such as deer or burros, often block restoration projects, and restorationists themselves often feel conflicting emotions about this phase of their work. This is no doubt why the use of fire as a tool for restoring ecological communities such as prairies and forests has often been controversial, fire being an archetypal emblem of destructive chaos.[20] Yet like the epic floods, murders, and battles of myth, fire can prepare the way for renewal—a resurrection of the kind symbolized by the phoenix or, for the Christian, by the pentecostal tongues of flame. There is a striking resonance here with classic modes of sacrifice, as Jerry Escher, a restorationist in Tacoma, Washington, remarks: like the innocent victim of traditional sacrifice, the weeds and exotic plants the restorationist kills die for our sins. This may be painful, but, we must remind ourselves, the victim must be innocent because what is involved here is not a punishment for sin, but an acknowledgment of existential shame.

Perhaps it is the restorationist's responsibility, then, to take advantage of this link with myth, to ritualize the process of restoration in order to turn it into an occasion for figurative and subjective—as well as literal and objective—world renewal. An example of how this might work is provided by a project carried out at the UW Arboretum several years ago by Barbara Westfall, an ecological artist from Mt. Horeb, a small town 15 miles west of Madison. Exploring the Arboretum's restoration projects

for opportunities to create art that would draw attention to the prairies and their history, Westfall was attracted to a project being carried out to remove a grove of mature aspen trees that was encroaching on a patch of prairie adjacent to Curtis Prairie. The trees would be killed by girdling. To turn this more or less routine project into a work of art, Westfall directed her attention to the girdle itself, a ragged wound a foot or so wide, made by stripping a band of bark from the trunk, all the way around and several feet above the ground. Ordinarily this is done, and the tree is simply left to die. To draw attention to what was going on, however, Westfall painstakingly removed the dark surface of the bark on the yard or so of trunk between the girdle and the ground on more than two hundred trees, exposing the rust-orange layer beneath. This she treated with vegetable oil, deepening the color and enhancing its striking contrast with the smoother, greenish-gray bark above the wound. She then highlighted the ragged edges of the bark above and below this wound with black paint, rather, I thought, like mascara. This created a sharp contrast in color and texture with the bone-smooth white of the exposed wood.

In this way, Westfall used the classic technique of sacrificial ritual—not only performing the shameful act but intensifying the shame by highlighting it, drawing attention to it, and making it public. In doing so she turned what might have been a routine, clinical procedure into a sacrificial act and an occasion for the creation of beauty. The result was a population of dying trees standing among other, flourishing trees at the edge of the prairie—a contrast that became especially vivid and poignant at the time of leaf-out in the spring. Westfall, borrowing a phrase from the Arboretum crew, titled the project "Daylighting the Woods." Easily visible from a nearby trail, it was an affecting visual testimony to the discrimination and respectful death-dealing that are an integral part of the act of restoration.[21]

Westfall's project dealt with killing at the population level—a grove of trees—and represents a step beyond more traditional sacrifices, which typically deal with killing at the level of the individual organism. The next step would be to the level of the entire ecosystem or ecological community. This would entail, first, the consecration of the ecosystem, possibly by restoring it, and then, eventually, the destruction of at least part of it. This might involve a ceremonial plowing down, for example, in the case of a prairie, or a timber harvest in the case of a forest. On the prairies, this ceremonial cycle of consecration and destruction could coincide with the cycle of shifting agriculture suggested by Mike Miller and Julie Jastrow's studies of soil regeneration under prairie.

This cycle of ritual renewal offers a way to counter the problem Aldo Leonard described in an often-quoted sentence in "The Round River." "One of the penalties of an ecological education," Leopold wrote, "is that one lives alone in a world of wounds."[22] We can read this with an emphasis on "wounds" and aspire to a world without wounds, but this would be unrealistic, sentimental—even antiecological since the world as we know it is constructed in such a way that life depends on killing and death. A better reading is with the emphasis on "alone." Read this way, Leopold's formulation of this problem is beautifully apt: in the absence of ritual to transmute the violence and shame of killing into an occasion for communion, we do indeed live alone in a world of wounds. But our task is not to end killing or eliminate all wounds but, through ritual, to turn the act of killing from impure violence—mere casual or unreflexive killing in a clinical or matter-of-fact spirit—into the purifying violence that is a source of grace. As Turner points out, the word "blessing" actually derives from the Old English word *bletsian,* which means to consecrate with blood, to wound, or make bleed.[23] This is the wisdom implicit in the tradition of ritual sacrifice: the realization that communion is achieved in the act of eating, in which we encounter in an especially immediate and vivid way the inextricable link between life and death, and in doing so achieve a state of grace.

Some skeptics may still ask, what good does ritual actually do for the environment? Granting that restoration is worthwhile in a practical sense, how does ritualizing it or turning it into a work of art add to its value? What is the relationship between the literal act of restoration and the process of world renewal or redemption through ritual? Clearly, fussing over a girdled tree, scraping off its bark and dabbing paint on it, has no immediate ecological effect on the landscape. Similarly, the practices of the Hupa Indians, the Australian Aborigines, or the Babylonian priest—renewing the world through ritual reenactment of the creation—have no literal effect on the landscape. The results of such acts are entirely internal and subjective.

As materialists, we see more value in "real," literal work, such as restoration, in which the effects on the landscape are obvious. Indeed, we ignore or at least fastidiously exclude from official accounts of the work its other, inner results. From our modernist perspective this is a sensible move. What the Hupa or the Aborigines merely *pretend* to do, we *really* do—or so we like to think. But is this really the way it works? Of course not. As environmentalists frequently point out, the ecosystems we inhabit are not merely dependent upon us but are ecologically dominated

by us, their quality and even their survival depending to a considerable extent on the contents of our hearts and minds. Thus to overlook the effects of the work on those involved in restoration, either as participants or as part of an audience, is to overlook what is, even in purely ecological and "practical" terms, quite simply its most important result.

