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GILCREASE

J O U R N A L

aboard the

EASTERN

RAILROADS

and

J. M. W.

TURNER

MORAN

as the

HERO

ULYSSES

at

YELLOW

STONE

Sp/Sum
1997
Vol. 5
No. 1
c. 1

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Thomas MORAN

AT GILCREASE

In his special issue of *Gilcrease Journal* presents the artist Thomas Moran (1837-1926) in a variety of contexts. It

explores his connection to the classical European painting tradition through a look at his affinity for the artist J.M.W. Turner; it celebrates his association with the American West by tracing his midlife return to Yellowstone; it follows him east as well, aboard the great Eastern railways whose development he helped to promote. And it shows him expressing the spirit of his age—a time when artist and explorer were one—through a connection with the hero Ulysses.

It is the mark of a great artist that we can understand his work anew from so many points of view. And it is the mark of a great collection that its depths can support such an exploration. The Gilcrease Museum is the repository of over 60 paintings by Thomas Moran, some 1500 sketches, and more than a thousand letters, notebooks, and other artifacts. The collection was purchased from the estate of the artist's daughter Ruth upon her death in the late 1940s.

From September 1997 through August 1998, a selection of the Gilcrease Morans will be enjoyed by audiences at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., and the Seattle Art Museum, as well as in Tulsa, at a major Moran retrospective. Its Tulsa showing February 8 through May 10, 1998, is made possible

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Thomas MORAN
AT GILCREASE

Moran and the European Tradition

NEAR TURNER'S POINT OF
VIEW — THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN THOMAS MORAN AND
J.M.W. TURNER

Even our heroes have heroes. For Thomas Moran, the paintings of J.M.W. Turner were a benchmark of artistic success. Moran studied Turner throughout his life, even traveling to foreign locales to stand near where Turner had stood and to draw what Turner saw there.

Richard P. Townsend

Ruth G. Hardman Curator of European and American Art, Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa

Moran and the American Image

RETURN TO YELLOWSTONE

Moran's first visit to Yellowstone was a life-changing experience both for him and for the area, which later became the world's first national park in part because of Moran's portrayal of it. His second visit, at midlife, came more than two decades later.

Anne Morand

Curator of Art Collections, The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art

YELLOWSTONE

The story of Yellowstone National Park

Carol A. Shively

Ranger-Naturalist, National Park Service

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MORAN IN THE EAST: LANDSCAPES AND
LOCOMOTIVES—THOMAS MORAN AND THE
EASTERN RAILROADS

As the golden age of the railways gained steam, Americans asked whether they could preserve cherished values of rural simplicity. Could the garden survive the presence of the machine? Moran knew where he stood. He allowed the machine to take him to the garden and then painted only rural paradise. The railroad was his employer, never his real subject.

James P. Ronda

H.G. Barnard Professor of Western American History, The University of Tulsa

Moran and the Spirit of the Age

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MORAN/ULYSSES: THE ARTIST AS
EXPLORER

In the eyes of the 19th century, artists were explorers. Certainly Thomas Moran was both. Joseph Kestner presents an apt model for Moran's zealalousness and approach to life: the explorer-hero Ulysses.

Joseph A. Kestner

McFarlin Professor of English, The University of Tulsa

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Portrait of Thomas Moran

PAGE ONE

NAPOLÉON SARONY

Thomas Moran, detail

photogravure, ca. 1870s

Gilcrease, 4326.6126

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THOMAS MORAN

Spruce Creek, detail

Gilcrease, 022.942



Thomas Moran's Temple of Minerva Medica after J.M.W. Turner's print of the same subject published in the *Liber Studiorum*



J.M.W. Turner's Temple of Minerva Medica published in the *Liber Studiorum*

THOMAS MORAN (1837-1926) IS ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED PAINTERS OF THE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE. HIS VIEWS OF YELLOWSTONE, THE ROCKIES, AND THE GRAND CANYON—AND THE ROLE HE PLAYED IN THE FORMATION OF OUR NATIONAL PARKS—HAVE ASSOCIATED HIM INDELIBLY WITH AMERICAN HISTORY AND WITH THE WEST. BUT STRIP AWAY THE STEREOTYPE OF MORAN AS INTERESTED SOLELY IN PAINTING VAST, EMPTY CANVASES OF WESTERN SCENERY AND WE DISCOVER HIM FITTING COMFORTABLY IN THE SHOES OF A WELL-EDUCATED, CLASSICAL 19TH-CENTURY PAINTER, OCCUPIED WITH LARGE-SCALE WORKS ILLUSTRATING THROUGH USE OF ACCEPTED IMAGERY AND LITERARY SOURCES THE “GREAT” THEMES OF WESTERN ART.

Near Turner's Point of View

RICHARD P. TOWNSEND

The Relationship between Thomas Moran and J.M.W. Turner

Moran's creative imagination was consistently engaged throughout his career by the work of a single artist—Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1852). Moran paid homage to Turner not only by copying Turner's paintings and visiting the locales of their origins, but by a lifelong exploration of the way the British genius made art, the manner in which he viewed nature and translated that vision to canvas and paper. Moran's discipleship was not indentured servitude; the American artist combined and changed motifs from Turner and developed stylistic elements of his own. A case in point is an important painting from Moran's early career, *The Glory of the Canyon*—a particularly Turnerian production, when compared with a painting by Turner himself, such as *A View on the Rhone*(?), ca. 1828-1829, in the Worcester Art Museum. As in Turner's composition, Moran leads the eye into the picture via a body of water upon which a resplendent sun shines, the mid-ground in tones of gold and pink and the light blue sky filled with clouds tinged in those exquisite colors.



J.M.W. TURNER

A View on the Rhone (?)

oil on canvas, ca. 1828-1829

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM, WORCESTER
MASSACHUSETTS, 1940.59

These palette choices and lighting effects not only evoke Turner's sublime atmospherics but make fine use of them. Even the handling of paint, such as that used to indicate the effects in the sky of the sun and streams of light are similar in the pictures. Conversely, the promontory in the immediate foreground of *The Glory of the Canyon* is painted in a manner quite unlike Turner's. Moran's style there is more akin to that of Pre-Raphaelite landscape painting of his day. However, the "Turnerisms" were close enough to elicit comparison to the master as early as 1875 in the context of a painting exhibited by Moran in London.

J.M.W. Turner, the greatest British painter of the 19th century and one of western painting's monumental figures, was the child of a London barber who encouraged his son's pursuit of painting from an early age. As an adult, Turner was characterized as taciturn

and lacking social ease; he formed few deep friendships, had two children by a woman he never married, and in later life sustained a romantic relationship with his housekeeper. Turner's

paramount loyalty was to his art, and to that vehicle of artistic endeavor in late 18th- and 19th-century Britain, the Royal Academy of Arts, where he taught and displayed his paintings from 1790 to 1850, the year before his death. He assiduously studied nature firsthand, taking his sketchbooks with him on trips throughout England, Scotland and Wales, and when the Continent opened up after Napoleon's final defeat in 1815, to Germany, France, Switzerland and Italy.

FACING PAGE

THOMAS MORAN

The Glory of the Canyon

oil on canvas, 1875

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0126.2350





J.M.W. TURNER

Venice: The Dogana and San Giorgio Maggiore

oil on canvas, 1834

WIDENER COLLECTION, ©1997 BOARD OF TRUSTEES, NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C., 1942.9.85

While he sketched, and occasionally painted, out-of-doors, Turner sometimes added color or more detail later while the scenery was still fresh in his memory. He produced more fully worked-up studio watercolors and finished pieces intended for reproduction, exhibition or sale. His major works on canvas painted in the studio were based on numerous pencil and watercolor sketches as well as on his devoted study of the Old Masters. Turner had an uncanny sense of his own place in the history of art. Not surprisingly then, he bequeathed his personal collection of paintings, watercolors and drawings to the nation. Today the Turner Bequest is housed in the Tate Gallery, London. After his death, however, it was the National Gallery which displayed portions of the Bequest, the watercolors and drawings selected and installed by Turner's staunchest defender, critic and artist John Ruskin, who had championed Turner in his landmark writing *Modern Painters* (volume one of which appeared in 1843).

THOMAS MORAN

The Splendor of Venice

oil on canvas, 1889

THE PHILBROOK MUSEUM OF ART, TULSA, GIFT OF MR. AND MRS. HARRY L. SEAY, 1957.21



Some ten years later, in 1862, the twenty-one year old artist Thomas Moran was to wander the rooms of the Gallery, absorbing the lessons Turner had to impart.

Moran had studied Turner first through prints. He encountered them during his youth in Philadelphia, where his family had eventually settled after crossing from England. Like Turner, Moran created magnificent scenes depicting far-flung and exotic locales including the Swiss Alps, the Atlantic Ocean and Venice. In particular the two shared a fascination for Venice, Turner's dreamlike evocations of it influencing Moran both stylistically and in the way he experienced the city. But even more basic to their respective artistic endeavors was the common role played by printmaking.

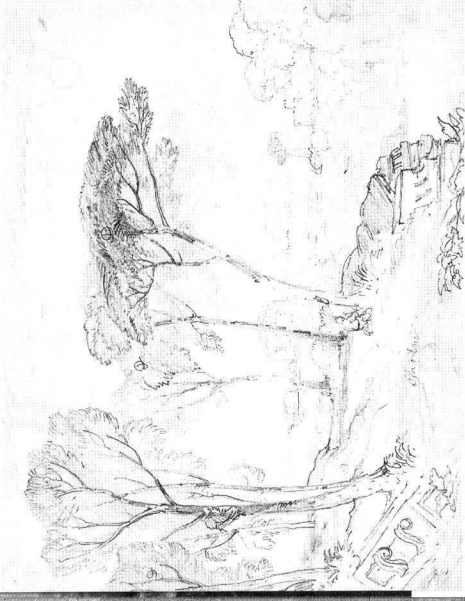
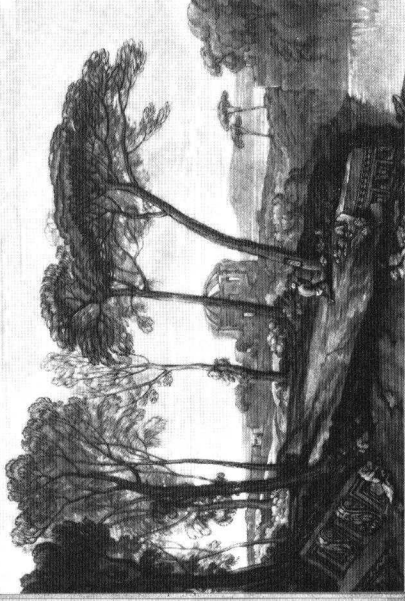
Turner was especially taken with the potential of the "multiple original." He was extremely conscious of the process and its fidelity to his designs submitted to the engraver. Turner prepared watercolors to be

J.M.W. TURNER

Temple of Minerva Medica

watercolor on paper, ca. 1808

TATE GALLERY, LONDON, D08128



T O P

J.M.W. TURNER

Temple of Minerva Medica

etching and mezzotint on paper, ca. 1808-1809

TATE GALLERY, LONDON, A00957

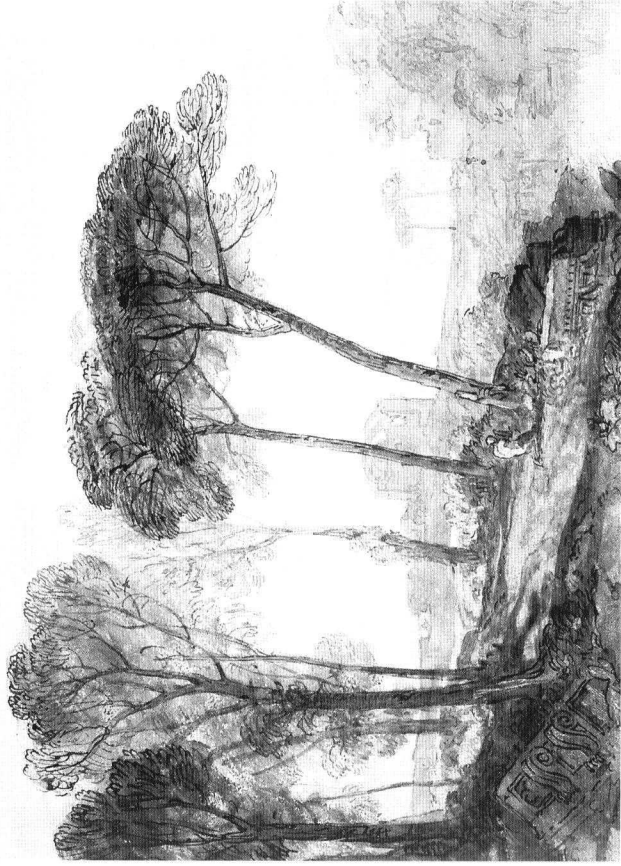
B O T T O M

THOMAS MORAN

*Temple of Minerva Medica
from Turner's Liber Studiorum*

graphite on paper

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1326.524



engraved for book illustrations (for example, the “vignettes” for Samuel Roger’s poem *Italy* of 1826-1832), or to be reproduced in their own right in collections of his works such as the *Picturesque Views of England and Wales* or the *Rivers of France*. Another type of print that disseminated Turner’s works across the world were innumerable engraved reproductions.

Moran spent much of his own career preparing watercolors and drawings for publication, both as illustration for numerous guide books and for the periodicals popular in the 19th century (*Harper’s Magazine* and *Scribner’s Monthly*), the commissions for which earned him the reputation of “the railroad artist.” [See James Ronda, this issue, page 37.] Both Turner and Moran had a love for making prints; Moran and his wife, Mary Nimmo, excelled at etching (Moran etched over one hundred plates in his lifetime). In fact, Moran’s artistic training began as a wood engraver in the shop of Scattergood and Telfer, Philadelphia, in 1853.

As a youth Moran purchased a copy of Turner’s *Liber Studiorum* (*Book of Studies* or *Drawing Book*, produced between 1807 and 1819). The ninety-one plates illustrate Turner’s range as an artist, variously depicting “pastoral,” “historic” or “architectural” compositions, among others (according to the designations given by the artist). Out of concern for the fidelity of the engraved images, Turner had learned to etch and even to engrave (a more arduous task), and had etched the outlines of the designs of a majority of the plates for the *Liber* and even engraved a few of them. Recently, it has been suggested Turner intended the *Liber* as a artist’s manual for study and copywork. Whether or not this is true, some artists—including Moran—used it in precisely this way.

The twenty-third plate in the *Liber*, *The Temple of Minerva Medica*, depicts picturesque ancient Roman ruins outside the city of Rome in the surrounding *campagna* or countryside. Turner’s watercolor for it is in the Tate Gallery, London, a part of the artist’s bequest to the nation; one can see how proximate the print is to Turner’s design for it. The Gilcrease Museum collection contains three drawings copied by Moran from the *Liber*, one of which is taken from the Turner print discussed above. Comparing it with the etching from the *Liber* that Moran copied, there is little variance, Moran faithfully transcribing the image. Though Moran was a copyist of Turner—a role not in itself exceptional—this was by no means the sole method nor the ultimate way in which

Moran apprehended the British master’s work. The tradition of the “Grand Manner” encouraged emulation—particularly copy work—as a time-honored method for refining technique and truly assimilating a master’s style. Ultimately, however, Moran resolved to leave off merely copying from Turner’s prints and reproductions after his paintings and to study him firsthand. Moran sailed for England and arrived in London by June 1862.

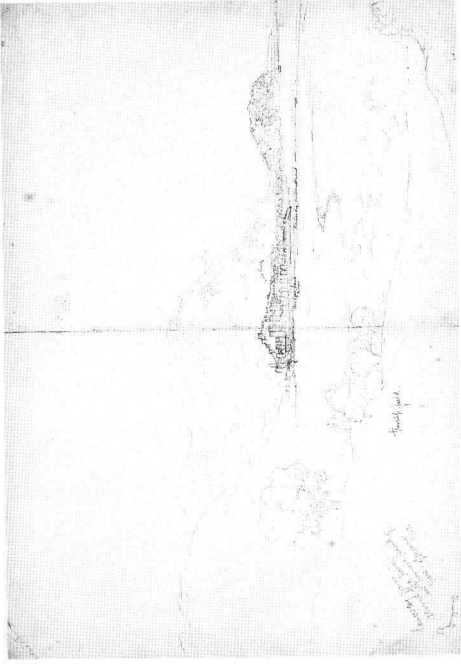
ONCE IN THE CAPITAL OF EMPIRE, Moran set out to absorb Turner’s production in person at the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square, where Ruskin had recently installed watercolors from the Turner Bequest alongside paintings by the artist also on view. There Moran spent much time studying—and copying—

Turner’s paintings. Eventually, it was not enough even to copy Turner’s pictures at firsthand; Moran was impelled to visit the same sites the master once frequented and sketch those same landscapes. He drew in London and its environs—Richmond, Windsor, and Greenwich and then in July of 1862 traveled throughout southeastern England—Surrey, Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire. He followed the coastal towns Turner had once visited: Margate, Dover, Hastings, Bexhill, Arundel, and Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight, wending his way to Southampton, no doubt to depart from there for America. He was once again in Philadelphia by that autumn.

