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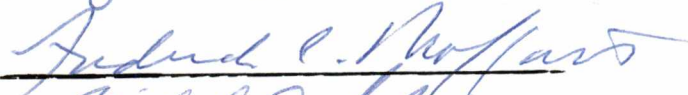
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Miles Tanenbaum entitled "Walt Whitman and American Art." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in English.



William H. Shurr, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:



Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

WALT WHITMAN AND AMERICAN ART

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Miles Tanenbaum

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Miles Tanenbaum

ABSTRACT

The "long foreground" to Walt Whitman's poetry that Ralph Waldo Emerson expressed curiosity about in his 1855 letter to Whitman has long been the subject of critical attention. The many influences that contributed to Whitman's startling poems in the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass have been studied in detail, but one important influence that has been ignored is Whitman's association with American artists and interest in American art prior to 1855.

In the Introduction, I establish that Whitman had a lifelong interest in art by examining his comments on Jean Francois Millet and Thomas Eakins, two artists whose work was admired by the poet. In Chapter 1 I examine the aesthetics and goals of American art and artists in the years before 1855 in order to provide a background for later comparisons. Whitman's associations with American artists and comments on art in the years 1846-1855 are examined in Chapter 2 in order to prove that Whitman was a part of the art world during those important years. In Chapters 3 and 4 I examine Whitman's prose works and early poetry (the major poems of the first three editions of Leaves of Grass) to point out similarities with American art in themes and techniques. Finally, in the Conclusion, I briefly touch upon Whitman's legacy to modern art.

Although the influence of American art is not

solely responsible for Whitman's maturation as a poet, it is one of many factors that contributed to his development. Both mid-century American art and Leaves of Grass are representative of the complex ideas of their time.

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INTRODUCTION

" . . . what we call poems being merely pictures" ¹
("Spontaneous Me," line 8)

Walt Whitman's lifelong search for an art that corresponded to his vision in Leaves of Grass ended in 1881 when he first saw the works of French artist Jean Francois Millet. Whitman gave Millet his highest compliment when he said, "The Leaves are only Millet in another form--they are the Millet that Walt Whitman has succeeded in putting into words" (Traubel, With 1: 7). Three qualities impressed Whitman--the poet looked for an art that captured and "celebrated" man's individuality while also making a social statement. Whitman also believed the artist/poet was society's "seer" and "prophet"; paintings and poems should improve both individuals and society. Finally, Whitman looked for an universal art, an art that encompassed and unified man, nature and God.

Whitman was fascinated during his first encounter with Millet's art. He wrote in Specimen Days--

Two rapt hours. Never before have I been so penetrated by this kind of expression. I stood long and long before The Sower. . . . There is something in this that could hardly be caught again--a sublime murkiness and original pent fury. Besides this masterpiece, there

¹All quotations from Walt Whitman's poetry are from Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition, eds. Harold Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965). Poem titles and line numbers will be used to note poetry parenthetically.

were many others (I shall never forget the simple evening scene, Watering the Cow), all inimitable, all perfect as pictures, works of mere art; and then it seem'd to me, with that last impalpable ethic purpose from the artist (most likely unconscious to himself) which I am always looking for. To me all of them told the full story of what went before and necessitated the great French Revolution--the long precedent crushing of the masses of a heroic people into the earth in abject poverty, hunger--every right denied, humanity attempted to be put back for generations--yet Nature's force, titanic here, the stronger and hardier for that repression--waiting terribly to break forth, revengeful--the pressure on the dykes, and the bursting at last--the storming of the Bastille--the execution of the king and queen--the tempest of massacres and blood.

. . . .
The true France, base of all the rest, is certainly in these pictures. . . . If for nothing else, I should dwell on my brief Boston visit for opening to me the new world of Millet's pictures. Will America ever have such an artist out of her own gestation, body, soul?
(267-69)

American art was in a transition period during this time, incorporating many elements from the Barbizon school of which Millet was a member (Burke and Voorsanger 71-83). The Hudson River School, a group dominated by landscapists and at the peak of its popularity around mid-century, began to decline after the Civil War for a variety of reasons. The large, breathtaking landscapes of Frederic Church and Albert Bierstadt which breathed optimism and hope in man's future were out of place after the carnage of the Civil War. Also, people began to tire of landscapes which were "repetitious in theme and treatment" (Burke and Voorsanger 73). The influx of international ideas after the Civil War led away from realism to an impressionistic period in

American art, and Millet's paintings were part of that influence.