The importance of the subjective results of restoration is clearly expressed in an account of a restoration project of sorts in the novel *Winter in the Blood,* by the Native American writer James Welch:

> The sugar beet factory up by Chinok had died seven years before. Everybody had thought the factory caused the river to be milky but the water never cleared. The white men from the fish department came in their green truck and stocked the river with pike. They were enthusiastic and dumped thousands of pike of all sizes into the river. But the river ignored the fish and the fish ignored the river; they refused even to die there. They simply vanished. The white men made tests; they stuck electric rods into the water; they scraped mud from the bottom; they even collected bugs from the fields next to the river; they dumped other kinds of fish in the river. Nothing worked. The fish disappeared.[24]

"The analytic science of Welch's fish department fails," the critic Chris Norden comments, "because its strategy for restoring the river consists in doing things *to* the river rather than doing things *with* the river. By excising the human participant from the ecosystem proper, Welch suggests, such analytical, nonritualized restoration may simply reinforce the fragmentation of ecosystems which instrumental (industrial) use has initiated. Restoration fails, Welch implies, so long as it is regarded and carried out merely as a form of technology. To succeed it must be carried out by members of a human community sustained by ritual."[25]

Perhaps Welch's account proves nothing, since fiction is just another form of make-believe. But we should recall here Victor Turner's suggestion that make-believe is a way of making *belief,* which is the key issue here. And the experience of restorationists makes it pretty clear that Welch is right. This really is the way the world works—not in an abstract or mystical sense, but in actual fact. The best restoration projects, those that result in the highest-quality ecosystems with the best chance of surviving over a long period of time, are those that are carried out by people who have had a chance to develop a close attachment to and an intimate understanding of the landscape through direct participation in the work. Best and most promising of all are those projects in which this work has been ritualized to some extent. The worst ones, the ones restorationists deplore, are projects carried out as mere technical procedures to meet

regulatory requirements, excluding as irrelevant the subjective element, not to mention its expression and development through ritualization of the work.

Such projects *do* fail because they fail to achieve the reordering of ideas and values required to make the *restorationist* and other members of his or her community effective, knowledgeable, loyal, and responsible members of the biotic community. Crucially, what really has to be renewed is not the landscape at all, but the human community's *idea* of the landscape, on which the well-being of the landscape ultimately depends. These are not, we must remind ourselves, separate things. The link between them is nicely reflected in an uncertainty about the meaning of the word *Intichiuma,* which the Arunta people of Australia use to refer to their world-renewal rituals.[26] This word has been variously translated as meaning to put into good condition or to instruct, but the uncertainty of translation is surely misplaced. Clearly *Intichiuma* does both. It ensures the maintenance of the totemic species *by providing the instruction and means of transformation needed to bring the human community into communion with it.* In any event, the distinction between subject and object is a modern one. In the archaic mind, as in the virtual space created by ritual, the two realms are inseparable. The world *is* what we make of it through performative interaction with it, redeeming it from chaos into cosmos by rituals that renew our ability to order the world, make sense out of it, and experience beauty in it.

In the end, then, we are led to conclude that Welch is right. Ritual without restoration may work. But to undertake restoration projects without ritualization is to overlook and waste what is perhaps most valuable about them. Possibly the single most striking example of this, recently pointed out by California restorationist Freeman House, was the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps back in the 1930s.[27] The young men of the CCC planted billions of trees and carried out projects to control erosion and improve watersheds and habitats at thousands of sites throughout the nation. In many areas they did a vast amount of good, halting and reversing degradation of the landscape on a truly vast scale. Many of them learned something from the experience. Yet they were, by and large, nonresidents of project areas and therefore lacked a close association with the projects. And the work was not ritualized. As a result, it was easy, two or three decades later, for society to lose interest in the old CCC sites and to neglect or exploit them.

If, on the other hand, CCC enrollees had been recruited from local communities, and if the work had been ritualized, with project planners

and crew supervisors calling in artists and ritualists, and taking their advice as seriously as that of the scientists and technical experts involved in the work, my guess is that the results would have been very different.

Pastoral, as described by literary critic Leo Marx in his classic study of the genre, is one of the several great artistic modes that arise from and provide ways of exploring the deepest tensions in human experience.[28] If tragedy is the exploration of the tension between what is and what ought to be, and comedy is the exploration of the tension between what is and what seems to be, then pastoral is the exploration of the tension between nature and culture. Pastoral explores this tension in the same way tragedy and comedy explore their themes, by moving the characters through the field of tension involved. In the American version of pastoral, this is accomplished through a combination of symbols and patterns of action that Marx refers to as the pastoral design.

This typically takes place in three "acts" or movements that, like the three-part structure of classical drama, correspond to the three phases scholars like Victor Turner use to interpret and describe the ritual process: separation, liminality, and reaggregation. In the first phase, separation, the protagonist, motivated by dissatisfaction with civilization, withdraws from civilized life, typically represented by a city, a factory, experience in battle, or the like, and seeks renewal through contact with nature in a more natural setting—what Marx calls a "middle landscape"—that combines elements of nature and civilization. There he ultimately achieves some kind of heightened experience, often including a moment of epiphany or a feeling of oneness with the world. This, however, is only the middle of the story, the second of the three "acts," and Marx outlines two quite different ways for the story to end. In the first, which he calls "sentimental" pastoral, the story concludes with an implied promise of redemption, in the sort of happily-ever-after ending we find in escapist art: good examples are the films *Mr. Blandings Builds His Dream House* and *Baby Boom.* This, however, is defective, incomplete pastoral. Like any sentimental art, it falsifies experience and is artistically dishonest, or at any rate superficial. In contrast, what Marx calls "complex" pastoral denies both protagonist and reader any such easy conclusion. Here, something—a reminder of death, or of civilization—breaks into the protagonist's epiphany, revealing the limitations of the pastoral retreat and motivating him or her to return to civilization, presumably with a deeper understanding of the ambiguous and troubling relationship between himself and the world.