Moran’s journeys to Europe continued throughout

his career, his desire to retrace Turner’s footsteps unceasing. He returned for five more extensive trips throughout Britain and the Continent (visiting at various times Switzerland, France, Italy and Germany).

Returning to Britain in 1882, Moran and his wife toured Scotland, sojourned in London and in September explored Wales, sketching in the North at Conway, then Snowden and Harlech, among other places. Fifteen drawings done in or around Conway attest to Moran’s fascination with the site. One of these reveals the reason for Moran’s many drawings done there. This view bears two inscriptions in the artist’s hand. One on the face of the sheet reads “*Conway from Across the River near Turners point of View. TMoran 1882*” and the other, on the back, “*Conway from Turners point of View. by TMoran The Original picture now in my possession. 1882.*”The



THOMAS MORAN

*Conway from Across the River
Near Turner’s Point of View*

graphite on paper, 1882

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1376.793



significance of Moran's inscriptions lies not merely in the artist's admission of his inspiration nor by his admiring a view which Turner had also seen and recorded—we have already observed the American copying from Turner's "drawing book" and constructing European tours that emulated Turner's itineraries. What is especially notable is the fact that

THOMAS MORAN
Archive photograph of Thomas Moran's "Turner" painting
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 4316.7854

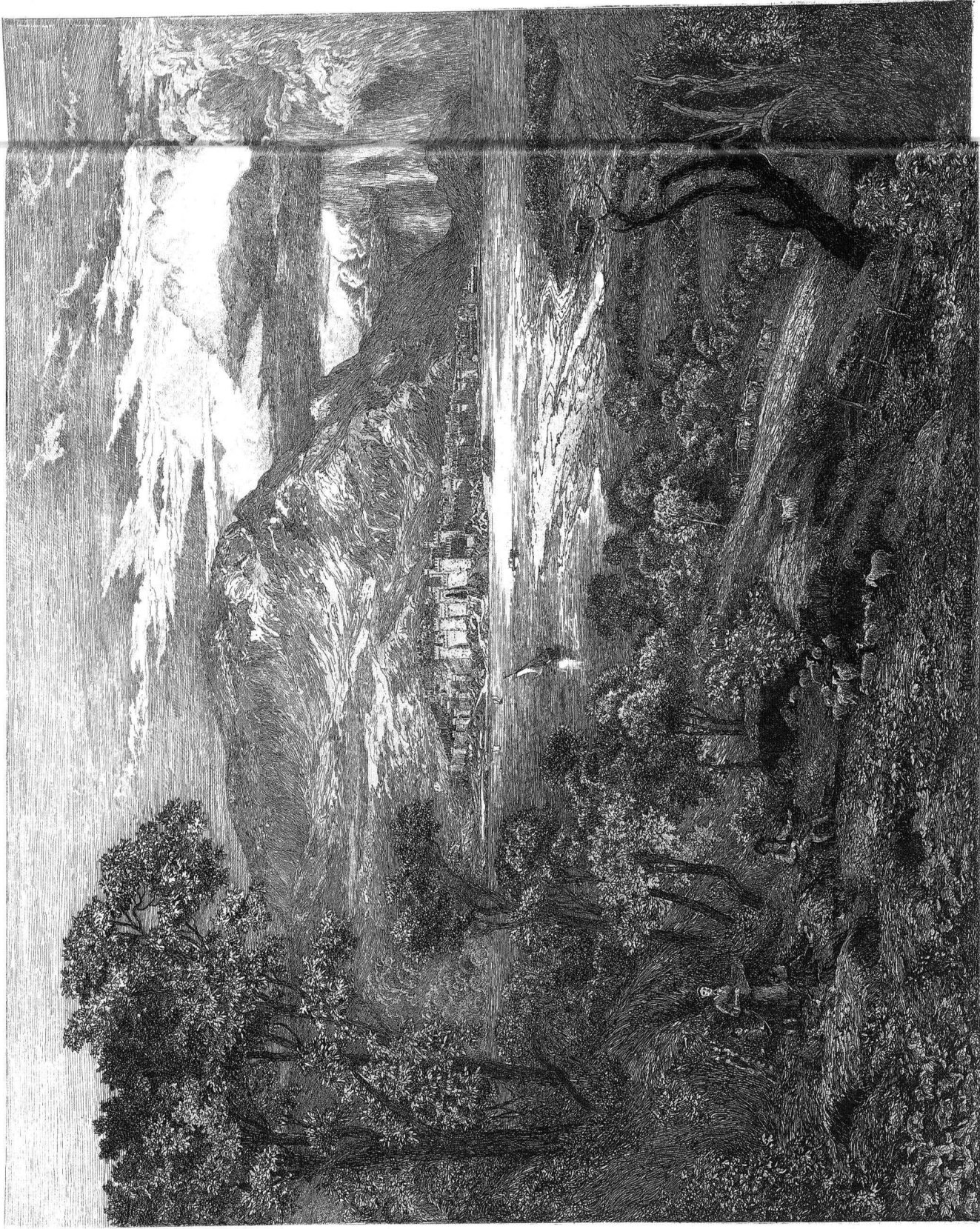
THOMAS MORAN
Conway Castle, North Wales
watercolor and graphite on paper, 1882
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0276.804



TOP
J.M.W. TURNER
Conway Castle, North Wales
watercolor and gum arabic with graphite
underdrawing on paper, ca. 1800
COLLECTION OF J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, MALIBU,
95.GC.10

BOTTOM
J.M.W. TURNER
Conway, Wales
graphite on paper, ca. 1798-1799
TATE GALLERY, LONDON, D01305





THOMAS MORAN
Conway Castle
etching on paper, 1879
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1426.391

But Moran inscribed his loving homage to Turner—his drawing of Conway—“Conway from Turners point of View. . . The Original picture now in my possession.” What painting was this?

Sometime prior to 1878, Moran had seen a Turner painting in Philadelphia of Conway Castle, and in that year encountered it again in the collection of a farmer at Hammondton, New Jersey. Moran purchased it from the farmer and etched his most ambitious plate, which reproduces it. The painting no longer exists, but there is a photograph of it in the Moran archive in the Gilcrease Museum which gives us some indication of its appearance. While Moran’s appreciation and knowledge of Turner may be described as ardent, in this case his connoisseurial abilities appear to have failed him; the painting seems not to be by the master. Indeed, Turner’s champion John Ruskin appears to have implied that it was not. Its attribution is not really the issue, however. The painting’s true importance to Moran was that it provided an introduction to Ruskin who, after seeing Moran’s reproductive etching of it, paid a call on Moran and his family at the London flat they had taken in the summer of 1882. The two artists formed a friendship, and through Ruskin, who had first meet Turner in 1840, Moran was able to connect to the artistic personality he had known before only through paintings and prints.

This connection was a wellspring to which Moran returned time and again throughout his career. That others—British *and* American—perceived the special relationship between the two artists is explicit in many comments from the period, but especially so in a review of an exhibition of Moran’s paintings, watercolors and prints at his birthplace of Bolton, England. The Bolton *Guardian* of June 9, 1882 called Moran “the American Turner. . . [as evinced by an exhibited painting particularly ‘Turnerian in character’ which demonstrates] a poetical and imaginative subject.” “Poetical and imaginative” are hallmarks indeed—not only of the British master himself—but his follower and innovative interpreter, the “American Turner,” Thomas Moran.

The biographical information in this article is based on Thurman Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma, 1966) and “The Artistic Side of the Trip: The Travels and Field Sketches of Thomas Moran” in Anne Morand’s *Thomas Moran: The Field Sketches, 1856-1923* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma, 1996). For a definitive and concise account of Turner’s life and art, see Andrew Wilton, *The Life and Work of J.M.W. Turner* (London, 1979).

BOTH THE INTERNATIONAL LOAN EXHIBITION *J.M.W. Turner, “That Greatest of Landscape Painters”: Watercolors from London Museums* and the related “*Near Turner’s Point of View*”: *Paintings by J.M.W. Turner and Thomas Moran* feature works cited in this article. Both exhibitions may be seen at The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, from February 8 to April 12, 1998. They were organized by The Philbrook Museum to coincide with the Thomas Moran retrospective at the Gilcrease Museum and demonstrate—for the first time in an exhibition context—the direct correlation between the two artists: Turner’s indelible impact on Moran and the latter’s own very personal interpretation of Turner’s art.

RICHARD P. TOWNSEND is the Ruth G. Hardman Curator of European and American Art at the Philbrook Museum of Art and is editor of and a contributor to the catalogue that will accompany Philbrook’s upcoming Turner exhibition.

During the summer of 1892, Thomas Moran returned to the Yellowstone, a region he had not seen for more than two decades. He was fifty-five years old, and he was returning to the enchanted place that inspired the images which had brought his early fame. Moran had changed; he was an established and highly-regarded artist. The Yellowstone had changed too. It now embraced a national park.

Return to Yellowstone



LEFT: *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1619

RIGHT: *The Main Springs at Gardners River, Yellowstone*, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1361

Though currently dormant, during Moran's first visit to Yellowstone in 1871, the Main Springs had one of the largest pools and discharged the greatest volume of water of any of the Mammoth Hot Springs. Twenty-one years later, a visitor to the park around the time of Moran's second visit described them this way:

"AT FIRST SIGHT, THEY LOOK LIKE LOVELY MARBLE TERRACES ONE ABOVE THE OTHER. NO HUMAN ARCHITECT EVER DESIGNED SUCH INTRICATE FOUNTAINS AS THESE. THE WATER TRICKLES OVER THE EDGES FROM ONE TO ANOTHER, BLENDING THEM TOGETHER WITH THE EFFECT OF A FROZEN WATERFALL."

GEORGE SYNGE, 1892

the dry rhetoric of Hayden's scientific reports of the 1871 expedition, and helped convince Congress to preserve the region as the first national park.

Thus Moran's impact on the Yellowstone was great. But the Yellowstone's impact on Moran was equally dramatic. His first national recognition as an artist, as well as his first large financial success resulted from this association. The year after his introduction to the region, Moran stunned the art world and captured the imagination of the American public with his first enormous painting of a far-western natural wonder, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, which the government

Moran's first trip to the Yellowstone in 1871 with Ferdinand V.

Hayden's United States Geological Survey expedition provided experiences, sketches, and memories that became the basis for hundreds of artworks. In painted, printed and published images from Moran's hand, Americans learned of such spectacular places as Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, the Mountain of the Holy Cross, and the Tetons. For many, Moran became synonymous with western wonders. Moran's Yellowstone sketches amplified the unique quality of the area, relieved



ABOVE: *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, oil on canvas, 1872, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, lent by the U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of the Secretary

BELOW: *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, oil on canvas, 1893-1901, The National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, gift of George D. Pratt

Although Moran's 1872 painting of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone was hailed by scientists and critics alike for its accuracy, Moran himself knew it was not (nor did he want it to be) a "literal transcription of nature." For the best effect, he developed a composition that was a cumulative view, combining the best aspects of a nearly 360-degree panorama. In 1893, Moran created another major image of the spectacular subject. His 8-foot by 14-foot Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, based on his visit to Yellowstone of the year before, was shown at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Although the composition and perspective are quite similar to his earlier version, the brushwork is significantly different. In 1872, perhaps desiring to produce a more convincingly realistic image, one that would complement the scientific attitudes, Moran applied the paint in precise, almost hard-edged strokes. Twenty years later, the reality of Yellowstone was no longer in question, and Moran was free to use a more painterly application of brilliant color, softening the edges and blurring outlines to create the sublime effects he employed so well. Moran could also eliminate the tiny human figures he placed in the foreground of the earlier version for scale reference as the immensity of the Yellowstone landscape was not doubted.

subsequently purchased in 1872 for \$10,000. For the next two decades, income and recognition continued from hundreds of additional western works.

Moran's second expedition to Yellowstone was made at the invitation of Elwood Mead, the state engineer of Wyoming, in preparation for the World's Columbian Exposition.

In the 1890s the United States began preparing for the centennial celebration of what then was still considered Columbus's "discovery" of America. The World's Columbian Exposition was organized to include proof of the superiority of both industrial and cultural progress in America,¹ and included such exhibition categories as Industry, the Arts, and the States.

Wyoming, only two years old in 1892, wanted an entry that would "make known the wonders of this, the youngest commonwealth, through presentation of an imposing Wyoming Exhibition."² Mead led an expedition to record unique features of the state in photographs and artworks that could be exhibited at the Exposition. Although this expedition would travel lesser-known mountainous

regions, it would conclude at the Yellowstone.

William Henry Jackson—Moran's friend since they met during the first trip to Yellowstone—was hired as the official photographer, and Thomas Moran traveled as a guest of the expedition. The roles echoed the two men's status on the 1871 expedition.

Moran, who had based all of his many images of Yellowstone thus far on his earlier trip, welcomed the opportunity to reacquaint himself with the landscape. About the middle of May 1892, he left his home on New York's Long Island to spend the summer in the Far West. He joined Jackson at the Grand Canyon in Arizona and the pair took the train to Denver together. There they spent two weeks awaiting rail passes and instructions from Wyoming. Moran wrote to his wife on June 11: "It is just a week since I arrived here and it is getting very tiresome as well as expensive as I pay \$3.00 a day here."³ Leaving Denver and traveling north, Moran and Jackson joined a larger group that included Mead and several other Wyoming representatives. They arrived at Gillette, the rail terminus; from there the

Great Hot Springs, Yellowstone Park, oil on canvas, 1893, Gilcrease Museum, 0126.2342

When Moran returned to Yellowstone in 1892, he was still intrigued by the stepped terraces formed by the hot springs at sites such as Mammoth, on Gardners River. The deposits of soft travertine limestone (calcium carbonate) make these terraces quite different from those of the geyser basins to the south. The Mammoth Hot Springs lay down about two tons of material a day, and with erosion of the soft limestone the terraces are an endlessly-changing structure. The white terraces and the rainbow of colors reflected in the water from the surrounding rocks make a spectacular vision that Moran painted often.

party went by mail stage northwest to Sheridan. The remainder of the trek west to Yellowstone was grueling, on horseback.

The *Cheyenne Daily Leader* reported on June 19 that “The expedition proposes to . . . go through the heretofore impenetrable mountain fastnesses that have so long defied approach.”

Moran noted in another letter home “It will take us some time to reach the park from Sheridan as our progress will be slow, it being a comparatively unknown

northwest. However, the first site visited was the same, the Mammoth Hot Springs of Gardners River, of which Moran had witnessed the discovery in 1871. Mammoth was also the first stop for tourists entering the northern Park. Moran’s journey to this point had been different from most tourists’, thousands of whom were brought to its borders by the Northern Pacific Railroad. However, once in the Park, Moran and Jackson opted to enjoy many of the amenities of tourism, for example, staying in the hotel at Mammoth instead of camping as they had twenty-one years earlier and during the past two weeks enroute. As Moran wrote his wife, “We have all had enough of camp life.”

The day after arrival, they visited Mammoth Hot Springs, Jackson photographing and Moran making sketches such as the beautiful *Upper Basins*. After refamiliarizing himself with the formations that he had captured so exquisitely in a series of watercolors in 1872, Moran sketched a place that was new to him, the Norris Geyser Basin of the Gibbon River, on the way to the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River. Norris had not been discovered in 1871.

Again in a letter, he remarked to his wife “After a day at Norris we left for the Grand Canyon where we stayed two days and made a great many photos. I saw so much to sketch that I have determined to return there myself after I have been to the Geyser Basins and the lake and spend a week at work there. It is as glorious in color as ever and I was completely carried away by its magnificence. I think I can paint a better picture of it than the old one after I have made my sketches.”