In Millet, Whitman found a poetic treatment of the common man. Sharp landscape images were not present in Millet's depictions of peasant life in the French countryside. Instead, his impressionistic scenes highlighted man's spiritual side. Of course, earlier American landscape and genre painting also portrayed spirituality, but that spirituality was found through a strict adherence to nature. Millet's more imaginative renderings pleased Whitman; while discussing American artist (and personal friend) Thomas Eakins' portrait of him with Horace Traubel, he said of Millet,

We need a Millet in portraiture--a man who sees the spirit but does not make too much of it--one who sees the flesh but does not make a man all flesh--all of him body. Eakins almost achieves this balance--almost--not quite: Eakins errs just a little, just a little--a little--in the direction of the flesh. (With 1: 131)

The qualities Whitman admired are evident in Millet's famous painting The Angelus (1859) that depicts two French peasants, a husband and wife, in the field with a basket and cart. Their heads are bowed as they hear church bells. The couple's "perpetual struggle with nature, the grim fight for subsistence, for life itself" (Turner 18-19) is seen in the rocky, barren field. The sunset in the scene's background highlights the peasants' quiet dignity as they pray. Not only does the painting portray what the commoners' lives are like, it also stresses the importance

of religion to hold society together, and the sunset's mystical light implies God's presence everywhere. Millet's treatment of the individual, societal, and the universal, all on one canvas, captivated Whitman.

Whitman "admitted the greatness of Millet's 'most famous picture' [Angelus]," but another of Millet's paintings evoked this comment to Horace Traubel,

There is one of Millet's pictures--not so well known--I have seen it--which seems to me the gem of his creations--at least, of such as I have known. The plot of it was simply this--a girl going home with the cows of an evening--a small stream running lazily along--the cattle tempted forward to the water, mildly drinking. I can conceive of nothing more directly encountered in nature than this piece--its simplicity, its grand treatment, the atmosphere, the time of day: not a break in the power of its statement. I looked at it long and long--was fascinated--fascinated by it--could hardly leave it at all. This picture more than any other to my judgment confirmed Millet--justified his position, heroism--assured his future. (With 5: 369-70)

Millet's art combined specific qualities that Whitman admired in earlier American art--primarily genre painting's depiction of the common man in a spiritual light, and landscape painting's portrayal of the unity of man and God in nature--and added to those qualities the social conscience that Whitman demanded of art. But even with the differences in style between Millet and the earlier American painters, their themes were similar, as best illustrated by Whitman when he commented about Millet:

The thing that first and always interested me in Millet's pictures was the untold something behind all that was depicted--an essence, a suggestion, an indirection, leading off into the immortal mysteries. (Traubel, With 2: 407)

Earlier American landscape and genre paintings also led "off into the immortal mysteries."

The painter Whitman compared almost favorably with Millet was his friend Thomas Eakins. Whitman met Eakins in 1887 at his home in Camden. His first impression was that Eakins "seemed careless, negligent, indifferent, quiet: you would not say retiring, but amounting to that" (Traubel, With 4: 155). But Whitman soon recognized some of his own personality traits in Eakins. He said of the artist that he had "no parlor gallantries" but "something vastly better" (Traubel, With 4: 156). And like Whitman's personality, Eakin's "unconventional, independent, masculine character" (Rule, "Thomas" 8) led to societal conflicts. After three years of having his paintings rejected by the Society of American Artists, in 1892 Eakins resigned from that group in protest. He refused to repaint portraits when asked, feeling that he must be true to his principles. And he was forced to resign his teaching position at the Pennsylvania Academy in 1886 because he used nude models and at one point removed the loincloth from a male model. Eakins stubbornly clung to his belief in the purity of the body, even though his battle against the Victorian attitudes of the day was fruitless (Rule, "Thomas" 11-26).