A crucial feature of complex, as opposed to sentimental, pastoral is that complex pastoral confronts the irreducible tensions inherent in the relationship between nature and culture, or in relationship generally. As the "evasion" episode in *Huckleberry Finn* suggests, this can be done only in the domain of make-believe and performance. The resolution, in other words, is not literal (like the resolution of *Baby Boom* in which J. C. Wyatt, the "Tiger Lady" of the early scenes in Manhattan, winds up having it all: baby, husband, cottage in rural Vermont *and* the directorship of a multimillion-dollar corporation) but figurative, offering what Marx calls a "virtual resolution." Being, like tragedy or comedy, a major artistic mode, pastoral is ubiquitous. It is a major element in the work of canonic writers such as Herman Melville, Emily Dickinson, Willa Cather, Sara Orne Jewett, Robert Frost, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Mark Twain. It is a common element in advertising and in popular art forms such as the western, crime, and adventure genres, and even in sports. Michael Gershman and Scott Schiamberg, both students of Leo Marx, have noted that baseball incorporates elements typical of pastoral art, such as the suspension of time and the choice of a pastoral landscape, the "ballpark," as the setting for the action.[29]

As in the case of traditional rituals of initiation and world renewal, there are striking parallels between pastoral art and the act of ecological restoration. For one thing, the basic movement or "plot" is the same: like the pastoral figure, the restorationist is motivated by disaffection or disappointment with civilization and attempts to resolve it through a return to nature. For another, both take place at least partly in a landscape that combines elements of nature and culture—Marx's "middle landscape"—creating the field of tension between nature and culture in which the pastoral experiment is carried out. In traditional pastoral art this landscape is usually defined geographically, being located, like Thoreau's Walden Pond or Twain's Mississippi River, in some sense on the boundary between city and wild nature. The restored landscape also provides a middle ground, even if it is only a patch of green in an urban park that is betwixt and between, both in the sense that it represents "nature" physically juxtaposed with "culture" and in the sense that it is partly natural, partly artificial.

Viewed as a performance, then, restoration is a new way of carrying out the pastoral experiment, and for this reason the restorationist has much to learn from pastoral art, and also much to offer it.

One limitation of American pastoral literature is the action on which

it commonly relies as the way of conducting the pastoral experiment—that three-part action of withdrawal, immersion, and return that Marx describes as the pastoral design. Both restoration and traditional artistic pastoral follow this basic pattern of action, but they do so in very different ways. While the protagonist in traditional literary pastoral withdraws from civilization by actually moving in space, leaving the city, for example, and seeking contact with nature in the country, the restorationist remains in place and, rather than leave the city for the country, attempts to remove the city or other marks of civilization from the landscape in order to reconstitute country or "nature" in place. In other words, instead of exploring the field of tension between nature and culture by moving in *space,* the restorationist explores it by moving in *time,* and this has important implications for the outcome—that is to say, for the meaning of the performance.

As I noted earlier in discussing John Muir, it is a mistake to take the search for the garden too literally. American history, for example, may be seen as a literal pastoral, a withdrawal from Old-World civilization and a search for a new and unspoiled world outside history. Columbus, skirting the coast of Venezuela during his third voyage to the Americas in 1498, recorded in his journal, apparently in all seriousness, that he believed he was approaching Eden.[30] The early explorers sought a fountain of youth and often assumed that the native people they encountered were living in a state of prelapsarian innocence.

The tragedy inherent in this, over and above the yearning after innocence it reflects, lies in the mistaken belief that Eden is a place to be found or rediscovered rather than a relationship to be achieved. This misconception has led to much fruitless searching, from Columbus's time down to our own, where it is evident in such futile—and environmentally destructive—practices as the construction of homes and vacation retreats in rural and remote wilderness areas. The restorationist, in contrast, is a pastoral figure who has taken what those in religious life call a vow of stability. Rather than withdraw from the city, abandoning it even temporarily, he attempts to redeem it by bringing the grace of nature back into it. This is harder than taking a vacation in the country or moving to the suburbs, but it is also, as restorationists are learning, deeply rewarding. And it opens up the possibility of actually residing in and reinhabiting the middle landscape rather than merely visiting it.

Another limitation of traditional American pastoral, expressed as much in ritualized activities as in formal works of art, is that its plot commonly hinges on actions that intrude on or consume the natural

landscape. The obvious examples are overtly consumptive or intrusive pastoral activities such as hunting, fishing, motorboating, driving off-road vehicles, or moving to the country. But even activities such as hiking and birding, which usually involve a commitment to minimize "impact" on the landscape, are essentially consumptive. They take from the natural landscape, altering it (even if only in subtle ways), and they give nothing back. The restorationist, in contrast, does give back to nature by making a place more natural *both* in the conventional sense that it becomes more like its "natural" counterpart *and* in the sense that through the process of restoration the landscape becomes more fully realized, more aware of itself. In this way it provides a basis for a reciprocal relationship with nature, while at the same time allowing us to fulfill our obligations as a uniquely self-conscious species.

Yet another limitation of American pastoral art is its individualism, which reflects the radical spiritual individualism of puritanism, reinforced by the experiences of immigration and settlement on the frontier. The New England Puritans themselves were plagued by a separatist tendency and, as Marx points out, a logical outcome of Puritan separatism is the congregation of one, exemplified by the solitary figure of Thoreau sitting on his pumpkin at Walden Pond. He notes that the protagonists of our pastoral adventures and fables are commonly solitary figures, lonely, disaffected, or rebellious, Huck Finn being only one of the more conspicuous examples.

The reason for this is not simply a willful individualism, but rather the failure of culture to provide adequate means of connecting with the natural landscape in a social or communal manner. Other, less individualistic cultures characteristically place more emphasis on the individual as a member of a community, taking it for granted that both an individual's identity and his or her relationships to a considerable extent depend on the community and its institutions. As Chris Norden points out, in Native American cultures, even an apparently individual experience such as the vision quest, which entails personal isolation, sometimes for extended periods, is communal in orientation. It is a rite of initiation into community. It takes place through a ritual, which is itself a social institution, and its purpose is not withdrawal or escape but actually socialization. In the end the individual "resurfaces," as Chris Norden says, into the community to take his or her place in it. Other traditions offer examples of pastoral that involve a group rather than a purely solitary activity—think, for example, of *Robin Hood,* or of Shakespeare's pastoral plays, *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* All of these are pastorals, but they are *communal* pastorals, in which the characters, having withdrawn from civilization as a group, eventually return to it in the same way.