At this point, Jackson and Moran traded their “broken down animals and packs” for “a Concord stage, four fine horses and a driver

to go where and when we please.” This was quite a contrast from the earlier visit when the expedition had to walk most of the time. In his 1871 journal Moran recorded frequently encountered “dense forests with a great deal of fallen timber, making it very difficult to travel through with horses. The path in many places very precipitous & dangerous. One part of the route lay through a magnificent forest of pines & firs all growing straight as ships mast, & growing but a few feet apart.” By 1892 there was a growing network of roads providing stage coach access to all the most popular locations; Moran noted to his wife the part of the circuit they followed along the Yellowstone River to its source, Yellowstone Lake.

Although he found the lake “fine but too large and the mountains too far off for good pictures” Moran and Jackson stayed an entire day to pursue another love, trout fishing, and spent the night at the partially-completed Lake Hotel. Eighty rooms of the planned 210 had been finished at the hotel that would be considered one of the most beautiful in the Park. Moran, astounded at his reception in the Park, remarked in his letter home “I have been made much of at all the places in the park as the great and only ‘Moran’ the painter of the Yellowstone and I am looked at curiously by all the people at the Hotels.”

They spent the next day sketching and photographing such sights as Old Faithful and the Castle Geyser at the Upper Geyser Basin before going on to the Lower Geyser Basin. Moran was amazed that the Great Blue Spring was “about 10 times as large as when I saw it last and has become the greatest Geyser in the Basin.” He concluded





Lower Falls, Yellowstone Park, oil on canvas, 1893, Gilcrease Museum, 0126.2344

This spectacular waterfall is the highest on the Yellowstone River, 308 feet. Moran painted it many times, including this smaller version of the painting he exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. He did not sell this painting, but kept it in his personal collection.

to his wife "... each big spring seems finer and more beautiful than the last one." The Lower Geyser Basin Hotel, completed the year before at a cost of \$100,000, was a particularly nice place to rest. Moran and the other 350 guests could enjoy baths fed by the hot springs, electric lights, steam heat (in the winter), and fancy dress balls.

Moran left Jackson and the rest of the party, returned to Norris alone to sketch before spending several days at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River. Seeking to secure new impressions and images of the canyon, Moran sketched more extensively here than he had been able to in 1871. He made drawings of the canyon, the

Upper and Lower Falls, and in several views captured the place that was named for him by members of the 1871 expedition, Moran Point. The range and variety of these sketches contrast noticeably with those made in 1871. Then, Moran was bound by the restrictions of the survey party more interested in gathering scientific data about such things as the geological and meteorological character of Yellowstone than in offering an artist the leisure to consider the best views. Still, he was under some time

constraints in 1892—his railroad pass issued by the Northern Pacific would expire August 4. By that date, Moran was on his way back to home and

studio in East Hampton, New York, having caught the train at what was then the Northern Pacific Park Branch Line terminus, Cinnabar, just outside the park, near Mammoth.

By September Moran was busy working on a new and larger painting of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. Although Moran repeated the subject of his earlier large Yellowstone picture, even giving the new version the same title, he must have felt the site still spoke most eloquently and expansively about the character of the Park and demonstrated his artistic maturity. *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* reveals that he was not locked in the past. William Henry Jackson described it as "the product of his matured experience as a painter of the Yellowstone and one that more nearly represents what even he

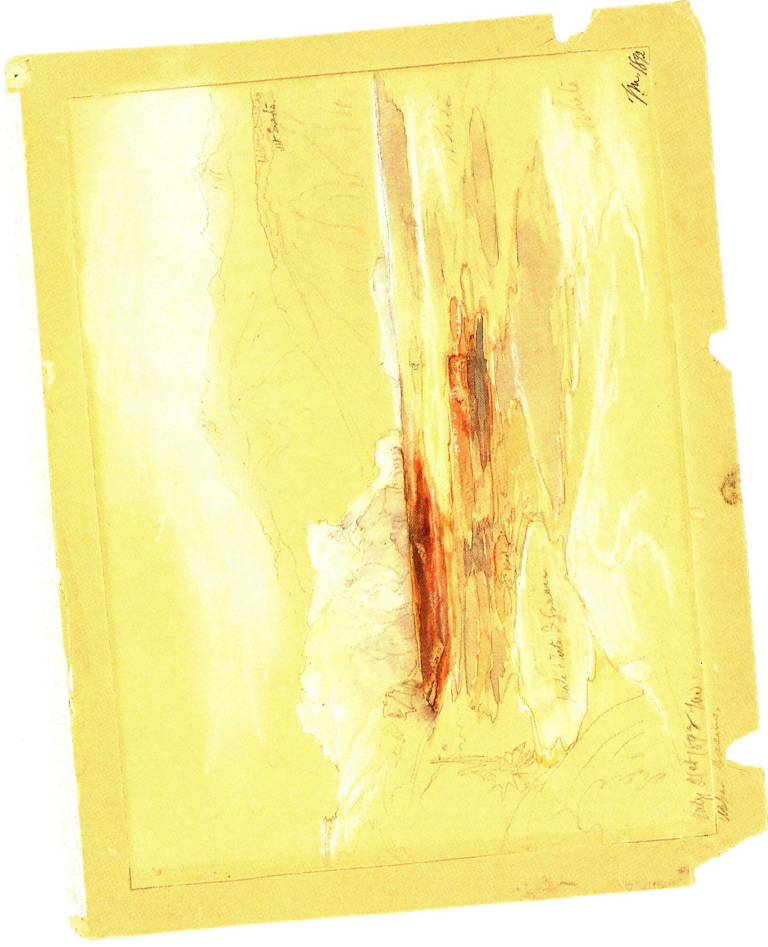
[Moran] thought was 'beyond the reach of human art!'"⁴

The painting was so large that Moran could not work on it in his own studio. Instead, he used his neighbor Frederic Gallatin's carpentry shop. After several months steady work, *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* was completed. Although the composition and perspective are quite similar to his earlier version, the brushwork is significantly different. In 1872, perhaps desiring to produce a more convincingly realistic image, one that would complement the scientific attitudes, Moran applied the paint in precise,

almost hard-edged strokes. Twenty years later, the reality of Yellowstone was no longer in question, and Moran was free to use a more painterly application of brilliant color, softening the edges and blurring outlines to create the sublime effects he employed so well. Moran could also eliminate the tiny human figures he placed in the foreground of the earlier version for scale reference as the immensity of the Yellowstone landscape was not doubted. He clearly liked the later version of *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*, considering it one of the two best paintings of his career.

Upper Basins, pencil and watercolor on paper, July 21, 1892, Gilcrease Museum, 0236.831

With time to do more than a quick contour drawing, Moran beautifully enhanced some of his sketches with both transparent veils of color and opaque white. The white was particularly effective in implying the sparkling crystalline deposits left by the evaporation of boiling water. The Upper Geyser Basins boasted such formations as the Castle and Grotto Geysers, which Moran had earlier painted in exquisite studio watercolors.



Stream from Faithful, pencil on paper, 1892, Gilcrease Museum, 1336.1016

Quick sketches, capturing the contour or outline of a formation, were the foundation of all of Moran's work. The simultaneous acts of observation and drawing not only created a permanent image on paper, but also helped Moran to establish a detailed visual memory.



Moran Point, Yellowstone Canyon, pencil and watercolor on paper, July 31, 1892, Gilcrease Museum, 0236.830

This viewpoint on the north rim may have been named for Moran in 1871 by members of Hayden's party. It is different from the more famous Artist Point on the south rim, which was mistakenly thought by many to be the place from which Moran made sketches for his 1872 painting. While it is not now designated as Moran Point, it was still recognized when Moran visited the Park in 1892.

The Golden Gate, Yellowstone, 1893, oil on canvas, The Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, WY

Located twenty-five miles south of Mammoth Hot Springs, the Golden Gate was probably named during the construction of a stage coach road, 1883-4. The name combines a reference to the golden hue imparted to the canyon walls by lichen and the roadway as a gate to the Upper Park. The original wooden bridge, seen in Moran's painting, was replaced in 1901 with concrete. The prominent rock outcropping at the end of the bridge, which Moran exaggerated for effect, is called the Pillar of Hercules and was once part of the canyon wall.



With high hopes, Moran shipped *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* and another large canvas *Spectres from the North* [see page 63] painted two years before, to Chicago for the Columbian Exposition, which opened May 1, 1893. Evidently, the Yellowstone painting did not form part of Wyoming's entry, as Moran exhibited both of his paintings in the Fine Arts section. From this point came a series of disappointments, starting with the fact that neither ambitious work won an award. After the close of the Exposition on October 30, Moran recorded in his work ledger that on November 12 a wealthy collector offered to buy *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* for the Art Institute of Chicago “if after inquiring he found the artistic quality & commercial value to warrant his doing so as he said, ‘I am no judge myself.’”⁵ Apparently, a negative verdict caused Moran to later add a terse “Declined” to the notation. Not giving up, Moran sent the Yellowstone painting to exhibitions in San Francisco in 1894 and Buffalo in 1897 before bringing it back to East Hampton in 1901 where he reworked it. He then sent it, along with *Spectres from the North* to the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs, for extended exhibition in the lobby. Eventually, Moran put several paintings,

FOR FURTHER READING

- Thurman Wilkins, *Thomas Moran: Artist of the Mountains*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1966.
- Joni L. Kinsey, *Thomas Moran and the Surveying of the American West*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, 2 volumes, Yellowstone Library and Museum Association, 1977.

NOTES

1. Although the Exposition was originally planned for 1892, the centennial year, many problems forced the opening to be delayed until the following year.
2. "The Artist and Photographer Visit Devils Tower," Gilcrease Archives, 5136.245.
3. This and all other excerpts from Moran's letters to his wife Mary during his 1892 trip are taken from Amy O. Bassford and Fritiof Fryxell, *Home Thoughts, From Afar: Letters of Thomas Moran to Mary Nimmo Moran*, East Hampton Library, 1967.
4. Quoted in Bassford and Fryxell, page 148.
5. Moran ledger, Gilcrease Archives, 4026.4024.
6. Moran recorded the various paintings in the ledger cited above.
- ANNE MORAND is Curator of Art Collections at the Gilcrease Museum, a position she has held for twenty years, and the author of the recent *Thomas Moran: The Field Sketches, 1856-1923* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma, 1996), winner of the 1997 Western Heritage Award.

MORAN IN THE WEST: A TIMELINE

1871 <i>Yellowstone</i> , guest of the United States Geological Survey, under Dr. Ferdinand V. Hayden	1874 <i>The Mountain of the Holy Cross, Colorado</i> , unofficially with members of Hayden's USGS	1881 <i>Colorado and New Mexico</i> , by commission from the Denver and Rio Grande Railroads	1892 <i>Grand Canyon of Arizona</i> , by commission from the Santa Fe Railroad; <i>Yellowstone</i> , commission from State of Wyoming
1872 <i>Yosemite</i> , commission for Appleton's	1879 <i>The Tetons, Green River</i> , mountains regions of Utah, commission from Union Pacific Railroad	1883 <i>Mexico</i> , by commission from Mexican National Railroad	1900 <i>Idaho</i> , probably unsponsored travel
1873 <i>Canyonlands of Utah and the Grand Canyon of Arizona</i> , U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), under Major John Wesley Powell			

including *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone* on long-term loan at the National Museum, the forerunner of the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. The director, William H. Holmes, remarked in a Smithsonian press release in 1917 that he felt it was "America's greatest landscape." Two years after Moran's death in 1926, the painting was purchased from his estate for the National Museum.

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone was not the only product of the 1892 visit. During the next several years Moran painted other versions of various Yellowstone scenes, from a 40-by-60-inch *Lower Falls, Yellowstone Park* to a series of smaller works.⁶ Moran's subjects also included the Upper Falls of the Yellowstone River, Mammoth Hot Springs of Gardners River, Jupiter and Minerva Springs at Mammoth, the Great Blue Springs and the Fountain Geyser of the Firehole River, and the Golden Gate. One of the most striking of these views is *The Golden Gate*. Seldom did Moran include in his Western paintings any of the typical signs of 19th-century progress—trains, buildings, bridges—preferring to present an unspoiled vision of nature. When he did allow the intrusion of technology, such as the wooden trestle bridge built years before to carry the road around the sheer wall, through the pass called the Golden Gate to the upper Park, it seems as if he were calling attention not only to a remarkable feat of engineering, but also to the fact that what was once a nearly-impassable wilderness was now accessible to even the least rugged of tourists. Even so, he presented the juxtaposition of civilization and wilderness so romantically, integrating the structure into the landscape and reducing its scale as to avoid any jar to the senses. With these paintings Moran enjoyed success in prestigious exhibitions such as the National Academy of Design, and greater sales with smaller pictures that were ultimately more attainable by private individuals. He even formed a business arrangement with photographer Frank J. Haynes, who owned Haynes Picture Shops at Mammoth Hot Springs, to sell Moran's paintings of the park to tourists.

Moran continued to travel and to paint the West for another thirty years; a trip in 1900 to Idaho resulted in a final heroically-sized canvas, *Shoshone Falls on the Snake River* [see page 58]. But the trip in 1892 was the last to have the character of a frontier expedition. His world was growing smaller as most of the great geographic discoveries had been made in America. Extensive networks of railroads made places that had been inaccessible twenty years earlier a matter of a few days travel in the relative luxury of a Pullman car.

Moran's excursions to the West in 1871 and 1892 were two of the most important to his artistic career. The first journey established the reputation of a young artist as he responded to western splendors and created views that became part of the American mind. Out of the second journey came work that reinforced Moran's primacy with Western subject matter and reflected a mature artist who continued to respond to the beauty of nature.

Lower Geyser Basin, pencil and watercolor on paper, July 29, 1892, Gilcrease Museum, 0236.829

The sketches Moran made at the geyser basins are understandably some of the most colorful. This pencil drawing showing some of the chromatic mineral deposits at the Lower Geyser Basin of the Firehole River is accentuated with rich, transparent washes of watercolor.

Lower Geyser Basin, Firehole River, 1892
J. Moran.



C A R O L A . S H I V E L Y

I HAVE WANDERED
OVER A GOOD PART OF
THE TERRITORIES AND
HAVE SEEN MUCH OF
THE VARIED SCENERY
OF THE FAR WEST, BUT
THAT OF
YELLOWSTONE
RETAINS ITS HOLD
UPON MY IMAGINATION
WITH A VIVIDNESS OF
YESTERDAY.

T H O M A S M O R A N

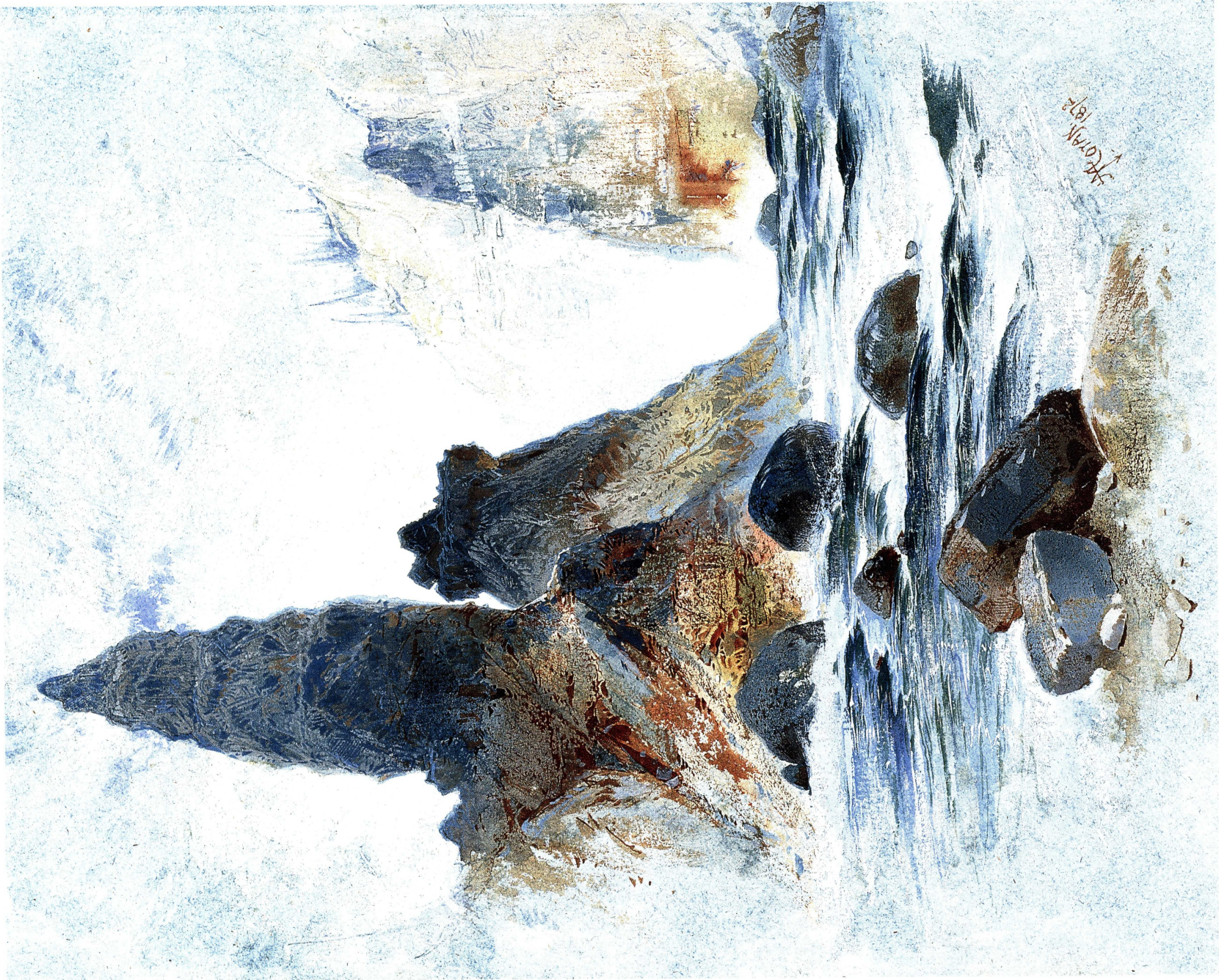
AS EARLY AS 10,000 YEARS AGO, people inhabited the area around the Yellowstone. Recent archeological studies have revealed projectile points, hearth sites and middens which suggest that several villages existed along the lakeshore. But only one group of native people was known to actually live in Yellowstone, a band of Shoshone who hunted the bighorn sheep with neither guns nor horses, only bows made of sheephorn. Hence their name, the Sheepeaters.