Shortly after Whitman and Eakins met, the artist returned to Mickle Street to begin his portrait of

Whitman.² The result was a portrait that Whitman's friends strongly disliked. It did not deify the poet, or, like Herbert Gilchrist's portrait, turn Whitman into "the conventional, proper old man" (Traubel, With 1: 154). Eakins, in his own words, "treated [Whitman] as a man" (qtd. in Schendler 102), capturing,

the submergence of spirit in the biological man. . . . Shoulder, arm, chest, and the gut beneath his vest fill half the portrait--but they are all dominated by that powerful head whose submerged spirit is its life. The painting is a massive yet deeply searching confrontation of the poet's consciousness. (Schendler 103)

Whitman's friends primarily objected to the portrait's "fleshiness," a concern Whitman shared. He said,

Eakins' picture grows on you. It is not all seen at once--it only dawns on you gradually. It was not at first a pleasant version to me, but the more I get to realize it the profounder seems its insight. I do not say it is the best portrait yet--I say it is among the best: I can safely say that. I know you boys object to its fleshiness; something is to be said on that score; if it is weak anywhere perhaps it is weak there--too much Rabelais instead of just enough. Still, give it a place: it deserves a big place. (Traubel, With 1: 39)

But he later defended the portrait vigorously, saying, "I never knew of but one artist, and that's Tom Eakins, who

² In 1887 alone (perhaps the peak year for Whitman portraiture), Whitman was painted by Herbert Gilchrist, J. W. Alexander, and Thomas Eakins (Allen, Solitary 525-26), hoping to find the painter who could capture the essence of his being, that perfect merger of body and soul. Whitman was also photographed repeatedly throughout his lifetime. Ed Folsom collected 130 photographs of Whitman for a special double issue of the Walt Whitman Quarterly Review (Fall/Winter 1986-1987). These portraits and photographs attest to Whitman's lifelong interest in art.

could resist the temptation to see what they think ought to be rather than what is," and "The Eakins portrait gets there--fulfills its purpose; sets me down in correct style, without feathers--without any fuss of any sort. I like the picture always--it never fades--never weakens" (Traubel, With 1: 41, 153).

Whitman was attracted to Eakins' realism and both men shared a "passion to recreate the near, the commonplace, without false sentiment or ornamentation" (Rule, "Thomas" 21). In particular, both men were unique in their battles against prudery. Eakins' The Swimming Hole (1883), often compared to the scene in "Song of Myself" when "Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore" (199), depicts the artist and a group of his friends swimming nude. The picture captures the innocent "Calamus" spirit of "adhesiveness," but contemporaries found it "shocking" (Rule, "Thomas" 29), much as reader's had found Whitman's "Children of Adam" poems. Eakins, like Whitman, never compromised his principles, and his reputation often suffered because of it.

Eakins also painted three scenes of William Rush, an early eighteenth-century sculptor, carving a nude model. Rush was commissioned by the city of Philadelphia to carve a statue to be displayed at the water works. The city government was "shocked to discover that he was using a live model, the daughter of a well-known merchant" and was

further scandalized that "the larger-than-life nymph obviously contained beneath her wet, clinging garments the rounded contours of a real woman" (Rule, "Thomas" 26). Eakins' paintings capture the innocence of the modeling session, emphasizing that the indecency was not in the nude modeling or the sculpture but in the reactions to it. Eakins sought to exonerate Rush from any charges of wrongdoing and point out that the prudish attitudes of seventy years earlier still needed to be changed. Whitman complained about those same attitudes in 1848 in a column for the Daily Crescent. He wrote, "It is a sickly prudishness that bars all appreciation of the divine beauty evidenced in Nature's cunningest work--the human frame, form and face" ("Model" 191).

Eakins also shared Whitman's nationalism, advising his students that, "their first desire should be to remain in America, to peer deeper into the heart of American life, rather than to spend their time abroad obtaining a superficial view of the art of the Old World" (qtd. in Rule, "Thomas" 32). However, Eakins' choice of subject matter was not as all-inclusive as Whitman's; he tended to portray "people and work that were admirable in modern life." Among his subjects were athletes, musicians, doctors, religious leaders, and the president (Johns 149).