Modern pastoral, in contrast, offers few examples of pastoral retreats that either involve or achieve community.[31] It reflects the assumptions of a culture that encourages us to think of our relationship with nature—like the Puritan's relationship with God—as essentially a personal, even private affair. Left more or less to his own devices, the American is compelled to undertake the pastoral experiment alone, improvising as he goes along. And even if he is successful in carrying the project through to some kind of communion with nature, American society offers no way back in, no institutions or congenial, biologically enfranchised sensibilities within the culture that the successful initiate can connect with upon emerging from the transforming experience of the pastoral rite. As a result, the reciprocal movement of the ritual, first out, and then back in, is not completed, and the experience is one of outward movement only, a centrifugal movement away from community that results not in community but in separation, and ultimately in alienation. In this context, Marx suggests, the "inspiriting vision of a humane community" implicit in the pastoral experiment "has been reduced to a token of individual survival." And, he continues, "the outcome of *Walden, Moby Dick,* and *Huckleberry Finn* is repeated in the typical modern version of the fable; in the end the American hero is either dead or totally alienated from society, alone and powerless. . . . And if, at the same time, he pays a tribute to the image of a green landscape, it is likely to be ironic and bitter."[32]

The limitations of this sensibility for environmentalism are obvious. Human beings are a social species. For such a species, the relationship with nature is not a personal matter but is necessarily mediated by the community. The solitary individual, King Lear's "unaccommodated man," is an ecological and spiritual nonentity, as helpless and as ecologically irrelevant as a solitary honeybee, cut off not only from the human community, but from the larger community of other animals and plants as well. In the end, as important as personal and even solitary experience may be in the process of creating a relationship, the relationship between humans and the rest of nature is essentially a relationship between *communities.* To borrow a phrase from the legal profession, it is not the individual but the community that has standing with nature. This being the case, it is clear that the fate of the natural landscape depends not only on individual people, but on the coherence and vitality of the communities to which they belong and the means they develop for negotiating their relationship with the biotic community.[33]

One advantage of restoration as a way of conducting the pastoral ex-

periment is that the work of restoration lends itself to community and group effort. It is not that restoration cannot be carried out by individuals working alone. Often it has been, especially in the early stages of its development, when it was a new idea that appealed to mavericks and loners such as Henry Greene at the UW Arboretum or, more recently, Dan Janzen in Costa Rica, or Bob Betz in Illinois. At the same time, restoration is *conducive* to group effort because of the variety of skills and interests it engages, and because it is by nature a constructive rather than consumptive (and therefore ultimately exclusive) activity—an environmentally oriented version of a barn raising or a quilting bee. In fact, group effort is commonly needed to carry out high-quality restoration work on an environmentally significant scale. As a result, restoration projects tend to become community projects and even, as we have seen, occasions for festival. In this way restoration carries the participants, not away from the human community but back into it and, through it, back into the biotic community, correcting one of the fundamental weaknesses of modern environmentalism and pastoral art.

A fourth limitation of modern pastoral is the language in which it is expressed. The task of pastoral, so far as we are concerned, is the same as that of classic rituals of initiation and world renewal—to provide the symbolic context we require to explore and define our relationship with the rest of nature. Ritual, we have seen, can provide this, but it does so partly because it is carried out in the language of nature itself, the language of action, which not only addresses nature on its own terms but engages us in dialogue with it at the deepest levels of our own nature. The arts, as we know them, are close relatives of ritual. Indeed, Victor Turner saw them as the descendants of ritual, which emerged as the various elements of ritual—poetry, music, dance, and gesture—were detached from their original ritual context.[34] To the extent this is true, arts such as literature have the same aim as ritual: reconciliation through make-believe in a metaphoric space. But even though the arts may retain the same aims and sometimes even the same basic structure as ritual, they are not exactly ritual. One reason for this is that in varying degrees they replace the natural language of action with more abstract, conventional human language. To the extent that they do this, the arts make possible a higher level of reflexive awareness and so a fuller realization of nature itself. But they also make it more difficult for us to establish communion with less reflexive creatures, confining us to communication with other humans.

To avoid isolation from other creatures, we need to find ways to communicate across various thresholds of reflexivity. Marx notes that

Thoreau sought communion through language: "If he could only connect the right words to the right facts, he could then transmit feeling, hence ideas, beauty, meaning, and value across the gap between minds."[35] In this way, through language, Thoreau sought to make mere fact "flower in a truth," linking the facts of nature with the higher reflexivity of the human mind." To do this, Marx suggests, Thoreau creates in his writing a series of links that together make a chain joining the fact, the observer (Thoreau himself), and the reader. When successful, Thoreau was able "to maintain the evanescent feeling . . . that we are on the verge of a thrilling revelation. Yet given his respect for fact, he was forced to accept the achievement of form, the aesthetic unity he so desperately sought, as a surrogate for what the Puritans had called justification."