But while Yellowstone was home to few, it was crossroads to many. The Crow, the Blackfeet and the Bannock people, among others, traversed this high mountain plateau in search of bison, a source of life, and of Yellowstone's obsidian or "volcanic glass" — much valued for tools and weapons and traded among native people all across the continent. Long before it was a national park, Yellowstone was a place of national significance.

It also inspired art before it inspired Congress to preserve it for all Americans. Fifty years before the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, the painter George Catlin had a grand notion of what a national park could be. As the nation's frontier began to disappear, he proposed that almost the entire American West be set aside to preserve "in their primitive beauty and wildness, in a nation's park, where the world could see for ages to come, the Native Indian."

The Towers of Tower Falls, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1455

INTRIGUING PINNACLES give Tower Falls its name. Geologically, the formations are known as "hoodoos" and are created as the hard rock caps on the top protect the weaker rock of the towers from eroding due to rain and snow.

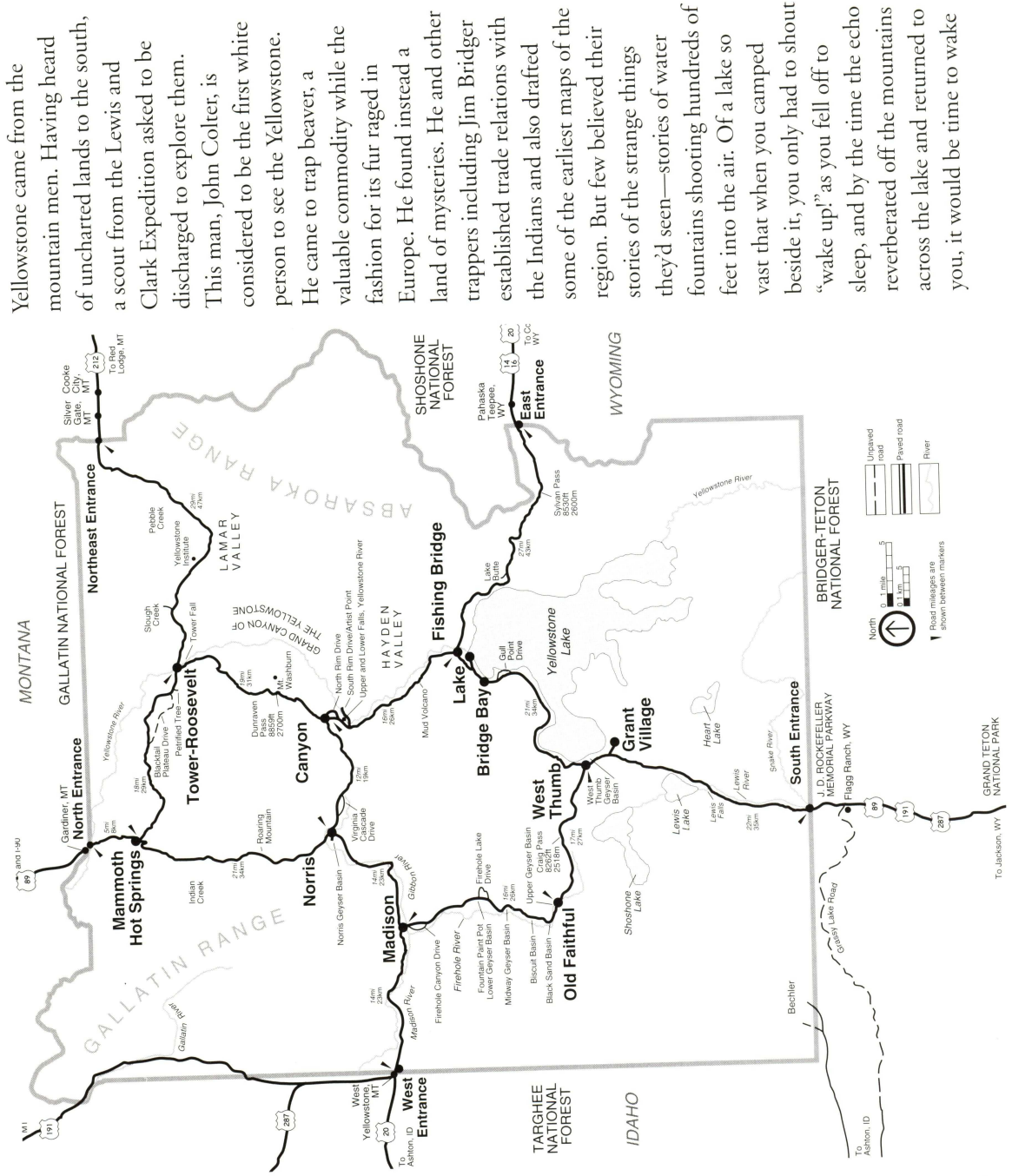


According to treaties made in the 1840s and 50s, the land which would later become Yellowstone National Park legally belonged to the Indians. But the destiny of native people in Yellowstone paralleled that of their fate elsewhere. The last of the park's original inhabitants were forced to reservations in 1871. Yet today, when we encounter the remains of an old wickiup, or hunting lodge, or when the lake exposes the stone weir once used to catch fish, it is as though their spirits still are here. And Yellowstone has fulfilled the prophecy of an old Flathead legend, which said that "In generations to come, this place will be a treasure of the people. They will be proud of it and of all the curious things in it. Hot springs and cold springs will be side by side.

In 1865, the Governor of the Montana Territory, Thomas Meagher, was forced by a snowstorm to take refuge in the Old St. Peters Mission on the Missouri River. There he listened with fascination to the stories of Father Francis Kuppens, a Jesuit priest who had explored the Yellowstone with the Blackfeet that spring. Based on what he heard, Governor Meagher determined that the area should be reserved by the government as some sort of park—if that is, "things were as described." Early listeners to the tales of Yellowstone took the descriptions with a touch of skepticism. The first reports of the Yellowstone came from the mountain men. Having heard of uncharted lands to the south, a scout from the Lewis and Clark Expedition asked to be discharged to explore them. This man, John Colter, is considered to be the first white person to see the Yellowstone. He came to trap beaver, a valuable commodity while the fashion for its fur raged in Europe. He found instead a land of mysteries. He and other trappers including Jim Bridger established trade relations with the Indians and also drafted some of the earliest maps of the region. But few believed their stories of the strange things they'd seen—stories of water fountains shooting hundreds of feet into the air. Of a lake so vast that when you camped beside it, you only had to shout "wake up!" as you fell off to sleep, and by the time the echo reverberated off the mountains across the lake and returned to you, it would be time to wake



Map courtesy of Yellowstone National Park, National Park Service, Department of the Interior



The Yellowstone Range from Near Fort Ellis, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1358

THE WASHBURN EXPEDITION of 1870 departed from Fort Ellis, the military installation northwest of Yellowstone. The view from this point helps one understand the obstacles that confronted those attempting to explore this fabled land, with range upon range of mountains—the Gallatin in the foreground and the Absaroka in the background. The Gallatins are named for the Secretary of the Treasury during the Lewis and Clark Expedition, and the Absarokas for the people who originally inhabited the area.

up. They spoke of a boiling pool along the lakeshore where a person could catch a fish and then cook it without taking it off the line. The wild stories captured the nation's imagination. Several expeditions set forth to find the truth for themselves.

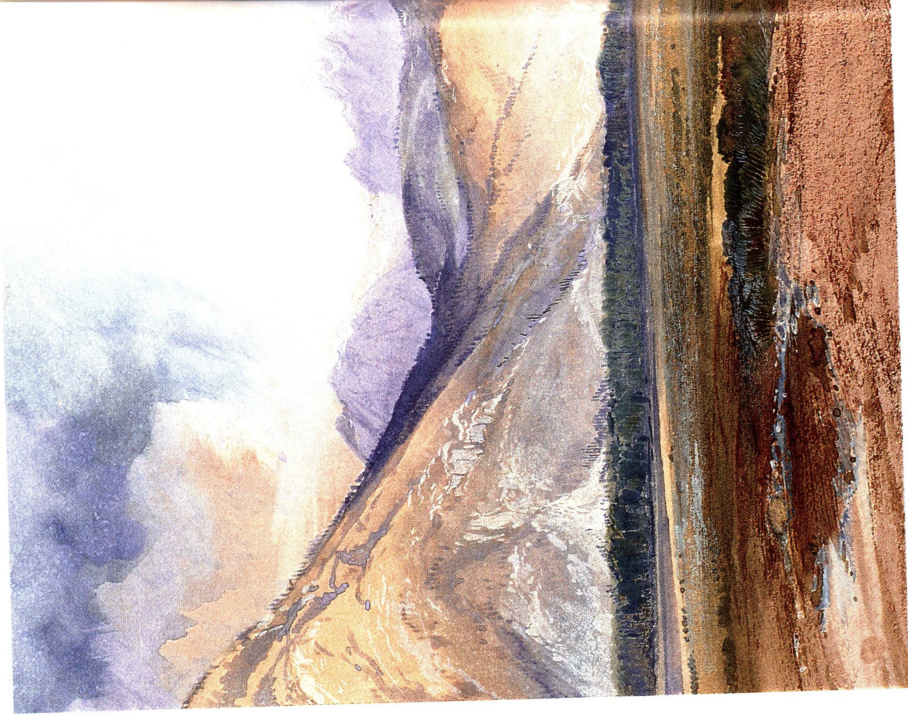
When the major exploration planned by Montana surveyor general General Henry Washburn failed to materialize, three men slated to go on the expedition forged ahead on their own. Departing with little fanfare from Bozeman, Montana in 1869, the three embarked on a 36-day journey that resulted in much improved maps of the region and reliable accounts the geysers, mudpots, Yellowstone Lake and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River.

When the major exploration planned by Montana surveyor general General Henry Washburn failed to materialize, three men slated to go on the expedition forged



Wyoming Falls, Yellowstone River, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1452

NOW KNOWN AS LOWER FALLS, this water plunges 308 feet into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, twice the vertical drop of the famed Niagara Falls. Rainbows are often seen here as the sun refracts off the constant mist formed by the powerful crashing of the water into the river below.



Upon returning home, the group's leader, David

Folsom, sent the account of his travels to *Western Monthly* magazine, including the suggestion that this unique place be made into a national park. Oddly, the editor deleted this notion from the published version of the article. But while Folsom failed to get his proposal out to the public, he did discuss it with General Henry Washburn, who assembled the next major expedition into the Yellowstone.

The members of this expedition too were amazed at what they saw. They spent 40 days exploring and naming the features they encountered, notably Old Faithful and many other geysers in this basin. On their last night, they gathered around a campfire and discussed these wonders. As a group primarily of businessmen from Montana, they began to consider how they might personally profit from this intriguing place. Nathaniel Langford, who would later become a powerful voice before Congress for the national park idea, records the events of the evening this way:

"Mr. Hedges then said that he did not approve of any of these plans—that there ought to be no private ownership of any portion of that region, but the whole ought to be set apart as a great National Park, and that each one of us ought to make an effort to have this accomplished."

Such dreams would eventually be realized. The head of the U.S. Geological and Geographical Survey, medical doctor Ferdinand Hayden, attended the lecture given by Nathaniel Langford reporting on the findings of the Washburn Expedition. Armed with reliable information and fueled by a longtime fascination with the geology of the American West, Hayden convinced Congress that an official survey of the place should be undertaken.

The Grotto Geyser, Gardner's River, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0236.1359

GROTTO GEYSER'S intriguing shapes were formed as the geyser's cone grew around a stand of dead trees. Grotto hurls splashes of water that can reach 40 feet in height and last from 45 minutes to a striking 36 hours. It's no wonder that Congress had to be convinced of the reality of such incredible features by Moran's depictions.



The Yellowstone Range Near Crow Mission, watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum, 0226.1364

HERE, in what now are called the Beartooth Mountains, are the oldest rocks in the region, the basement rocks of the earth. They have been heated and squeezed deep below the surface and then thrust into the sky. The younger rocks have peeled off, exposing ancient rock to the glaciers which sculpted them into the jagged peaks that give the range its name. Their beauty is as dramatic as the geological forces that formed them, causing anyone to stand in awe, as does the group depicted here in Moran's painting.

THESE MAGNIFICENT FALLS were formed as the last great glacier melted and the ice dams upstream broke, sending massive floods downriver. When the deluge reached softer rock that had been altered by the thermal activity of the geyser and hot springs, the result was immediate and catastrophic erosion which carved the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. The river drops first over the Upper Falls, 109 feet down to the Yellowstone river below, and then over the Lower Falls, nearly three times this size.