Eakins was "a portraitist of a modern heroism of intellect, morality, and discipline" (Johns 149); his

paintings were a celebration and idealization of America's best. But even though Eakins did not paint the lower subjects like "The kept-woman, sponger, thief . . . / The heavy-lipp'd slave . . . the venerealee" ("Song of Myself" 375-76) that Whitman included in his universe, his social realism led Whitman to exclaim, "Oh! there is no doubt Eakins is our man!" (Traubel, With 6: 301).

In Millet and Eakins, Whitman found artistic expression that encompassed the individual, societal and the universal. Even though Millet was an impressionist and Eakins a realist, Whitman embraced them both. In his article "Walt Whitman and American Art," Kent Blaser explained this contradiction by pointing to two elements in Whitman's poetry which correspond to Millet and Eakins. The first element is Whitman's search for

an art which had something to say to the community. He insisted that art be mingled with and concerned with the future of society. The artist was, he thought, like it or not, a chief prophet of modern society, a 'pointer of the way' towards a better world. (117-18)

In Eakins' art Whitman found the "social conscience" that he began searching for thirty-five years earlier when he wrote art reviews for New York newspapers, the social conscience so evident in Leaves of Grass.

The second element Blaser identifies is

a strong accent on the individuality and separateness necessary to creativity and imagination. . . . This is Whitman's legacy to another side of American art, to the modernists, the Bohemians, the challengers of tradition. (118)

In Millet's art Whitman found an artist who accentuated man's spirit through new, creative uses of color and light. Although Millet and Eakins approached their subjects differently, they both captured basic truths; they both portrayed man's body and soul. That is why Whitman declared both men "his" artists.

It is important to note that Whitman's interest in Millet and Eakins is not just an old man's passing fancy. As early as 1846 he was writing newspaper columns on art for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. He reviewed painters Thomas Doughty, William Sidney Mount, Asher Durand, Jesse Talbot and Walter Libbey in his newspaper columns, and he addressed the Brooklyn Art Union in 1851. He was friends with many artists in the years preceding the publication of the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, including George Catlin, William Sidney Mount, Henry Kirke Brown, John Quincy Adams Ward, Jesse Talbot, and Walter Libbey. Whitman's interest in art directly reflected his belief, stated in the Preface to the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, that a poet should "flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides . . . [be] the age transfigured . . . merge in the general run and wait his development" (726).

What Whitman termed the "immediate age" and the "general run" is the key to the critical mystery that Emerson labeled the "long foreground" to Leaves of Grass.

What were the major influences on Walt Whitman, particularly from 1850-1855, that resulted in the startling first edition of Leaves of Grass? Whitman's poems are obviously the product of a complex mixture of influences and experiences, among which the teachings of Ralph Waldo Emerson are probably paramount. Critics have also studied Whitman's political involvement during that period, his journalism, his reading, his interest in opera, possible literary influences and various other possible sources for the new ideas taking shape in Whitman's mind.³ But the poet's interest in art and friendships with American artists from 1846-1855, one of the many factors that helped produce his poems, is an influence that has not yet been examined in detail and is the subject of this study.

Whitman's poetry has many parallels to the landscape paintings of the Hudson River School, by artists Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Sanford Gifford, and Frederic Church, among others. In particular, the individual vision portrayed in a mature luminist work like Gifford's Kauterskill Clove (1862), the sense of merging with the elements to be one with nature, is similar to Whitman's vision in "Song of Myself." And the universal message in Church's The Andes of Ecuador (1855), a painting which

³ See Floyd Stovall, The Foreground of Leaves of Grass (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974) for further insights into other possible influences on Whitman.

portrays a new beginning for mankind in a new garden of Eden, parallels Whitman's theme in the "Children of Adam" poems. Many of Walt Whitman's poetic themes and techniques reflect of mid-nineteenth-century American landscape art.