In other words, words can go only so far as tools in the work of transmuting fact into truth. For that, another link in the chain may be necessary: to the act that converts data into facts must be added the ritual through which facts are *act*-ually transmuted into truth, beauty, and meaning. A process such as restoration, then, when developed as a performance, or act in the dramatic sense, offers a way to engage nature on its own terms and provides the missing link in the chain Thoreau sought to create between nature, himself, and his reader. What it offers is a context in which to take what Max Oelschlaeger calls "a hermeneutic step backward," from abstract human language to the more concrete language of action and performance. This, of course, reverses the step Emerson took when, having stepped down from the lowest rung of Christian ritual practice, he turned to poetry, as the context for redemption.[36]

Understood and practiced in this way, as a performing art, restoration provides a way of overcoming yet a fifth weakness of modern pastoral—its failure to provide what Marx calls an adequate symbol of reconciliation or possibility. In literary pastoral it is typically the pastoral or Arcadian middle landscape, harmoniously combining elements of nature and culture, that is the basic symbol of reconciliation between them. This middle landscape plays a key role in the pastoral experiment, and Marx attributes the failure of American writers to design "satisfactory resolutions for their pastoral fables" to the fact that this symbol is inadequate to bridge the widening gap between civilization and the primitive landscape. "The resolutions of our pastoral fables are unsatisfactory," Marx writes, "because the old symbol of reconciliation is obsolete."[37]

What Marx means by this is that the old ideal of the middle landscape is no longer convincing because it has been stripped of its meaning by forces, often represented by the machine, that act on the landscape in-

strumentally rather than sacramentally. For example, Huck Finn's famous decision to "light out for the Territory" is undercut by the fact that what was Indian territory in his time is now, as Marx has said, Kansas City. Much of the American landscape, which Fitzgerald, in *The Great Gatsby,* figures as Nick Carroway's vision of the Long Island that "flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes—a fresh, green breast of the new world"—has been reduced by the machine to a wasteland figured by the valley of ashes along the road from New York to West Egg, a truly desolate, manmade wilderness, and an ironic allusion to the green, Arcadian landscape of pastoral reconciliation.

Here, Marx argues, our pastoral art fails to provide even the virtual resolution that art can achieve. "To change the situation," he suggests, "we need new symbols of possibility." Ecological restoration is such a symbol. In addition to creating the middle landscape of the restored ecosystem, restoration is itself a kind of middle *action.* Mixing elements of nature and culture, it explores the relationship between the two. When the pastoral experiment is carried out in this way, its success no longer depends on the condition of the landscape at the outset but rather on the skill, understanding, sensitivity, energy, and imagination of the restorationist. Undertaken in this manner, the pastoral experiment need not fail when encountering the valley of ashes. If the pastoral ideal is figured, not by the middle landscape of a tamed Kansas or an ecologically degraded Long Island, but by the middle action of ecological restoration, then the valley of ashes is not so much the bitter end of the story as a challenge to action. In fact, almost 300 square miles of land around Sudbury, Ontario, virtually sterilized by a century of mining and smelting, and possibly the largest valley of ashes ever created, has in recent years become the scene of a restoration effort that is renewing the human community of the area even as it restores its devastated landscape.[38]

If restoration has much to offer the pastoral tradition, it also has much to learn from it. Pastoral art, like classic traditions of ritual world-renewal, reminds us that perfect harmony between nature and culture is neither "natural" nor attainable in purely literal terms. Like other relationships, this relationship entails problematic elements that reflect contradictions inherent in nature itself. These can be resolved only in performative, or make-believe, terms, in the liminal state achieved through ritual, in the realm of dream, where Campbell locates the origin of myth, or in the momentary stay against confusion that Frost identified as the aim of a certain kind of poem.[39] Such resolutions are always virtual, not literal resolutions, and though they can inform our sensibilities and affect

our relationships in lasting ways, they take place in the psychological "time outside time" experienced in the liminal state, and they may be short-lived. In other words, the experiences of harmony and communion may be achieved only within certain limits, and the attempt to achieve literal harmony where only a virtual harmony is possible inevitably does violence to the real differences between creatures. The crucial distinction here is that between complex pastoral, which deals with the irreducible contradictions in our relationship with nature, and sentimental pastoral, which does not and therefore falsifies the relationship. If restoration is a form of pastoral, then it must be judged in the same terms: whether, read as a performance, it depicts the complexity and ambiguity of our place in nature, or whether it does not.

A second lesson the restorationist-as-performer has to learn from the pastoral tradition is that history is real, and that events have consequences that are both irreversible and morally significant. Just as ecosystems have ecological Humpty Dumpties that may preclude restoration in the literal dimension, there are also psychological or spiritual Humpty Dumpties that preclude a literal retrieval of past experience. This, indeed, is one of the lessons of restoration—that restoration in the moral as well as the literal sense is impossible, that what is done cannot be undone, as Macbeth says—and that to disregard this is to court catastrophe. This is well illustrated by the character of Jay Gatsby, as interpreted by Marx. Reading *The Great Gatsby* as a pastoral fable, Marx sees Gatsby as the pastoral protagonist, a "modern primitive" who denies history and takes it for granted that he can step out of circumstances and return to the past, the idyll of his early relationship with Daisy. When Nick objects, Marx writes, "observing that one cannot undo the past, Gatsby is incredulous. Of course he can. 'I'm going to fix everything,' he says, 'just the way it was before.' " Nick, in contrast, though "drawn to images of pastoral felicity," learns how destructive they are when cherished in place of the literal.[40] In the same way, we can undertake the work of ecological restoration sentimentally, in a naive attempt to return to the past. Or it can become a way to explore change and learn to discriminate between those changes we can reverse and ones we can only expiate or atone for through ritual.

Keeping these suggestive precedents and parallels in mind, how can we apply them to the work of restoration? Before considering this question I should reiterate that I understand ritual to be a process that is fundamentally inventive and nonprescriptive. Ritual, in other words, is not ultimately a prescription but a grammar and a vocabulary. It is not, in the

last analysis, a way of imposing meaning, but a way of discovering and inventing it. It is, at the deepest level, a process of personal and social self-creation and self-transformation.

It is recourse to ritual in this creative sense that I am proposing here—certainly not, preposterously, a program of ritual invented by one group and imposed on another. What I am suggesting is simply this. Here is an interesting experience, one that obviously has a lot to do with our relationship with nature. Let's try it out in a reflexive way and see what happens—to the landscape, and to us. Beyond that, let's try ritualizing it, in an attempt to select, focus, and articulate the feelings, values, and meanings associated with this work. We will do this, of course, in the expectation that the meanings that do emerge, though they may pertain to universal themes such as shame and redemption, will nevertheless vary in important ways from community to community.