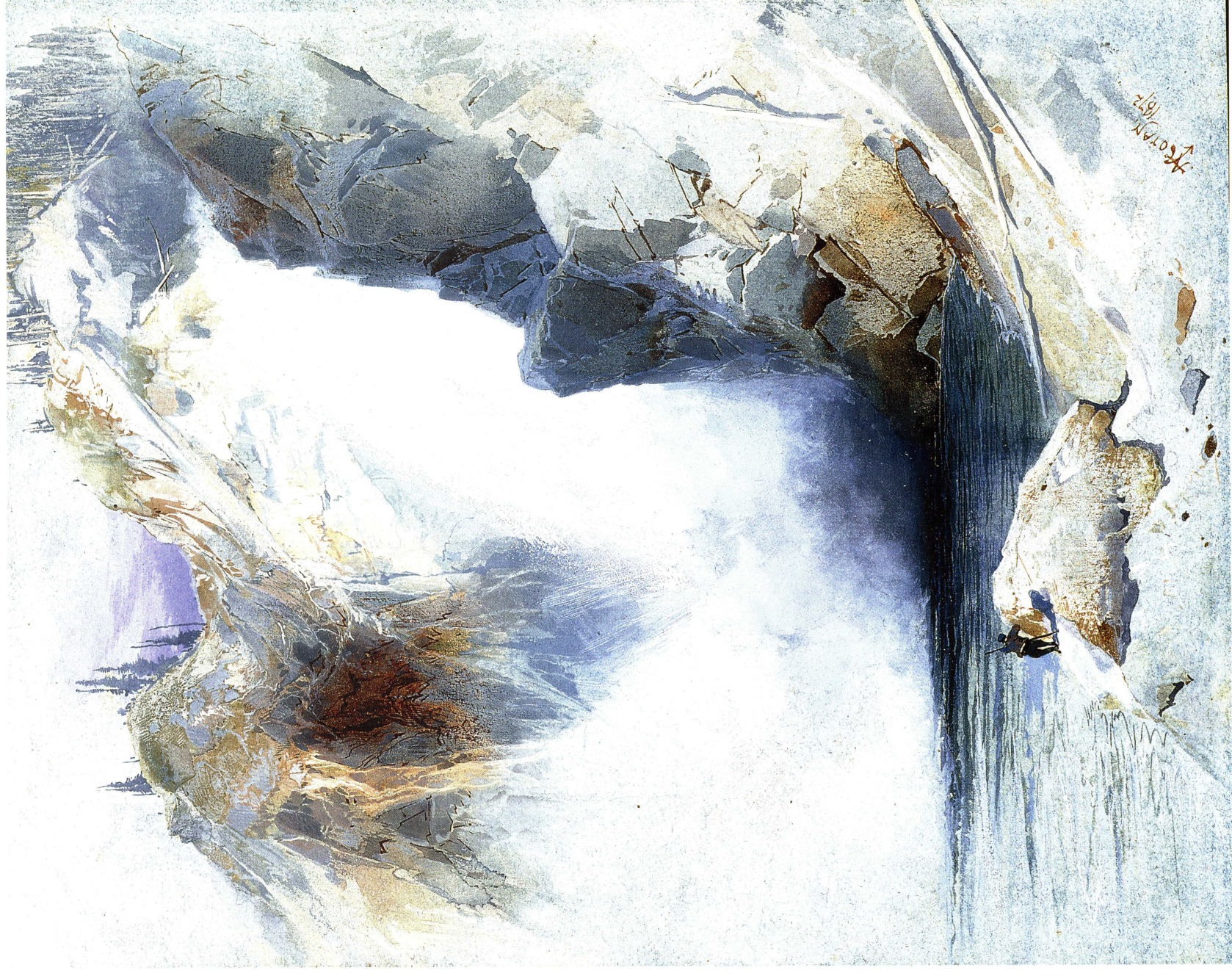
The great success of the Hayden Survey had much to do with the people he chose to accompany him. Departing Ogden, Utah in June 1871, the first of the three Hayden Surveys included a mineralogist, a zoologist, a cadre of military engineers, photographer William Henry Jackson, and the artist Thomas Moran. The images of Jackson and Moran were to capture the essence of Yellowstone for all to see—including Congress. The legacy left to Yellowstone by these explorers included hundreds of place names still used today and volumes of scientific data. Yellowstone clearly left its mark on them as well, as Dr. Hayden returned to Washington a strong advocate for the protection and preservation of this land, believing that “The intelligent American will one day point on the map to this remarkable district with the conscious pride that it has not its parallel on the face of the globe.”

After considerable lobbying by members of expeditions, General Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill establishing Yellowstone as the world’s first national park in 1872. This great American experiment would become a hallmark in the history of human attitudes toward the land, and an example later followed by nations all over the world.

It seems that the stroke of a pen in Washington however, does not necessarily ensure the protection of resources thousands of miles away. Back in Yellowstone, despite the establishment of the national park, wildlife continued to be destroyed, trees harvested and thermal features vandalized with devastating intensity. The U.S. Army was called to the rescue. For 32 years, the army protected the park with military precision. There were some great successes.

By the turn of the century, the great herds of bison which once covered the plains of the American West in numbers up to 60 million, now made their last stand in Yellowstone. After a mere ten years of being killed for heads and horns, or simply for sport by people like Kit Carson and “Buffalo Bill” Cody, fewer than fifty bison survived in the wild, in an isolated corner of Yellowstone. In the winter of 1894, a poacher learned of their location in the Pelican Valley and began to systematically destroy them. Two soldiers were dispatched to the dangerous scene. There, at great risk to themselves, they managed to apprehend and arrest the poacher. The nation’s last bison in the wild had been saved. Due to the public outcry surrounding this incident, Congress passed the Lacey Act in only thirteen days. The act prohibited hunting in the national parks.

The military Superintendents became increasingly aware however, that the role of the Armed Forces was to protect national security, not natural resources. In addition, the new parks and monuments were administered by three different branches of government; the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of War. By 1914, the need was clear for a unified and consistent civilian approach to managing the parks. The National Park Service was created in 1916 and park rangers became the guardians of the parks, protecting them in the proud tradition left them by the military. Their charge was “... to conserve the natural and historic objects therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such a manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations.”





The Devil's Den Near Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River,
watercolor on paper, 1872, Gilcrease Museum 0226.1454

THE BOILING SPRINGS and steaming skies of Yellowstone were so otherworldly to early explorers that many features were given names with allusions to the underworld. Dr. Hayden named Devil's Den in 1871.

useful in the breaking down of oil spills by non-chemical means. Yet another has the ability to help scientists read the genetic code, enabling police to identify a suspect from one tiny cell of blood and helping physicians to determine what causes birth defects and genetic diseases. We're only just beginning to understand the power contained in Yellowstone's thermal features.

We are also beginning to understand the tremendous importance of biodiversity—of preserving the vast array of species no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, knowing that some tiny flash of life we have not yet fully understood may just carry the answer to a critical global problem. The United Nations distinguished Yellowstone as an International Biosphere Reserve and a World Heritage Site due to the significance of its natural resources.

In its preservation of wildlife species, Yellowstone represents a place where a nation took a stand, a place that is, in Wallace Stegner's words, "the geography of hope."

"We are from this wilderness," writes Paul Firnhaber, "and we return in our yearning to know our history. . . . We return for mysterious and unspoken reasons, as if on a pilgrimage to a sacred place."

Thomas Moran returned, as have many other portrayers of wild glory. Moran's large oil painting depicting the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone adorns the wall of the Department of the Interior, which administers the National Park Service.

Carol A. Shively has been a Ranger-Naturalist for the last decade, living and working in diverse national park settings from the wilderness areas of Yellowstone, Sequoia and King's Canyon to the urban parks of Fire Island and the Santa Monica Mountains. Ms. Shively holds a Master's Degree from the Natural Environment and Resources Planning Program and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, both from the University of California at Los Angeles. She has written extensively about the natural world.

As Yellowstone prepares to celebrate its 125th anniversary, it seems appropriate and important to reflect back on what the national park idea has come to represent to the American people over the years.

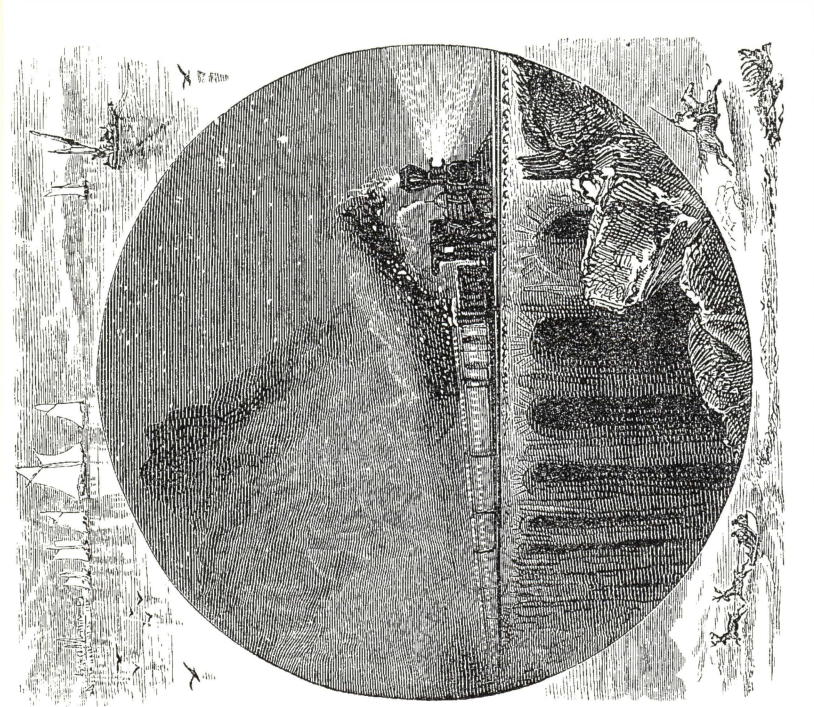
As the world has become more populated and polluted, the national parks have assumed an ever more vital role. They are among the least disturbed natural areas in the world. Park service historian Richard Sellars notes that they become ever more important to the health of the planet as reserves of genetic material and islands of naturalness, providing baseline information against which developed and disturbed landscapes can be compared for irreversible change of loss of species. As Wallace Stegner has written, wilderness is "a scientific yardstick by which we may measure the world in its natural balance, against the world in its manmade imbalance."

In the past several decades, remarkable discoveries have been made within Yellowstone's colorful hot springs and its intriguing mudpots—microscopic life forms with extraordinary properties. One is being used by NASA to determine if there is life on Mars. Another has been found

Thomas Moran and the Eastern Railroads

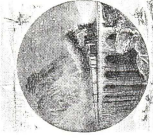
JAMES P. RONDA

When New York publisher Henry T. Williams issued *The Pacific Tourist* in 1876 he drew on the work of several well-known artists to illustrate the guidebook. On a special page portraying prominent artists and explorers linked to the American West only two artists were featured—Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran. Williams had engravers Meeder and Chubb prepare seventeen woodcuts of Moran works for use in *The Pacific Tourist*, more than any other artist. In the public mind the West



122

THE RAILWAY RIDE.
Now ever anxious to travel, for the
East has had upon the West,
And the West to know more of it,
We are going West for the tourist,
Till the road with lakes is strewn
All the country and the town.



Among the most beautiful lakes,
Spacious meadows, and flowing rivers,
Scenes that find their way to the
Heart the tourist seeks and loves,
Scenery of the world is scarce.

ENGRAVER UNKNOWN,
AFTER THOMAS MORAN

The Railway Ride
Wood engraving on paper,
May 1872

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1526.421

was Moran country. The guidebook also recognized Moran's association with western railroads, great commercial enterprises like the Union Pacific, the Santa Fe, and the Denver and Rio Grande. These were the railroads that brought the artist to Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico. They commissioned his work, paid the bills, and used his art to promote tourism and investment.

Williams’s guidebook simply told eastern readers what they already knew—that Thomas Moran, western landscapes, and western railroads were nearly synonymous.

But if that same audience had paid more attention to Moran’s wide-ranging travels and his business records they would have recognized something that broke the “Moran as western railroad artist” mold. Moran courted and won the affections of other regional railway clients besides the western companies. The eastern transportation giants—especially the Pennsylvania Railroad and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad—employed Moran to illustrate popular company publications. If the railroads took Moran to Wyoming and New Mexico, they also carried him to Pennsylvania, New York, and West Virginia.

Thomas Moran lived and worked in a world made by railroads. No other single invention in the 19th century so profoundly changed daily life as the steam locomotive and the railroad. The railway transformed the way ordinary Americans thought about time and distance. Words like “near” and “far,” “close” and “distant” took on new meanings. Railroads changed the way Americans did business, took vacations, and made war. The iron horse gave birth to new industries, altered national politics, and remade cultural tastes and fashions. The railroad symbolized all the dreams, ideals, and values of modern American civilization. What historical geographer John Stilgoe calls “the metropolitan corridor”—that spine of tracks across the countryside from city to city—epitomized all that was power, speed, wealth, and progress. Long before the appearance of the automobile and the airplane, the locomotive and the steel rail were the icons of the modern, images of the up-to-date.

At the same time, both railroad companies and artists like Moran recognized that railways had an interest in doing more than simply moving freight and passengers from one place to another. Companies could promote investment in particular places, enhancing revenue from both increased traffic and real estate sales. Even more important, the railroads quickly realized that they could sell scenery, the view from the passenger car window. The trip became a destination, an experience to value for itself. As one Pennsylvania Railroad official put it, “the purpose of travel is

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not merely to reach the goal, but to find enjoyment while enroute.” Railroads and their artists took the aristocratic idea of the Grand Tour and made it a common experience. Now for the cost of a ticket anyone could see glorious landscapes and the wonders of nature. In a market economy where everything had a price, railroads made nature a commodity. Artists like Moran showed tourists what they were going to see even before they left home. And those same artists recorded pre-packaged images in everything from penny postcards to lavish viewbooks.

THOMAS MORAN
Communipaw, New Jersey
etching on paper, 1884
GILCREASE
MUSEUM, 1426.430



For all his personal and professional ties to American railroads, Moran was not a traditional “railway artist.” Unlike some of his contemporaries (and twentieth-century painters like Edward Hopper, Charles Sheeler, Howard Fogg, and Ted Rose), Moran never drew mighty express engines, handsome Pullmans, or even ordinary box cars. His field sketches show no stations, roundhouses, or coaling towers. The Morand-Friese checklist of Moran prints in the Gilcrease collection contains only one image of a locomotive and passenger cars—a magazine illustration completely generic in setting and wholly devoid of any mechanical detail. Moran certainly had the ability to draw industrial scenes. His sketch of the Communipaw, New Jersey sugar refineries is a fine piece of urban illustration, capturing all the texture and grit of a factory landscape. But Moran never stood trackside eager to capture thunder on the rails. His railroad vision—one that guided him wherever he traveled and whoever he worked for—was quite different. Moran’s approach was not to document the railway as an engineering triumph. He was not interested in technological wonders or the landscape of the metropolitan corridor. Instead, the artist and his employers wanted to show the world as seen from the rails. With Moran, we look through the passenger car window or

RIGHT

THOMAS MORAN

Spruce Creek

wash on paper,

August 14, 1864

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0226.942

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THOMAS MORAN

Spruce Creek

pencil on paper,

August 22, 1864

GILCREASE MUSEUM,

1326.714



from the balcony of a railway-owned hotel, framing nature and erasing any sign of rails and roadbed. Railroads like the Pennsylvania and the B&O were selling scenery, not steam engines. Smoke and grime, sand and cinders had no place in their promotional schemes. And considering Moran's own Romantic sensibility about nature, he was just the artist to make places like western Pennsylvania seem nearly the Garden of Eden.

Virtually all of Thomas Moran's "railroad art" was shaped by the tension between what the locomotive represented and the dream of a pristine landscape. Moran was not alone in feeling that tension. Generations of artists, writers, and politicians struggled with what seemed a dilemma beyond resolution. How could the American republic preserve cherished values of rural simplicity and independence while embracing the promise of progress offered by the city and the factory? To put it another way,

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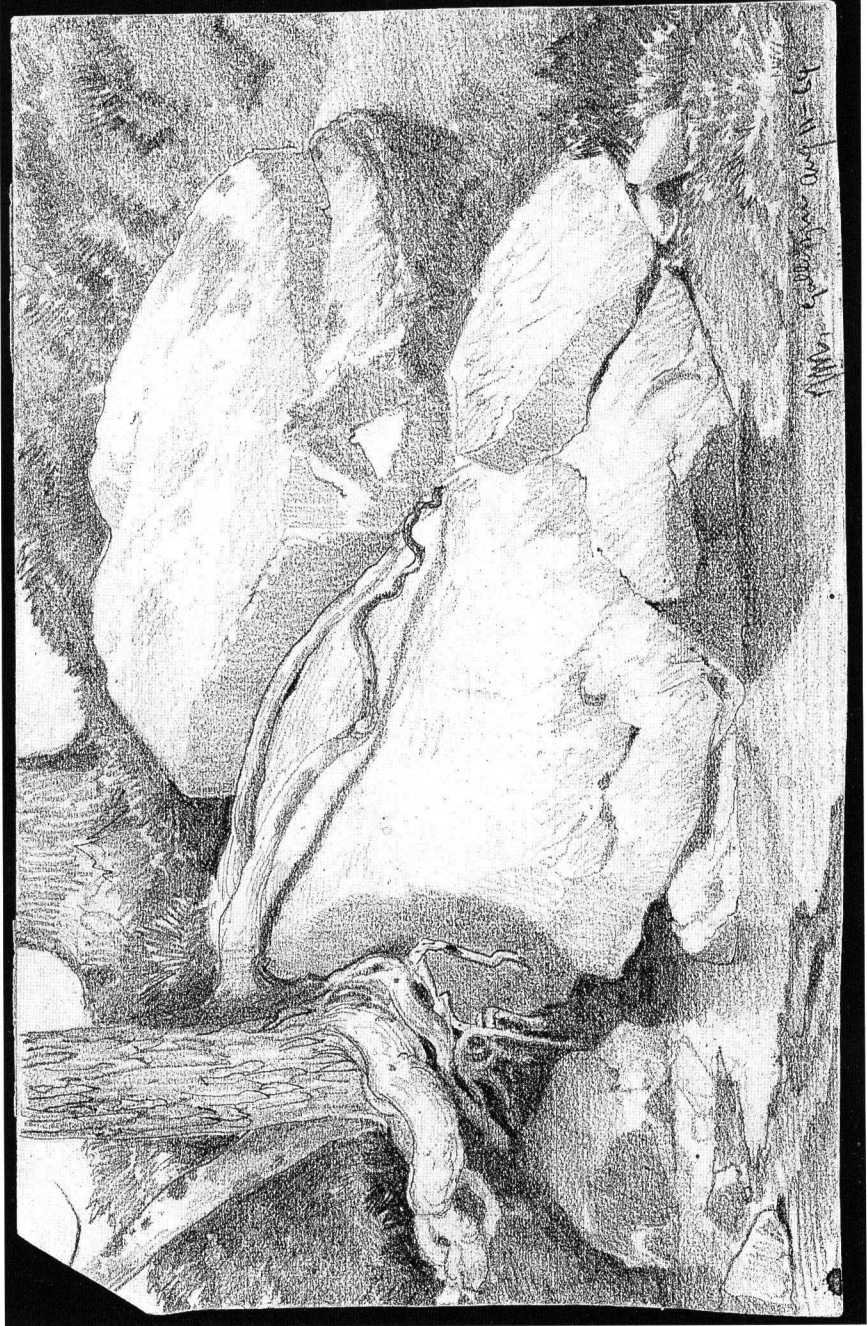
SURVIVE THE
PRESENCE OF
THE MACHINE?