Whitman was also interested in a democratic art depicting the common man, a quality he admired in Millet's work. He did not wish to be a "solitary singer"; he urged his readers in the conclusion to "Song of Myself"--

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop some where waiting for you. (1344-46)

Whitman's democratic beliefs were one reason why the genre painters, who portrayed middle-class Americans and everyday scenes, appealed to him. He even transposed several genre paintings by George Caleb Bingham directly into his poetry (Rule, "George" 248-53). And when associating with American artists in the studio of sculptor Henry Kirke Brown in the 1850s, Whitman not only discussed the aesthetic theories of important critics like John Ruskin and Horatio Greenough, but he also watched Brown seek "a form of sculptural expression that sprang from the native American culture" (Craven 45). These experiences contributed to Whitman's developing aesthetic and were reflected in his later poetry.

The aesthetic concerns of landscape and genre painting in the works of artists like Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Frederic Church and William Sidney Mount, artists whose

work influenced Whitman prior to 1855, will be discussed in Chapter 1 of this study. In Chapter 2 the biographical connections between the artists of this period and Whitman will be examined to prove that he played a role in and was affected by the developing artistic aesthetic. Whitman's aesthetic theories and their expression in his prose works and in "Song of Myself" will be analyzed in Chapter 3, and in Chapter 4 a further study of the 1860 edition of Leaves of Grass will demonstrate that this work is indeed the "immediate age" in art "transfigured." Finally, to bring the issue of influence full circle, possible influences Whitman's poetry had upon American artists who followed him will be discussed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

NATURE, CULTURE AND NINETEENTH- CENTURY AMERICAN ART

The Revolutionary War freed the American colonies from England politically, but culturally the United States was still England's colony. The new American civilization needed its own art and literature, and American artists looked to the obvious inspiration--nature. While Europe had its ancient ruins and scenes filled with history, North America was an unspoiled continent, with many wonders awaiting the artist's brush. Nature, in all its grandeur, was God's work and gift to His chosen people; it was a symbol of America's special mission and role in the world. Landscape painting became popular because it depicted nature, and it was also a democratic art.¹ Appreciation of America's natural wonders did not require any background in history, as history painting did, or classical art or literature. The common man could relate to a beautiful landscape painting just as easily as an aristocrat (Novak, American 62). And nature provided America with a past that extended farther back in time than Europe's culture, for measured in geological time, the mountains and forests of

¹ For many of the interpretations presented here of American art, I am indebted to the scholarship of Barbara Novak, John Wilmerding, Bryan Jay Wolf, and David C. Huntington, among others.

the New World had far more history than European cathedrals and palaces (Novak, Nature 58-59). For these reasons, nature took on nationalistic significance--"The Young Republic proclaimed itself nature's nation, a society created in and of a wilderness unparalleled in beauty and sublimity" (Gelpi 295). As Whitman would later claim in the 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass, "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem" (709).

Modern historians have characterized views of nature in the nineteenth century in different ways. Perry Miller equated nature and the wilderness (204). He also discussed the conflict between civilization and nature, commenting on the irony that the society which took its identity from nature would destroy nature in the course of realizing its potential. R. W. B. Lewis, in The American Adam, portrayed Adam in an Edenic garden, and Henry Nash Smith, in Virgin Land, characterized America as the "garden of the world" (123). These conflicting views of nature were reconciled by Leo Marx in The Machine in the Garden, as he described an ideal pasture surrounded by the encroaching force of civilization on one side and the wilderness on the other (20).

These wilderness and garden images were represented in nineteenth-century landscape painting by the sublime and the beautiful landscapes. The sublime of the early nineteenth century was Edmund Burke's sublime, which was

based on the terror evoked in man when he was faced with the unfamiliar. Burke wrote,

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. (39)

Burke discussed darkness, extreme smallness, irregularity, obscurity, and vastness, among other qualities, as being causes of the sublime. These things inspired awe in man because they were unfamiliar and therefore threatening. Typical expressions of the sublime in landscape paintings were precipitous drops, storm clouds, jagged rocks, and torn, fallen trees. This sublime changed in the nineteenth century and ultimately, in the works of luminist painters, became a quiet, transcendental sublime. Both sublimes sought to create a moment of awe in the viewer so that he or she could see "into the life of things" (Wordsworth 164).