As I noted earlier, what I have in mind is not an ethic but a way of creating, criticizing, refining, and reforming an ethic by generating and exploring the values, ideas, and feelings on which an ethic is based. I am under no illusion that this will be easy. It seems to me an open question whether the classic route through shame to the higher values is available in a society where most have escaped what might be called ecological and social necessity and can afford to replace the shame-laden bonds of personal obligation with the more abstract linkages mediated by money, civic duty, and legal obligation, trading, as Huxley's World Controller put it, beauty for happiness.

As Catherine Pickstock argues in her analysis of the medieval Mass, the new, post–Vatican II Mass no longer accomplishes the work the old Mass did because it is basically a creation of scholars that inevitably lacks the performative elements that made this work possible. To be effective, she writes, a new liturgy "would either have to overthrow our anti-ritual modernity, or, that being impossible, devise a liturgy that refused to be enculturated in our modern habits of thought and speech."[41] That is a tall order, suggesting that, if ritual is as important in the creation of value as scholars like Pickstock, Rappaport, Lorenz, and the Turners suggest, it may be necessary either to find some other way to do this work or reconcile ourselves to the loss of the old values, as in fact many of us seem to have done.

The danger here is that, whatever we make of it, ritual will not go away. It is, after all, the most powerful way we have of defining ourselves and communicating with each other, and when we don't deliberately and self-consciously make our own rituals, others do it for us and we become

its products rather than its creators. Hence the dangerous and destructive confusion in our society between a thing like an automobile, and the symbol attached to it—Mustang, Yukon, Expedition—deploying the powerful technologies of performance traditionally used to generate the sacred and other higher values to generate the "realness" of brand names and celebrity. This is what critic George Trow is referring to when he suggests that television is a ritual that only works for the priests.[42] This is, of course, the confusion out of which political elections and innumerable other decisions are now made, and it is a direct result of performative dysfunction in a society that misunderstands performance and has lost control of its rituals. Perhaps the great questions are whether the classic economy of value can exist at all in the presence of wealth, and, if so, how it might work in a society dominated by more abstract forms of association such as the nation state.

That said, and the difficulty of exploring the highest elevations of ritual experience acknowledged, there are good reasons to suppose that we can at least begin by exploring the foothills. There are also good reasons to suppose that this will be delightful work. And there are several reasons to suppose that the work of restoration will provide a promising place to begin.

One of these is the many ritual traditions and genres with which the work of restoration resonates. Another is the essentially conventional nature of the work and its relationship with popular activities such as gardening, hunting, and nature exploration. A third is the field of tension and ambiguity this work generates. This is something we will want to keep in mind as we set about the task of ritualizing restoration. As I pointed out earlier, one danger to be avoided here is sentimentality. We will, of course, devise rituals to celebrate the positive outcomes of the restoration effort—the return of a rich assemblage of native plants to an old pasture in Iowa, or the first pair of rare clapper rails that nests in a restored wetland in California. But the toughest and most useful rituals will be those that emerge from tensions and contradictions generated or thrown into relief by the restoration effort. These will be the moments when the restorationist most clearly confronts shame—in the making of the copy; in the knowledge that the copy is imperfect; in the complicity in destruction implicit in restoration; and in the manipulation and killing that restoration always entails. It is these aspects of restoration that are most likely to be controversial, but they also underlie those strong moments that are inherently expressive and dramatic and that serve as the starting points for ritualization. Besides this, controversy itself is a bene-

fit if it is seen as the social and political expression of the shame and ambiguity inherent in the work.

Of these strong moments, perhaps the most obvious, and also the most important, are those that involve the discrimination, destruction, and killing involved in restoration, both in the act of restoration and within the larger cycle of our taking from and giving back to nature. This being the case, it is not surprising that ritual emerges naturally out of the work of brush clearing, for example, which is a major part of the work of restoring many ecosystems. Thinking about the "negative moment" of clearing tamarisk from natural areas in southern California, and the lessons it conveys to participants and audience alike, restorationist John Rodman questions the combative language that sometimes accompanies this work—the references to "tamarisk bashing," for example.[43] But he also anticipates with some concern the unlikely, far-off time when all the tamarisk is gone and some other way has to be found to achieve this vigorous, violent, caretaking relationship with the landscape. Similarly, we have seen how the first self-conscious attempt to create a work of art out of the restoration effort at the UW Arboretum began with the killing of trees to open up space for prairie. With an artist's instinct, Barbara Westfall picked this moment of shame out of the Arboretum's round of activities and transformed it from a routine procedure into an occasion for the making of beauty, meaning, and community.

Psychologically, the acts of discrimination and killing exemplified by the removal of invasive species are, like the hunter's death-dealing or the farmer's calculated killing, both problematic and promising. They parallel the ancient practice of clearing the sacred groves in order to maintain them, the clearing of land for settlement and agriculture, and the work we naturally do to place our mark on the landscape, possess it, and in the crucial, performative sense make it real. Literary critic Richard Garber has shown how Thoreau used the creation of a clearing in the forest as a central metaphor for the redemption of nature.[44] We are creatures of the clearing—the great clearing in the forest represented by the African savanna, where we perhaps emerged as a species; but also the clearings we make in the Arcadian and Edenic landscapes of myth and the pastoral or middle landscape of art; and those we make in creating our own habitat. The danger is that the act of clearing easily becomes exploitation. But restoration provides a way to redress this problem. By clearing the underbrush, opening up the forest insofar as we can on behalf of the forest itself, we create the clearing and, at the same time, turn nature back into itself, realizing and freeing it at the same time.