Moran's first major eastern railroad commission came from perhaps the most influential of all east-coast railway companies. The Pennsylvania Railroad, chartered in 1846,

THOMAS MORAN
*Warriors Ridge,
Huntingdon, Pa.*
pencil on paper, 1864
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.1028



THOMAS MORAN
Gallitzen
pencil on paper,
August 11, 1864
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.1021





THOMAS MORAN
*Huntingdon from
Warriors Ridge*
pencil and wash on paper,
August 3, 1864
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.715



THOMAS MORAN
*The Juniata Below
Huntingdon*
pencil on paper,
August 6, 1864
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.717

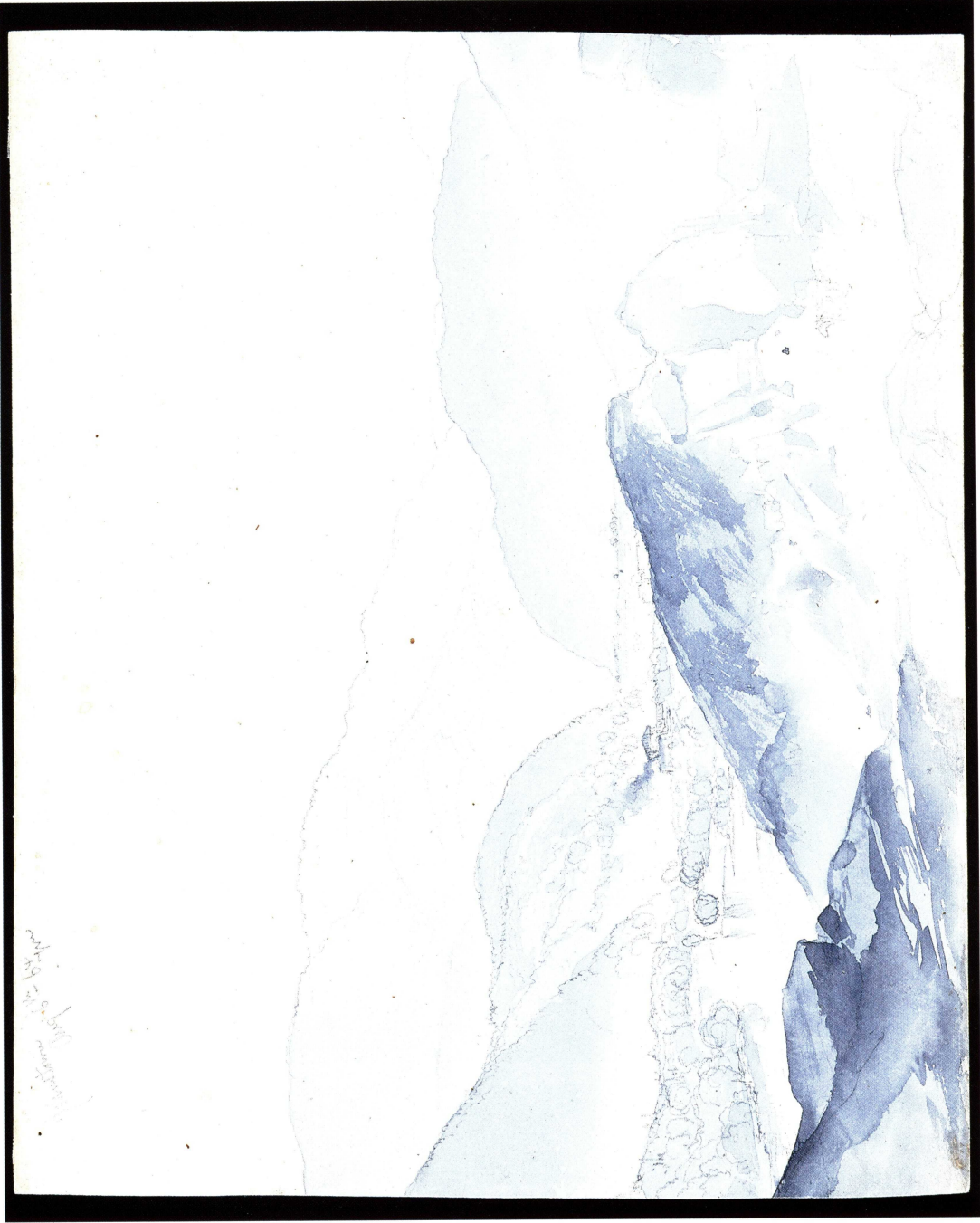
eventually proclaimed itself “the Standard Railroad of the World.” In the last decades of the 19th century, the Pennsy (or the “P Company” as it was affectionately known) had thousands of miles of track, and hundreds of thousands of cars and engines. Under the forceful leadership of company president J. Edgar Thomson, the Pennsy empire stretched from Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. to Pittsburgh, Chicago, and St. Louis. This railroad was more than a business; it was a national institution and a way of life for employees and customers alike. Just one comparison hints at the Pennsy’s magnitude. In 1930 the railroad owned 5,671 locomotives. That same year the mighty Union Pacific had a mere 1,619. From the 1840s until its consolidation with the

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New York Central in 1968, there was nothing quite like the Pennsy.

Beginning in late July, 1864 Thomas Moran made a personally-financed excursion through central Pennsylvania as far west as Bolivar, just beyond present-day Johnstown. It is possible that Moran was joined on the ramble by his photographer brother John. The journey took Moran into some of Pennsylvania’s most picturesque territory—the hills and valleys of the Juniata and Conemaugh river country. At first glance, Moran’s route through towns like Huntingdon, Lockport, Gallitzin, and Spruce Creek seems to follow no particular plan. But as Anne Morand has discovered in her careful research, the artist was actually traveling along the

THOMAS MORAN
Johnstown
pencil and wash on paper,
August 6, 1864
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
0226.795



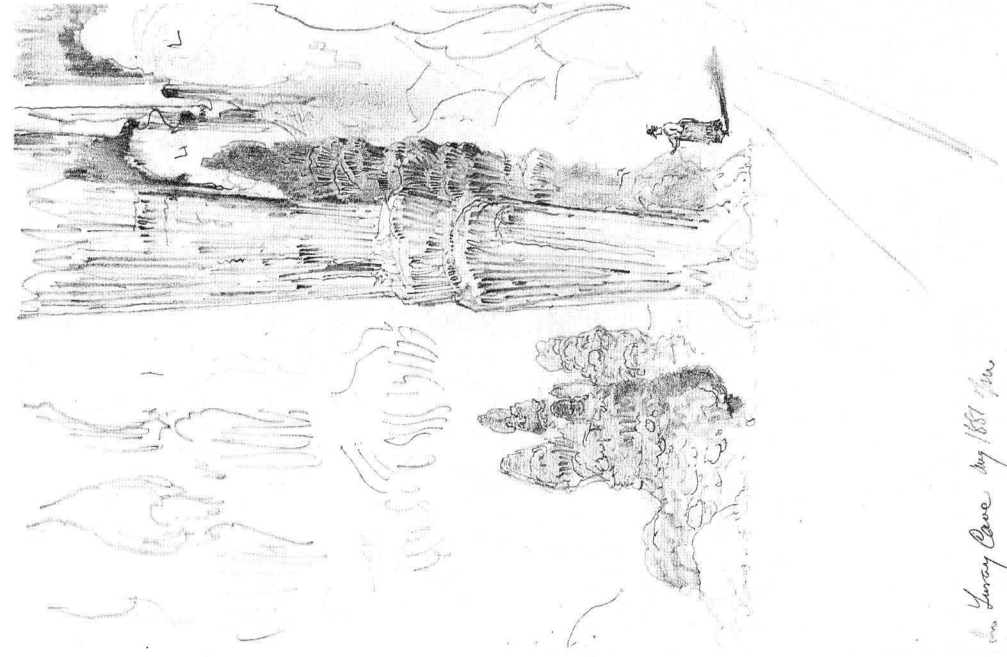


THOMAS MORAN
*Forest Scene,
 Alleghenies*
 wood engraving on paper,
 1875
 GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1526.443

Pennsy Main Line in its famed Middle Division. During the expedition Moran sketched all sorts of landscapes—sweeping river valleys, striking rock formations, and timbered hillsides. Moran’s angle of vision shifted throughout the journey. Some of the drawings in the series are highly detailed studies of rocks and roots as in *Gallitzin* and *Spruce Creek*. At times Moran took a middle view as in *Warriors Ridge*, *Huntingdon*, *Pennsylvania*. And there are sweeping panoramas such as *Huntingdon from Warriors Ridge*, *The Juniata below Huntingdon*, *Johnstown*, and *Spruce Creek, Pennsylvania*. Anne Morand finds that the pale blue wash Moran used on some of these sketches lends a sense of hazy distance and romantic mystery—all feelings that came to the fore in the artist’s Yellowstone paintings. The Pennsy brought Moran to the Juniata and the Conemaugh but as always the artist made the railroad itself invisible.

Nearly a decade after Moran’s Pennsylvania excursion the Pennsy purchased some of the pictures from that journey (and other brief trips) for use in a company publication. In 1875 the railroad’s Passenger Department published *The Pennsylvania Railroad: Its Origin, Construction, and Connections*. The book was part of the railroad’s planning to promote travel to the United States Centennial celebration scheduled for Philadelphia the following year. And as it happened, 1876 would also mark the Pennsy’s thirtieth birthday. Compiled and written by William B. Sipes with engravings by James W. Lauderbach, the 281-page volume offered readers a thorough treatment of rail technology and colorful descriptions of Pennsylvania and New Jersey towns on the line. Of the book’s many illustrations, twelve of the most striking were based on Moran’s 1864 sketches. A Moran/Lauderbach engraving entitled *Forest Scene, Alleghenies* is typical of the artist’s work that appears in the book. The scene is a tourist dream—a quiet spot to fish in an isolated mountain stream framed by the arches of great trees. The message Moran and his railroad patron sent was both simple and effective. There was a place to escape the crowds and noise of city and

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THOMAS MORAN
In Luray Cave
pencil on paper,
August 1881
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.1006

factory. That place was in the shady glens of Pennsylvania and “The Standard Railroad of the World” could bring passengers there with speed and safety.

While the Penny proclaimed itself the standard by which all others were measured, it was neither the first commercially successful American railway nor the leader in employing artists for company promotion. In both cases it was the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad that could claim pride of place. The B&O was incorporated in 1827 and began construction in 1830. By the end of the 1870s the B&O reached from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago, and St. Louis. The B&O was not only the nation’s pioneer railroad; it also led the

THOMAS MORAN
Luray Cave
pencil on paper,
August, 1881
GILCREASE MUSEUM,
1326.995

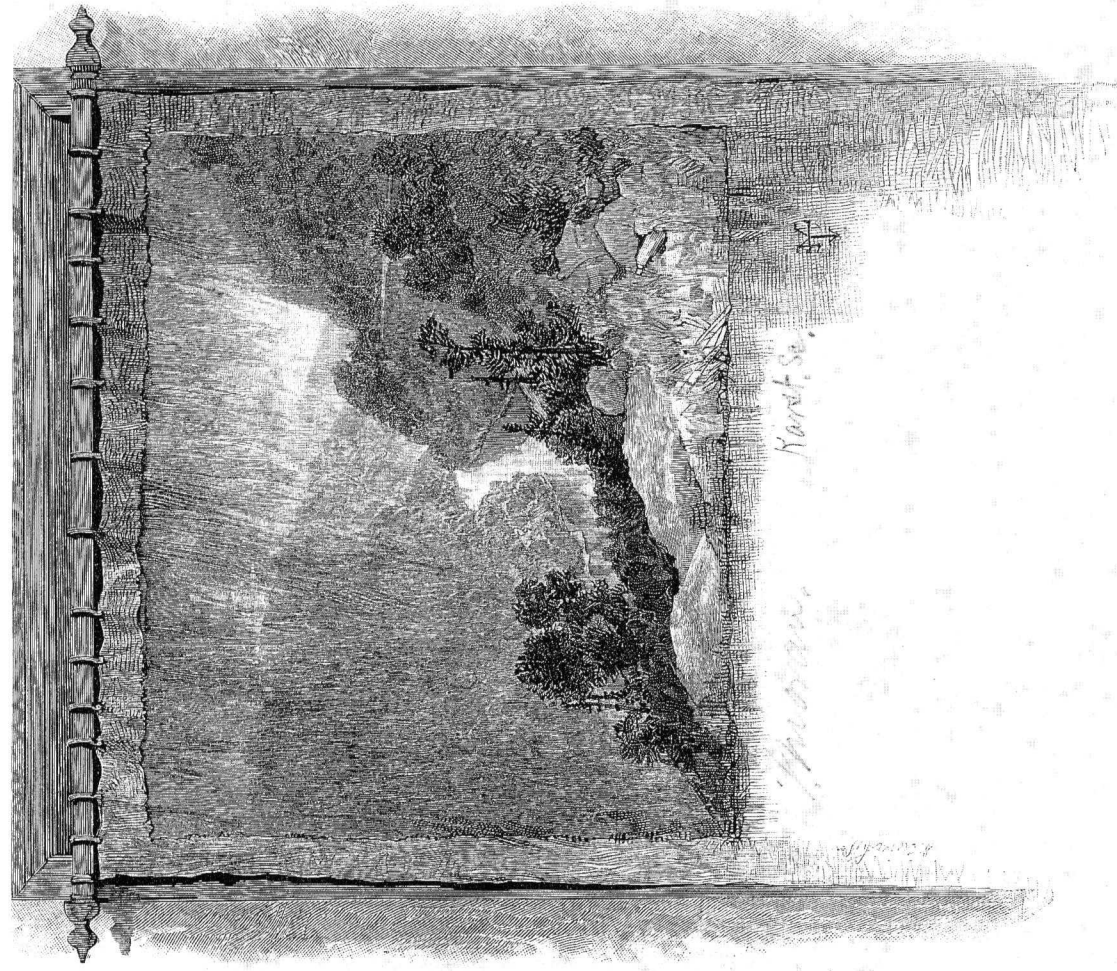


industry in using artists, writers, and photographers for corporate promotion. As art historian Susan Danly writes, “The B&O was the first American railroad to promote its commercial interests through the visual arts, and during the 1850s it published illustrated travel guides, organized tours, and publicized the scenic attractions of its route.” The most notable of those pre-Civil War efforts came in 1858 when the railroad put together a tour of present-day West Virginia for several artists, including John Kensett, David Hunter Strother, Thomas Prichard Rossiter, and Louis K. Minot. The results of the trip appeared in B&O books, popular magazines like *Harper’s* and *The Crayon*, formal studio paintings, and photographs.

The successes of the 1850s fostered an enduring B&O art tradition. And in 1881 Thomas Moran was recruited into the company art corps. Prompted by the view books produced by other companies and the increasing importance of tourism, the B&O contracted with author and tour organizer J. G. Pangborn for a similar enterprise. Moran’s reputation as “the most energetic seeker after the picturesque in nature” made him Pangborn’s first choice as the venture’s principle artist. Moran and Pangborn were accompanied on their journey by Joseph Karst, an experienced engraver. And to keep B&O private car number 217 on track and on time, the railroad assigned a company officer to shepherd the party.