In contrast, the beautiful landscape did not contain threatening elements, but seemed to embrace man. An example of the beautiful landscape is Asher Durand's famous Kindred Spirits (1849). This work, painted as a tribute to Thomas Cole after his death, portrays Cole and his friend William Cullen Byrant enveloped by a peaceful, serene nature. Elements of Burke's sublime exist in the foreground; the fallen trees and split tree stumps imply

nature's darker side. But as the viewer's eye moves into the scene he sees a more benevolent nature surrounding the men in a harmonious scene. Here man and nature are at peace.

A third type of landscape, the picturesque, was not true to any one view of nature, but it combined elements to form an ideal scene. However, this form became a standard composition with elements of the sublime in the foreground, a river or lake occupying the center space, and mountains in the background (Andrus 35). Yet the goal of a picturesque landscape was the same as a sublime or beautiful landscape--to portray the spirituality of nature and enable the viewer to share in the experience of being one with nature. This goal was a transcendent moment, whether it was accomplished by creating a sense of awe in the viewer or a sense of peace and serenity.

These sublime, beautiful and picturesque elements are exhibited in Frederic Edwin Church's Twilight in the Wilderness (1860). The broken tree stumps and jagged trees in the foreground serve to frame the scene and to remind the viewer of the destructive powers in nature, its darker side. The sublime effect is heightened by the sky, which is infused with an all-encompassing power by the luminous colors and billowing clouds. The calm, peaceful mountains and river bring a serenity to the scene. They serve as a mingling point where man can go beyond his own existence

and be illuminated by heavenly light. The painting has all the standard compositional effects of the picturesque, but it is unique; it portrays nature vividly during a special moment when God, nature and man seem to merge. Whitman achieves a similar effect in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" when he creates a timeless vision of unity, bringing together the past, present, and future to establish a transcendent moment.

This transcendent moment in nature was a religious experience. Beauty, truth, morality, and religion were all linked according to the associationalist psychology prevalent in the early nineteenth century (Merritt 13). The beauty of nature, depicted in landscape painting, was God's work. The face of God could be seen in nature, and God had chosen America to be the scene of His next climactic revelation. To commune with God, man went to nature, as Thoreau went to Walden Pond. While there he discovered a complete and inclusive cycle of existence. Nature had taken on more meaning than simply mountains and trees; it was a spiritual totality of man, God and all His works.

Not only was Nature revealed to the public through art, but science was also seen as the study of God's works. Science had not yet driven a wedge between man and God; Charles Darwin's Origin of Species was not published until 1859, and even then leading intellects in literature and

art (Emerson and Church) reconciled Darwin's discoveries with their conceptions of a providential God, believing that science simply revealed God's handiwork (Novak, Nature 47-77). A contemporary critic, James Jackson Jarves, wrote, "As nature is His art, so science is the progressive disclosure of His soul" (40). Whitman agreed, claiming that the "supreme and final science is the science of God-- what we call science being only its minister" (1872 Preface 742). Landscape painters worked hand in hand with scientists to portray God's works and interpret them to the public. Art and society were inextricably bound in a society that looked to its artists for moral guidance; Whitman's claim that the "greatest poet" was society's "seer" (1855 Preface 713) was equally true of the age's artists.

All of these ideas--nature as a nationalistic symbol; nature as wilderness and garden; the sublime, beautiful and picturesque; the threatening force of civilization; nature as a manifestation of God; the scientific study of nature helping man to understand God; and the didactic role of the artist--are essential to an understanding of the age and its landscape art. All of these ideas can be found in the work of Thomas Cole, the founder of the Hudson River School. Cole brought his love of nature and his belief that landscape art should be morally instructive to a nation which perceived nature as a nationalistic and

religious symbol (Baigell 10). As a result, Cole's landscapes were tremendously popular.