In entering the forest or savanna to restore it, the restorationist goes back to the beginning of religion, to the act by which we engage nature, roughly perhaps, even violently, but then step back to question the meaning of that engagement and make it an occasion for the creation of value. The same argument applies, at an even higher level of intensity, to the killing of animals such as deer, donkeys, mongooses, nutrias, carp, or rabbits to control exotic species or to compensate for the absence of a natural predator from an ecosystem. Here the restorationist encounters a classic experience of shame, that of the hunter, who is aware that his life depends on his deliberate destruction of his fellow creatures. Here again the instinctive response is to deny the shame, to carry out the killing discreetly. But this is true violence, like murder or rape, since it is unredeemed by a shared public ritual that would make it an occasion for the creation of transcendent value. This makes the whole potentially beautiful enterprise vulnerable to the criticism it commonly receives when word of the killing leaks out.

Though it took me a long time to realize this, the animal-rights activists and others who object to this behind-the-scenes killing on behalf of restoration have a valid point. On purely ecological grounds, they are wrong to insist that we must not kill, because of course we must kill in order to maintain health, whether our own or that of the ecosystems we inhabit, and to deny this is to cut ourselves off from genuine relationship. But they are right to insist that we must not kill in a merely clinical or "scientific" spirit, attempting to hide the experience from others. And they would be right to insist that we must not kill without creating rituals to redeem the act of killing from mere violence. Though I can't recall ever hearing the matter discussed in these terms, I wonder whether this is really what the critics are objecting to—not to killing but to killing outside the context of ritual. This is a serious issue ecologically as well as morally, since public outcry over what is often euphemistically referred to as the "control" of plant and animal populations often curbs restoration efforts. If restorationists systematically—and publicly—ritualize the killing that is a part of all restoration efforts, might resistance to such killing fade away, revealing the genuine caring and the sense of shame behind it?

Similarly, we may expect to find rituals and liturgies emerging from other points of tension and contradiction encountered in the process of restoration. The burning of vegetation, essential for the restoration of many fire-dependent ecosystems, is an obvious example. Dramatic and evocative, the burning of prairies here in the Midwest has become an informal seasonal ritual for many, and I foresee the time when it will be-

come the basis for real festival and liturgy, part of the repertory of rituals by which a community defines itself, exploring and celebrating the terms of its relationship with the landscape it inhabits. It is true that burns are dependent on the weather and can't be scheduled, but that is just the point: one of the many lessons implicit in the burning of the prairies is that some events in nature are unpredictable. Restorationists acknowledge that fact and not only accommodate it but willingly defer to it. So, to snow days, when we close schools and offices because the weather forces us to, creating a holiday that has the special charm and magic of the unexpected, we can add unscheduled burn days, called by local burn supervisors, when schools and offices close to allow people to witness and participate in the restorative burning of prairies and woodlands.

While some may suppose that ritualization would introduce a mushy, "subjective," nonrigorous, or unserious element into the practice of restoration, this reflects a misunderstanding of both the rigor of artistic and performative thought and what Victor Turner called the seriousness of play. In fact, ritualization demands rigorous attention to meanings because it is the process of meaning making. As I have noted, we can think of an experiment as a performance, and this adds to the merely intellectual rigor of science the more comprehensive and in some ways more demanding rigor of the artist. This, however, does not imply a turning away from sound technique based on the best available theory.

In fact, the relationship with practice and effective technique is crucial. Ritual or performance should grow out of the work—or play—of restoration and should remain in an organic relationship with it. A weakness of much contemporary environmental ritual is that it is carried out in connection with events such as the equinoxes that have little to do with practice of any kind, with the way most of us actually live or with the shameful experiences at the center of our economic lives. Rituals of this kind have an unconvincing, adventitious quality—they can decorate life but hardly come to terms with its more problematic aspects. Restoration, because it involves a good deal of robust, and even violent action, provides endless opportunities for a tougher kind of ritualization. An excellent example of a ritual arising from the practice of restoration is the annual Bagpipes and Bonfires festival in Lake Forest, Illinois. This event has developed naturally out of the brush clearing that is a major element of the restoration effort. The ceremonial burning of brush piles that mark the festival's climax are an effective as well as an expressive core for other activities that have grown up around this work.[45]

Even when commuted to a gesture, the ritual act should still include

or "contain" the original, literal act. I have burned a few stalks of dried prairie grass standing in a bowl of sand for audiences with good effect. The point is that the essential, problematic act remains at the center of the ritual, and performative elements, such as words, dance, and music should be used to enhance the expressive value of the act, rather than merely to decorate it or to evoke feeling. We should be wary of attempts to use ritual techniques to achieve *communitas* without a solid base in community, for the same reason that we should resist the separation of ritual elements such as alcohol, tobacco or peyote from their ritual context. Ritual, Roy Rappaport often emphasized, is not just about feeling good. As much as anything it is about entering into obligations, including obligations of the most problematic and psychologically challenging kind, and we should be wary of rituals that overlook this—that offer the sweet pang of endorphin release detached from the obligations of relationship.

It will be important to consider carefully the role of leadership in the creation of ritual. While it is true that we are by nature a ritual-making species and that good ritual grows out of experience, it does not follow from this that effective ritual happens spontaneously. Like any art form, ritual follows certain principles, and the creation of effective ritual demands special talents combined with an understanding of these principles, a grasp of technique, and knowledge of relevant performative traditions. These are valuable and highly developed skills, and will have to be respected and rewarded accordingly. While it is important that rituals and ritual repertories remain flexible and responsive to changes in the community and its circumstances, some formalization and even institutionalization of the ritual tradition is important in order to provide a degree of structure and coherence. Since ritual often deals with sensitive and deeply problematic matters such as identity, shame and relationship, it can be difficult, sometimes even dangerous work, demanding skill and informed judgment. Thus adepts specially trained in the conduct of ritual are among the first specialists and authorities in any society. The emphasis on the personal and experiential that is characteristic of a secular and intensely individualistic society should be balanced with respect for the role of the leader and adept.