Throughout the month of August the Moran-Pangborn expedition traveled over the B&O right-of-way, sampling the scenic marvels of Maryland, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Typical of Moran’s sketches on the trip are a series of views of Luray Cave, already a popular West Virginia tourist attraction. Less typical but perhaps more intriguing are drawings that hint at the presence of the railroad. *Allegheny Tunnel Near the Source of the Potomac* appeared in the B&O book as a Karst engraving entitled *Near the Source of the Potomac*. Moran’s wash drawing *View of the Narrows, Cumberland, B&O* sets an example of civil engineering in a natural context, almost as if Moran recognized the aesthetic possibilities of things built by human hands.

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THOMAS MORAN
*Near the Source of the
Potomac*
wood engraving on paper,
1882

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 1526.418

Working with Moran's sketches, Karst's engravings, and his own travel notes, Pangborn wrote *Picturesque B&O. Historical and Descriptive*. Published in 1882, the book offered a travelogue illustrated with 94 drawings—of which 68 were by Moran. Pangborn boasted that all the engravings were "made from nature" and not the product of mere studio work or copied from photographs. Capitalizing on Moran's reputation, Pangborn reminded prospective readers that "The single fact that Thomas Moran had furnished upward of seventy entirely new drawings for any one work would at once establish its

surpassingly high character in the first artistic circles of the continent." Perhaps Pangborn knew that the pedestrian quality of his prose, with its cute allusions to Moran as "Yellowstone" and Karst as "Apple Jack," made the illustrations the real reason to buy the book. And it was a popular publication, with a deluxe edition printed in 1883.

Thomas Moran's life spanned the golden age of American railroading. When he was born in 1837 the United States counted only 1,497 miles of railroad track, much of it in unconnected segments. By the time Moran died in 1926 the nation was criss-crossed by some 421,341 miles of track. Half a dozen transcontinental rail lines bound East to West. In Moran's lifetime, railroads came to define the American landscape. Railway terminals were built like cathedrals, places to witness and worship the power of what Emerson called "railroad iron." Luxury expresses like the Broadway Limited, the Florida Special, and the Santa Fe Chief represented both elegance and efficiency. And freight trains loaded with coal, lumber, steel, and oil spoke of prosperity and the promise of endless wealth. As the metropolitan corridor expanded to occupy more of the country, some Americans felt increasingly nostalgic about the vanishing national garden. Moran gave that audience a glowing vision of the garden, whether it was set in the Rockies or the Alleghenies. His pictures reassured many that there were still places like Warriors Ridge and the Luray Caverns, accessible and yet somehow unspoiled. To do that he relied on the railroads—the ultimate machine—to bring him to the garden. Like his contemporaries, Moran was touched by the magic of railroad iron. He might have turned away from painting locomotives, but their tracks were everywhere in his life and art.

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James P. Ronda is H. G.
Barnard Professor of
Western American
History at the University
of Tulsa.



MORAN/ULYSSES: THE ARTIST AS EXPLORER

J O S E P H A . K E S T N E R

J.M.W. TURNER
Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus
oil on canvas, 1829

REPRODUCED COURTESY OF THE TRUSTEES, THE
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

Madmen or visionaries?

In keeping with the mood of the 19th century, artists were conceived as explorers. As one reviewer declared rapturously when Frederic Church's *The Icebergs* was exhibited in London in 1863, these were “the very days of spirited graphic exploration and adventure.”

No one better fitted this model than Thomas Moran.

Moran was an explorer at a very early age. Born in Lancashire, England, in 1837, he had come with his parents to America in 1844. Throughout his life, he was marked by a spirit of adventure, which led to travels and expeditions throughout his long career. These excursions included European travels, such as his 1862 to England (where he studied Turner's paintings and sketches) and his explorations of England, France, and Italy in 1866-1867.

However, Moran is immortal for his numerous explorations of America itself. In 1860, he traveled to Lake Superior. In the summer of 1871, as part of an expedition for the U. S. Geological Survey led by Dr. Ferdinand Hayden, Moran went to Yellowstone. In the late summer of 1872, Moran journeyed to Yosemite, with an excursion in 1873 to the Grand Canyon and to Utah.

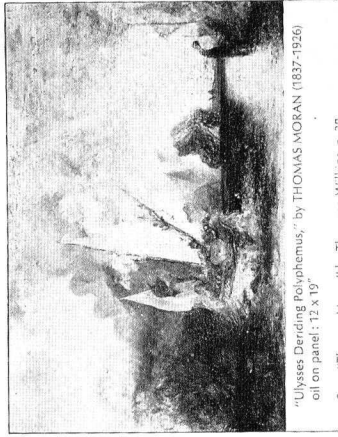
Was there a model which inspired this zeal? Definitely.

Moran indisputably reveals it was Odysseus/Ulysses from Greek mythology, the hero of the epic poem by Homer recorded in the eighth century B.C. In *The Odyssey*, Homer recounts how Odysseus, after the fall of Troy, wandered for many years before returning to his wife Penelope and his kingdom of Ithaca. Through his cunning, daring, and boldness, Odysseus confronts monsters, slays enemies, and endures trials with amazing fortitude. For the 19th century, Odysseus/Ulysses became the model of the spirit of exploration and adventure.

There was one single document which above all transmitted this paradigm, the poem “Ulysses” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, published in 1842. In this monologue, Tennyson imagines the mariner addressing the sailors who have confronted so many challenges with him. He reminds them of his restless history. “I am a part of all that I have met,” he says. “How dull it is to pause, to make an end.” Invoking their “one equal temper of heroic hearts,” Ulysses spurs his men to new explorations and distant horizons, exhorting every man to be “strong in will/To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.”

If an artist needed a manifesto to be an explorer, this was it.

When Moran returned to England in 1862, he encountered a large number of the paintings of England's celebrated landscapist J.M.W. Turner. One of Turner's most powerful canvases, *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus* of



"Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus," by THOMAS MORAN (1837-1926)
 oil on panel; 12 x 19"

Moran's unlocated *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus* is known today only through this photograph in an art trader's bulletin.

1829, so impressed Moran that he made an oil copy of it which hung in his studio throughout his life. This image of Ulysses is key to the psychology and practice of Moran as artist.

Turner's *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus* was considered by British critic John Ruskin "the central picture in Turner's career." Derived from Book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*, the painting shows Ulysses and his crew escaping from the one-eyed giant Polyphemus, whom Ulysses has blinded by piercing the eye with a stake. The giant is clutching his head on a mountain top at the left of the painting, while Ulysses jeers at him from his ship. Dawn breaks with the brilliant sunrise in the distance, signifying the triumph of light over darkness and certifying Ulysses's courage.

It is Ruskin who transforms the Greek mariner into a symbol of the defiant artist/adventurer. Ruskin claims that Turner as artist *is* Ulysses: "He had been himself shut up by one-eyed people. He had seen his companions eaten in the cave by the one-eyed people—(many a painter of good promise had fallen by Turner's side in those early toils of his); at last, he thrust the rugged pine-trunk—all ablaze—into the faces of the one-eyed people and got away to open sea as the dawn broke."

For Ruskin, Ulysses was the paradigm of the artist as adventurer and explorer. Moran's copy of Turner's *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus*, completed soon after his return from England in 1862, becomes his pledge of allegiance to Ulysses.

Moran had one great challenge, however. He had to make the Greek model an American one. In a brilliant strategic move, he decided to paint an American epic hero who nevertheless embraced the daring of the Greek Ulysses. He found one in *The Song of Hiawatha* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, published in 1855, a poetic literary sensation which sold 4,000 copies on the first day it appeared.

Longfellow's *Hiawatha* was intended as an American epic poem. It memorializes the exploits of an Ojibwa or Chippewa chief, Hiawatha, raised on the shore of Lake Superior. Longfellow deploys standard epic elements, derived from Homer and Vergil, in recording Hiawatha's life: the mysterious birth of the hero (Hiawatha is the child of Mudjekeewis, Father of the Winds of Heaven); the encounter with disruptive or dangerous forces (Pau-Puk-Keewis as chaos, Megissogwon as disease); the tragic love affair (the hero's political marriage with Minnehaha); the long journey (here by water, a deliberate echo of Ulysses and Aeneas); imposing speeches; the loyal friend (Chibiabos); and epic listings of names.

Moran painted several major canvases inspired by Hiawatha, including the 1867 *Hiawatha and the Great Serpent* (with the 1868 small version *Hiawatha and the Great Sea Serpents*) and the *Marine Sunset* of 1875. From 1875 to 1878, Moran worked on a series of illustrations to Longfellow's poem.

It was in 1869, however, that Ulysses and Hiawatha, Turner and Moran, coalesced in one dazzling image, *Spirit of the Indian*. Moran draws on Canto 9 of Longfellow's text, which records Hiawatha's encounter with Megissogwon, the force of disease, "the Manito of Wampum. . . the mightiest of Magicians." Hiawatha arrives on the shore and shoots an arrow at the Magician's "Shining Wigwam" as a bearer of his challenge "Come forth from your lodge, Pearl-Feather! Hiawatha waits your coming!"

THOMAS MORAN

Spirit of the Indian

oil on canvas, 1869

THE PHILBROOK MUSEUM OF ART, TULSA, 1944.9





JOHN LINNELL
The Return of Ulysses

oil on canvas, 1848

THE FORBES MAGAZINE COLLECTION, NEW YORK.

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Megissogwon is indeed
threatening as described by
Longfellow: "Tall of stature, broad of
shoulder,/Dark and terrible in
aspect,/Clad from head to foot in
wampum./

Armed with all his warlike
weapons." When threatened by the
Manito, Hiawatha responds with the
daring of Ulysses: "Deeds are better
things than words are,/Actions
mightier than boastings!" The two
fighters close in combat: "Then
began the greatest battle/That the
sun had ever looked on" records
Longfellow.

After being exhausted by the Manito, Hiawatha on the advice of the
woodpecker Mama aims his arrows at the crown of his foe's head, where
alone he is vulnerable, and finally slays "the great Pearl-Feather, . . . the
mightiest of Magicians." The aim at the head of course invokes Ulysses's
blinding of Polyphemus.

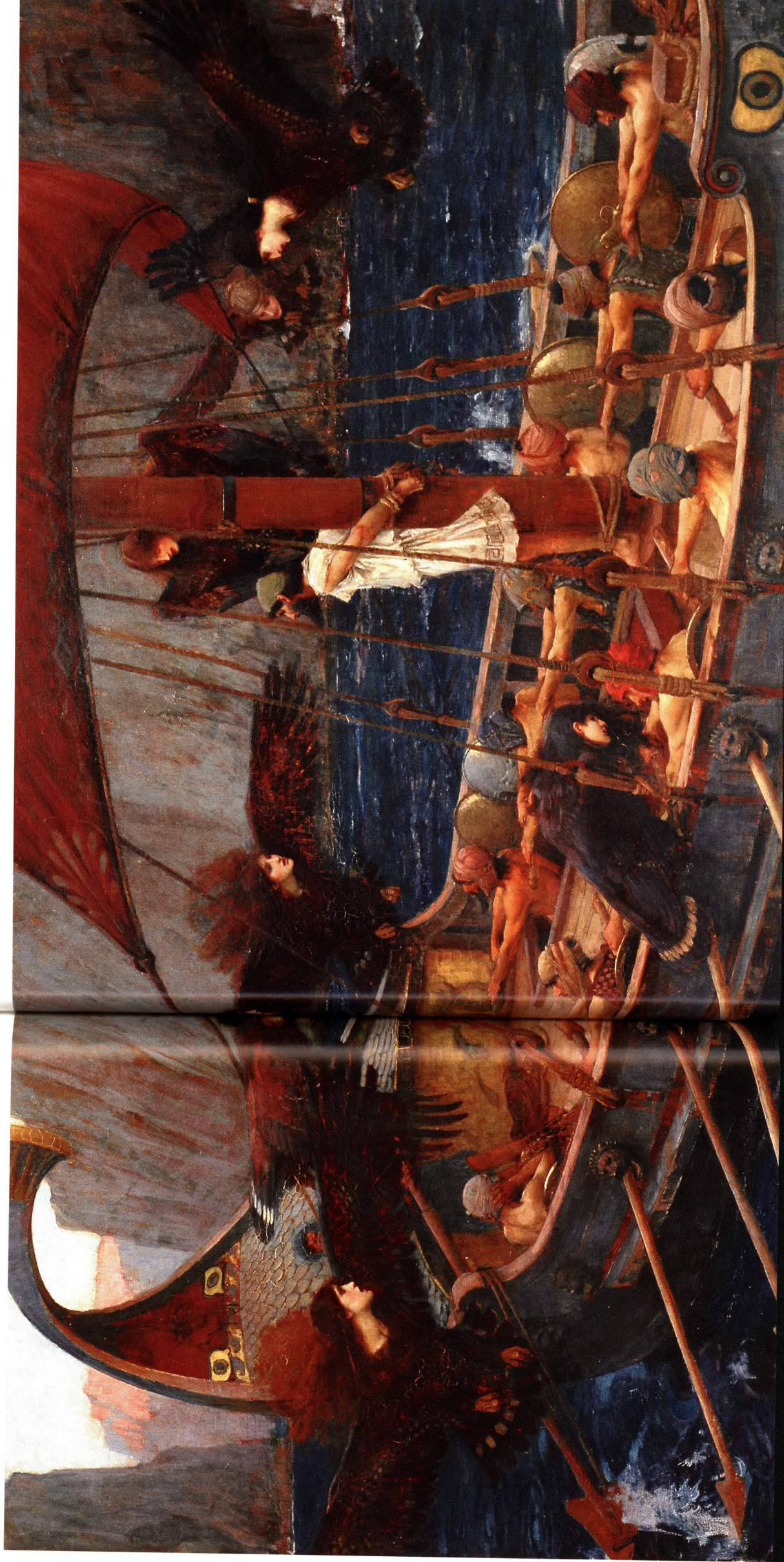
To reinforce the parallel between Ulysses and Hiawatha, Moran
echoes Turner's *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus* in the design of his canvas—
in reverse. Just as the colossal figure of Polyphemus is seated on a
mountain at the left in Turner's painting, Megissogwon, a pearl-gray
giant, is posed on the right in Moran's conception. Hiawatha stands
beside his canoe, back to the viewer, raising his bow in challenge: Moran
thus evokes Turner's Ulysses, who stands on the bridge of his ship hurling
taunts at Polyphemus.

Moran's *Spirit of the Indian* ought to be conceived as part of a 19th-
century preoccupation with the Ulysses narrative. This focus was
significant because it engaged the concern of the age with exploration,

JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE
Ulysses and the Sirens

oil on canvas, 1891

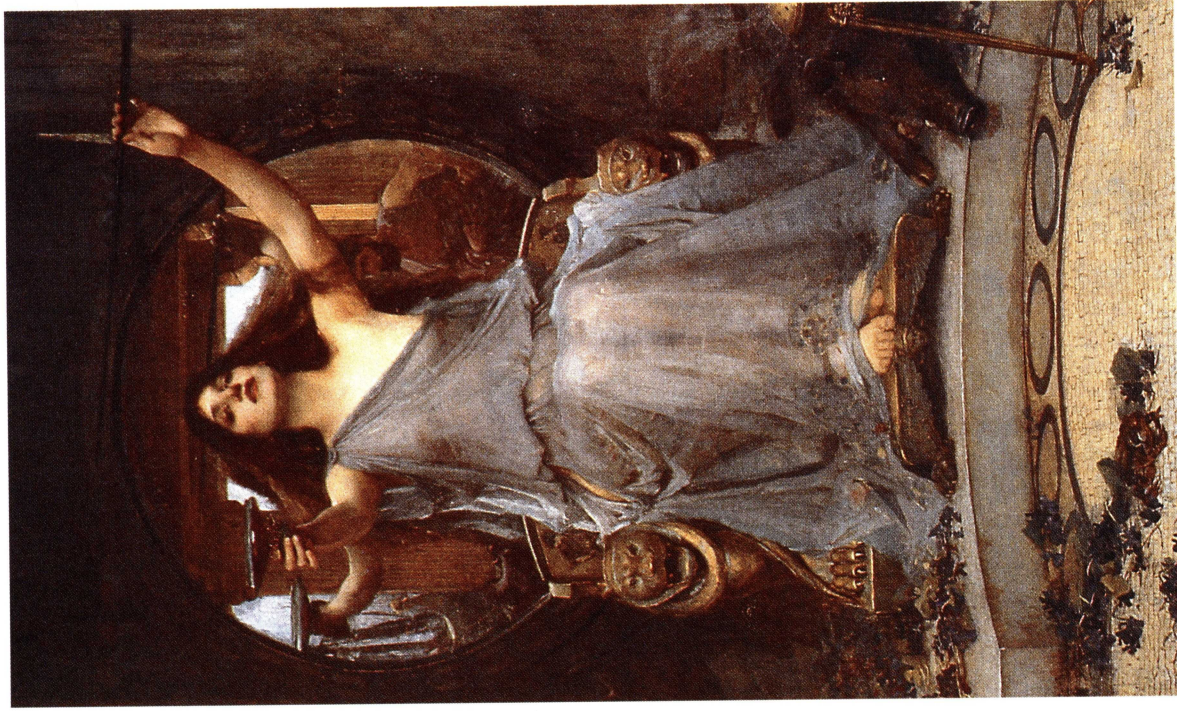
NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE,
AUSTRALIA



discovery, mapping, and imperialism. Artists were eager to align their practices with exploration by depicting elements of the tale of Ulysses. For example, the British painter John Linnell in 1849 exhibited *The Return of Ulysses*, derived from Book 13 of Homer's poem describing the Phaeacians depositing the sleeping Odysseus on the shore of Ithaca at dawn, in a canvas inspired by Turner. (Moran copied at least one Linnell work and was familiar with the artist's oeuvre.)

