

BEYOND THE BINARY

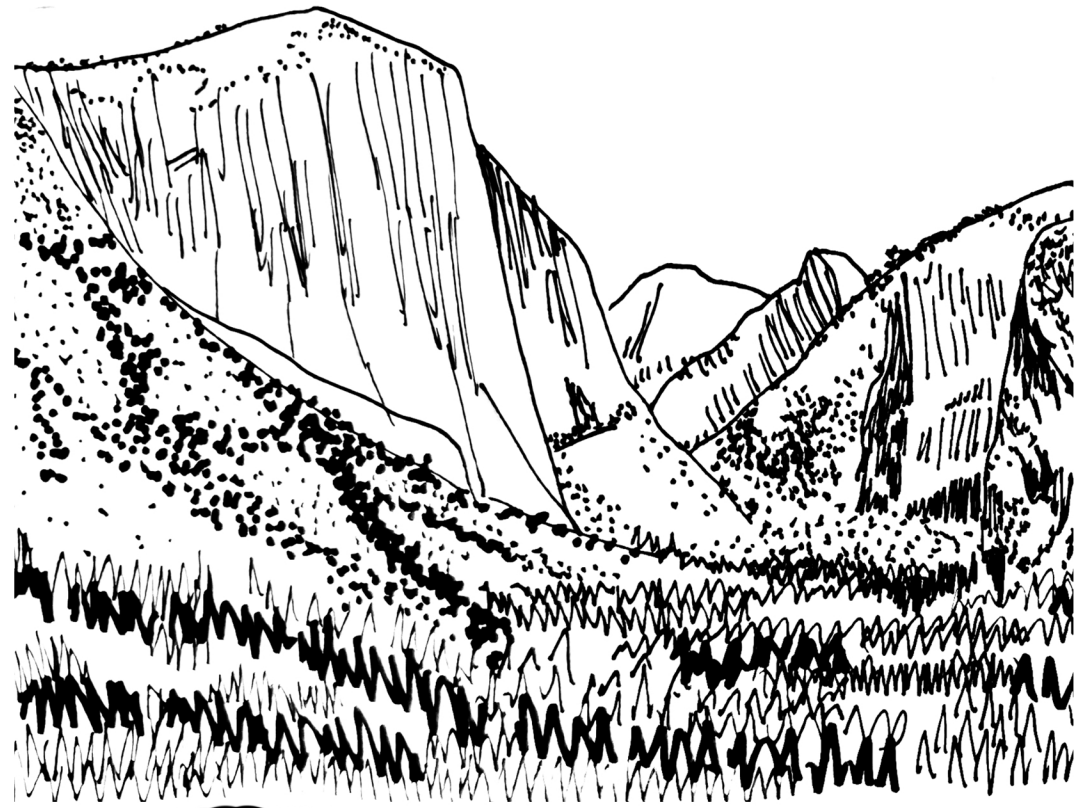


THE WILDERNESS MYTH



John Muir
stood in
Yosemite
Valley in
1868 and
called it
wilderness...

... but he was
looking at
land that
Miwok and
Yokuts people
had tended
for millennia.



To call the land-
scape of 1492
pristine is to
overlook not just
the sweeping
changes Indigenous
people made to
the landscape,
but their agency
as well.

It is to think
of them as
part of the
scenery, like
animals.

Perceiving the land as empty and unmanaged made it easier for Europeans to justify taking possession of it.



The native/invasive binary rests in part on a convenient myth: that the American landscape was untouched before Europeans arrived.



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SOURCES

“Indians walk softly and hurt the landscape hardly more than birds and squirrels.”

— John Muir

In many regions, the landscape looked empty because 90-95% of Indigenous people had perished from diseases brought by Europeans.