The ritualization of restoration will involve both invention out of the experience of the community and borrowing from the experience and ritual traditions of others. Allusions to other ritual traditions can deepen and enrich a ritual by adding to or enhancing its meanings. At the same time borrowing must be done with care, not only out of respect for the

ritual traditions and cultural property of others, but also in order to avoid performative irrelevance. Generally speaking, ritualization should involve at least as much invention as borrowing—here is an important outlet for the restorationist's creative abilities. Yet the search for resonance with existing genres and occasions for performance (quite apart from borrowing from them) will surely prove fruitful. In addition to the performance genres of festival and comedy, initiation, world renewal, and pastoral, the work of restoration offers interesting parallels with other genres and traditions, including rites of passage, of healing and of reconciliation. To these we may add genres such as pilgrimage, vision quest, rituals of the hunt, and various agricultural and seasonal rituals, all of which are related in various ways to the work of restoration. When possible, it will be advantageous to build on rituals and ritual traditions already existing in a community. Of the traditional seven Christian sacraments, all offer interesting parallels with restoration. If Christianity has tended to underemphasize the natural world in favor of the transcendent and otherworldly, perhaps what is called for is a kind of greening of the sacraments, or a spinning off of new ones, to allow us to explore our relationship with the rest of creation.

Similarly, the restorationist can find useful links between the work of restoration and traditional holidays and public celebrations. Thanksgiving, Easter, New Year, and Christmas, for example, all enact meanings that resonate in various ways with the work of restoration and that provide opportunities for integrating it into other parts of our culture, as do other more or less ritualized activities such as hunting and fishing, picnicking, athletics and sporting events, reenactments of various kinds, and of course traditional rituals of engagement with nature such as hiking, backpacking, birding, botanizing and the like, all of which have ritual as well as merely recreational or intellectual value.

While the ritualization of restoration will depend on contributions from the arts—and will provide many opportunities to put the arts and humanities to work—it will be important to keep in mind the modernist tendency for the arts to separate themselves, often quite deliberately and self-consciously from ordinary life, repudiating both the values and the idioms of expression of the marketplace or the cultural commons. After a century of this, the fine arts today are often meaningless, even alienating to the vast majority of people, who simply—and often rightly—feel left out by them.[46] Elements of ritual, whether invented by performance artists trained in the modernist tradition or borrowed from other cultures, often come across as flaky, incomprehensible, highbrow, or otherwise off-putting. Obviously, this must be avoided. The aim here is to use

the universal language of performance to open lines of communication, not only among people, but between people and other species as well, and this cannot be done through an esoteric idiom. What we need is populist art in the best sense. Both classic and folk-art genres are relevant here, as well as popular art and culture, the best of Hollywood, and even of Madison Avenue and the fashion industry.

The audience is crucial. If a performance isn't working for them, then it isn't working. Ultimately, the audience should be large and culturally diverse. A special attempt should be made to appeal to the mainstream and the middle class, as well as to minority groups, and any tendency toward the artiness and in-your-face quality characteristic of much modern art should be resisted. The place to begin will not in general be with theater or the more intensive forms of ritual, but rather with the low-key rituals of protocol and etiquette involving the handling of tools and the manner of relating to plants, animals, and other people on a project site. It may also involve a self-conscious attempt to find the rhythm and other expressive or emotionally engaging elements in the work in order to develop it as a kind of dance. Recently several colleagues and I experimented in a modest way with this idea as we participated as volunteers in restoration work being carried out at North Park Village Nature Center in Chicago. We found that the natural division of tasks involved in brush clearing—cutting, hauling, and stacking—lent the work a certain rhythm, and that the work became both more efficient and more enjoyable when we found that rhythm and worked with it. We also found that both brush cutting and seed gathering involve two kinds of performative interaction—an essentially personal one between the restorationist and the plants, and a more social one between the people in the group. Since these to some extent interfere with each other, even as they complement and reinforce one another, we tried "articulating" them, rather as in monastic practice, by agreeing on brief intervals of silence. Reactions to this experiment were mixed. Some thought it was just a distraction, but my own sense was that it was effective and suggested a way to increase the psychological benefits of the work.

As restoration develops into a performing art, a tradition of criticism of this work will emerge, borrowing from other traditions of criticism and expressing the self-critical component Victor Turner believed was inherent in the ritual process. As in other art forms and in work generally, evaluation and criticism are crucial. Standards must emerge, a discerning audience, capable of applying them must be developed, and superior work must be recognized and rewarded.[47]

And of course, while restoration, like any work, should always be car-

ried out in a spirit of respect and attentiveness to the emergence of meaning, it will not always be explicitly ritualized. Or perhaps it is better to say that it will be ritualized in varying degrees of intensity. An ordinary meal is not the Eucharist; yet no meal should be taken without some sense of the communion generated by the Eucharist. The same applies to the work of restoration, even in its profane or everyday forms. Just as not all areas will be restored to some historic condition, but all areas will benefit from those that are, not all restoration work will be carried out as ritual, but all such work will gain meaning, validity, and political standing from the work that is.

CHAPTER 8

Conservation and Community

Restoration, the Environment, and Environmentalism

Egoists that we are, we like to think that even our problems are unique, and this is as true in environmentalism as anywhere else. We live, we keep insisting, in a time of unprecedented danger with respect to the environment, and this may be true. And yet the problem of living in a sustainable relationship with the rest of nature, and of achieving a state of grace in our relationship with our fellow creatures, is as old as our species. The real problem for us, perhaps, is that in the last analysis this is not so much a problem as a mystery and, for this reason, has proved difficult for modernism to deal with.

If, as Fred Turner and James Hans have argued, shame is the pathway to beauty, and beauty itself is the master value—the "value of values," as Turner puts it—we may begin to understand why a value like community eludes us; why we can espouse values and recommend virtues but have so little ability to do anything about them; why we can celebrate difference and diversity and change only by draining them of their shame and so trivializing them; and why our various environmentalisms have so far failed to provide a plausible, much less compelling vision for the long-term conservation of classic landscapes and wilderness areas.

Restoration, I believe, provides a way around this impasse because it offers, as other environmental paradigms do not, a context for confronting and dealing productively with the shame of our encounter with nature as other—or given—at the level of the landscape, the ecological community, or the ecosystem. This paradigm may not be ideal—in fact, it is explicitly *not* ideal—but for this very reason it offers the best possible