JOHN WILLIAM WATERHOUSE
Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses
oil on canvas, 1891

OLDHAM ART GALLERY, OLDHAM, ENGLAND



Moran's interest in episodes from Homer's *Odyssey* persisted throughout his career. Many artists were inspired by Ulysses' encounter with the Sirens from Book 12. Of particular interest is John William Waterhouse's *Ulysses and the Sirens* of 1891, showing Ulysses tied to the mast while his ship is surrounded by Sirens, conceived as half-bird, half-human figures. Herbert James Draper in 1909 finished his *Ulysses and the Sirens*, depicting the mariner leaning forward to hear the voices of these threatening beings, one of whom is a mermaid. Moran's interest in this dimension of Homer is indicated by the fact that in 1900 he completed his *Ulysses and the Sirens*, now unlocated.

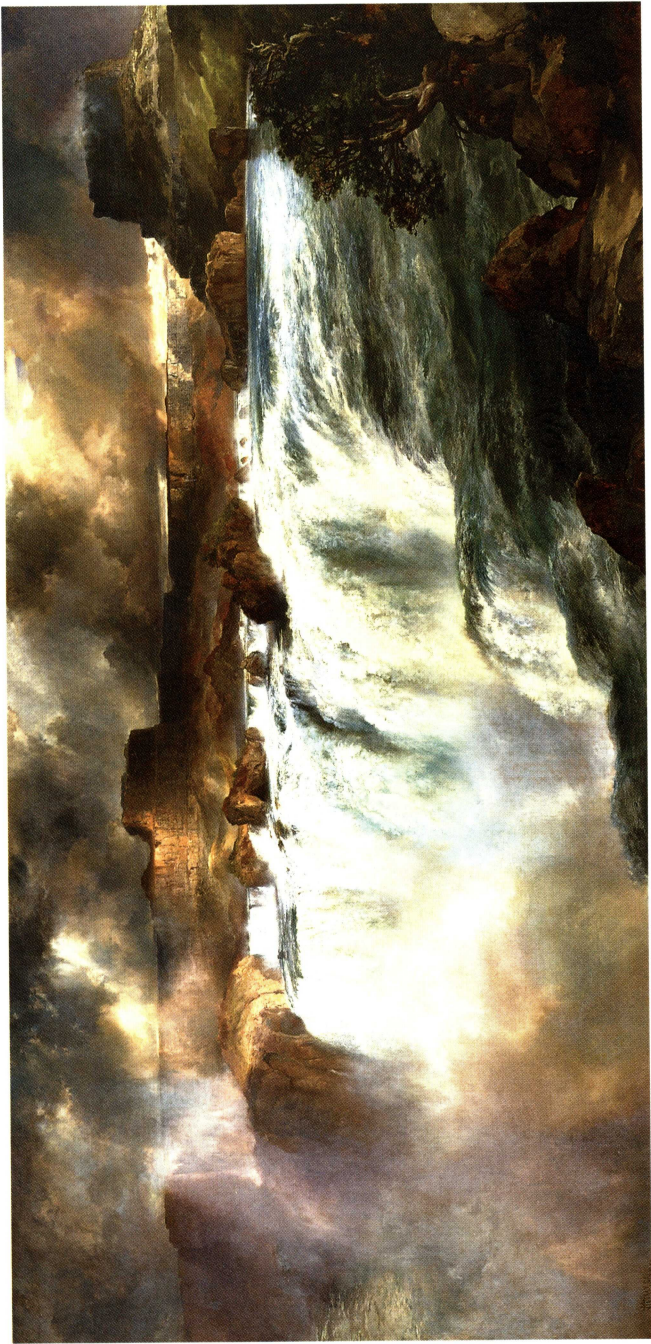
The threatening female/femme fatale was a dominant motif in 19th-century painting, and numerous depictions of the sorceress Circe from Homer's Book 10 were completed by a variety of artists, including Waterhouse with two versions, *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses* of 1891 and *Circe Invidiosa* of 1892. There is one memorable depiction of the nymph Calypso, *Calypso's Isle* by Draper in 1897, from Homer's Book 5.



THOMAS MORAN
Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came
oil on canvas, 1859
SPANIERMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

As a cultural ideology, nevertheless, exploration was fraught with hazard, as the Sirens or Circe symbolically indicate. Tennyson in his poem "The Lotos-Eaters" of 1842 drew on Book 9 of the *Odyssey*, describing an encounter with men who have eaten the lotos plant and ceased to sail and explore. Many of the hero's crew are attracted by this withdrawal from the world.

The myth of the Lotos-Eaters is the countervailing myth to that of the explorer. The 19th century was divided between a desire for security (the Lotos-Eaters) and the longing for adventure (Ulysses). That Moran saw this other side of exploration is revealed by his completion of two canvases, unlocated, on the theme of the Lotos-Eaters in 1892 and 1898. How insidious was this ideology of exploration? This was a subject



TOP

THOMAS MORAN

Shoshone Falls on the Snake River

oil on canvas, 1900

GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0126.2339



FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH

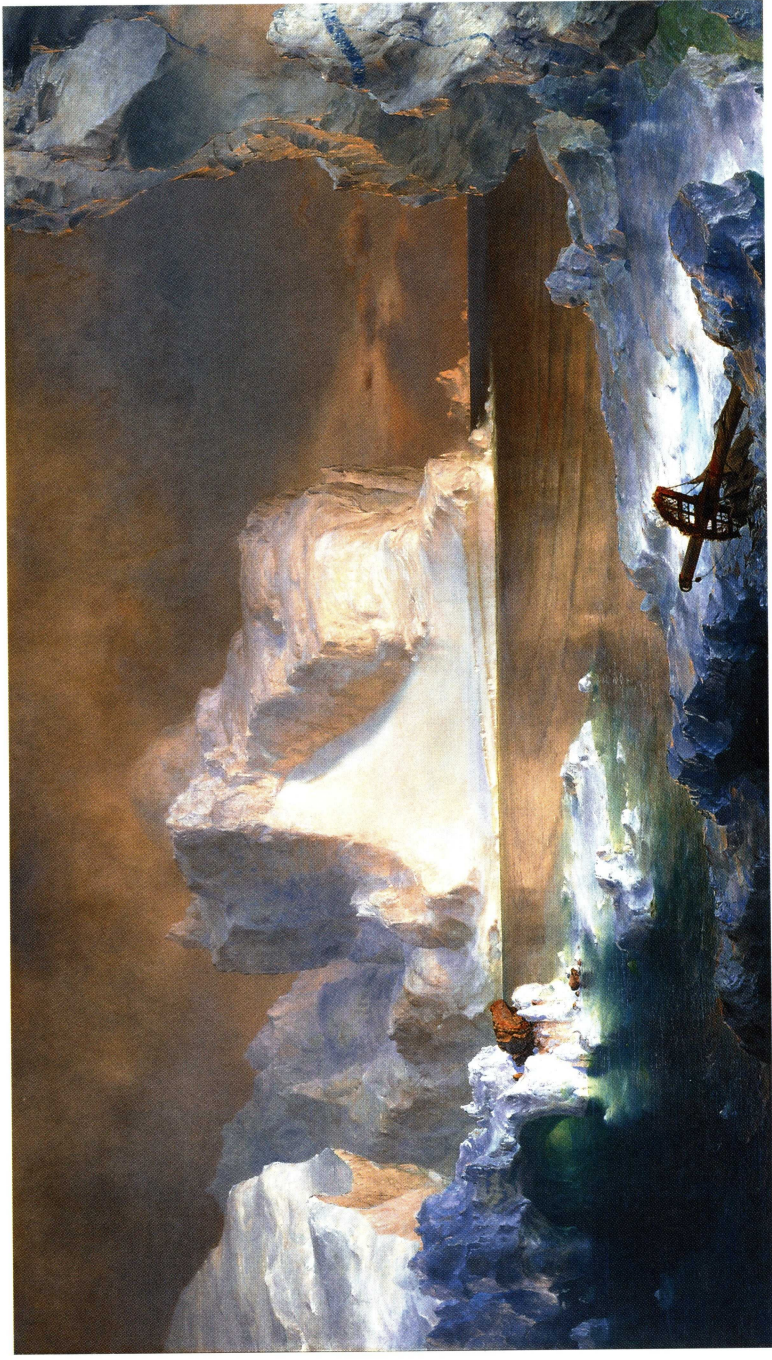
Aurora Borealis

oil on canvas, 1865

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION, GIFT OF ELEANOR BLODGETT, 1911.4.1

of great interest to Moran. In 1859 he completed *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came* derived from Edgar's mad song in Shakespeare's King Lear. Robert Browning in 1855 published a famous poem of that title, in which the hero Roland toils through a nightmare landscape and arrives at a fortress, a quest which yields no meaning except that the hero reached the dark tower, which represents the meaninglessness of existence. Do the mesas which resemble towers in Moran's *Shoshone Falls* of 1900 constitute a commentary on the futility of exploration? Nature endures, but man disappears.

One of the occasions which made the century speculate about exploration was the enormous impetus to explore the Arctic during the 19th century. This search was driven by the desire to discover the Northwest Passage, that is, a sea route from the Atlantic to the Pacific via



BOTTOM

FREDERIC EDWIN CHURCH

The Icebergs

oil on canvas, 1861

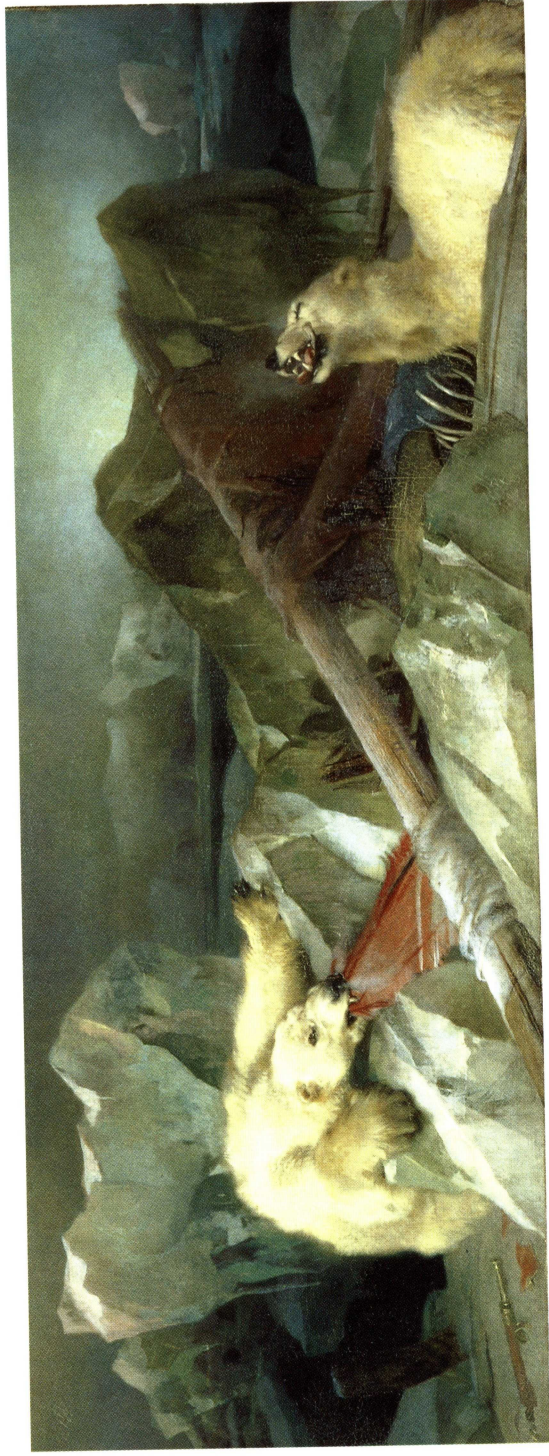
DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART, 1979.28

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER

Man Proposes—God Disposes

oil on canvas, 1864

ROYAL HOLLOWAY AND BEDFORD NEW COLLEGE, SURREY, THE BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY, LONDON, AHC 9703





SIR JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS
The Northwest Passage
oil on canvas, 1874
TATE GALLERY, LONDON, 1509

Joseph A. Kestner is McFarlin Professor of English at the University of Tulsa.

the North to obtain access to India, China, and the East for mercantile purposes, an objective extending back to Elizabethan times with the voyages of Martin Frobisher, John Davis, and Henry Hudson. Exploration later in the century had strong propagandistic, imperialist, territorial, and nationalistic goals.

The loss of the expedition of Sir John Franklin, which set out in 1845, aroused fears that human beings were too daring, tempting God and chance in their ambitions. As the century advanced, the model of Ulysses became more ambiguous, reflected in Arctic-derived canvases in both Britain and America. In 1864, Edwin Landseer exhibited *Man Proposes—God Disposes*, showing polar bears devouring the remnants of the Franklin expedition.

Frederic Church, who had sailed the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1859 observing many icebergs, produced *The Icebergs* in

1861, adding the broken mast and rigging in the foreground in 1862 before the canvas was exhibited in Britain in 1863. Thus a work originally a landscape of sublimity eventually embraced a cautionary element. In Britain the work was received as an homage to Turner.

In 1865 Church finished *Aurora Borealis*, of a ship locked in the frozen wastes of north Labrador, a depiction of lonely aspiration and its hazards. Church was described as uniting “the characteristics of the explorer and the artist.” John Everett Millais’s

The Northwest Passage of 1874 shows an aged mariner listening as his daughter reads from his log book and assists him to consult the chart or map on the table. The white naval ensign and the Union flag on the right, the view of the sea on the left, the print of Admiral Horatio Nelson (who had gone to the North as a young midshipman in 1773), and the sketch of a ship locked in by icebergs and the sketch of a ship locked in by icebergs to the left of the flag affirm and yet query the motives of exploration. William Bradford’s *Ice-Dwellers Watching the Invaders* of circa 1870 reflects by its title this same disturbance.

In 1891 Moran finished his own iceberg canvas, *Spectres from the North*. In April 1890, Moran sailed aboard a liner for Antwerp. On April 28, Moran made at least ten sketches of icebergs he saw on his passage. This seascape is one of vastness and desolation, increased by the strange flotsam in the foreground (of a mast?), suggesting that exploration is as problematical as it is daring. While the rainbow at the right may indicate affirmation and hope from a clearing storm, the lowering sky still terrorizes. Is Tennyson’s Ulysses, therefore, insane or inspired?

The sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912 was to increase doubts about daring. Like *Spirit of the Indian*, *Spectres from the North* evokes the legacy of Turner—and of Ulysses. Moran’s greatness is epitomized by his own career as artist/explorer, a later—but more knowing—descendant of his famous prototype.

WILLIAM BRADFORD
Ice-Dweller, Watching the Invaders
oil on canvas, ca. 1870
OLD DARTMOUTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY-NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM



THOMAS MORAN
Spectres from the North
oil on canvas, 1891
GILCREASE MUSEUM, 0126.2340

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