Cole was heavily influenced by associationism, the belief that beauty, morality and religion are closely linked (Merritt 13), and his comments in "Essay on American Scenery" (1835) reflected this belief. Cole wrote,

The delight such a man [the man who looks on nature] experiences is not merely sensual, or selfish, that passes with the occasion leaving no trace behind; but in gazing on the pure creations of the Almighty, he feels a calm religious tone steal through his mind, and when he has turned to mingle with his fellow men, the chords which have been struck in that sweet communion cease not to vibrate. (100)

The artist must strive to awaken these sentiments; Cole stated,

Poetry and Painting sublime and purify thought, by grasping the past, the present, and the future--they give the mind a foretaste of its immortality, and thus prepare it for performing an exalted part amid the realities of life. ("Essay" 98-99)

To produce scenes creating these effects, Cole chose to paint compositions and not purely realistic renderings of nature. He preferred to paint in his studio from his memory of scenes, combining striking effects to achieve the ideal picture. He wrote to fellow artist Asher Durand in 1838,

I never succeed in painting scenes, however beautiful, immediately on returning from them. I must wait for time to draw a veil over the common details, the unessential parts, which shall leave the great features, whether the beautiful or the sublime, dominant in the mind. (qtd. in Noble 185)

This method enabled Cole to present not a simple imitation of nature but his imaginative rendering of a scene.

The effects of this method are evident in Cole's early landscapes. Cole's work can be roughly divided into four periods--

wild landscape views and expressive compositions; his growing concern with landscapes of more specific moral reference; the subsequent epic and moralizing series; and his paintings of the gentle rural scene. (Merritt 13)

The early (1826-1828) wild landscapes and compositions are "pointedly nonrealistic," according to Bryan Jay Wolf (Romantic 178). Wolf claims that these landscapes are designed to portray "a moment of psychological reversal when an oppressive burden is lifted and the soul receives an influx of power, which it experiences in an ecstasy of liberation and release" (Romantic 177). He also uncovers a pattern in these works--

The drama of oppression and release is expressed through a massing of mountain peaks in a formulaic pattern. . . . A foreground hillock or promontory is juxtaposed against a larger and often threatening middleground peak. In between the two lies an abysmal valley, usually saturated with rising mists, while in the distant background the clearing skies open onto a prospect of green meadows and expanding space. (Romantic 177-78)

To illustrate this pattern and its psychological effects, Wolf discusses Cole's Snow Squall, Winter Landscape in the Catskills (1825-1826). The viewer's perspective originates slightly above the foreground rock which juts out over the scene, a perspective which gives the viewer "extraordinary

vision" and a "sense of danger and revelation" (Rogue 24). The lifesize trees and wolf on the foreground slab of rock give the viewer a reference point. Even though the trees are twisted and all that remains of one is a stump, the viewer empathizes with the foreground plane since no other area is accessible.

But as the eye travels out into the void, the viewer "find[s] in the valley a barrier of almost metaphysical proportions separating him from the centerground peak" (Wolf, Romantic 186). The mist which covers the valley also blocks the view of its depth, giving the valley infinite possibilities. A dark sky overlooks the entire scene, casting gloom and a sense of loneliness. Wolf characterizes the experience of visualizing the foreground rock, mist-covered valley, and middleground peak as a moment of self-discovery:

To move visually from one to another is to undergo experientially the moment of angst and unmasking when the individual finds himself alone and confronted with a world that is an estranged version of himself. The significance of the dichotomy between foreground and middleground planes thus becomes clearer. The composition enacts visually an experience of estrangement as the isolated self slips from a state of normalcy to one of terror and self-regard. (Romantic 186)

The reward for the viewer who can traverse the valley, symbolic of depths and despair, and go beyond the middleground peak, the objective in the journey of self-examination, is a scene typical of the beautiful. The sun, absent in the foreground elements, shines upon a calm lake

surrounded by non-threatening mountain peaks. The viewer, having undergone the moment of "angst and unmasking," now visualizes a world of harmony. The drama of "liberation and release" has been played out, as "the everyday ego in a moment of self-alienation" has proceeded "to the goal of recovery" (Wolf, Romantic 186-87). With an enacting of a personal moral history in his landscape, Cole elevated his landscape painting to the level of history painting.

Cole's objective was to portray the individual in the act of "becoming," much like Walt Whitman did in "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking." To accomplish this Cole had to go beyond simple imitations of nature in his landscapes. In a famous letter to his early patron Robert Gilmor, Cole wrote,

If the imagination is shackled, and nothing is described but what we see, seldom will anything truly great be produced either in Painting or Poetry. . . . the most lovely and perfect parts of Nature may be brought together, and combined in a whole that shall surpass in beauty and effect any picture painted from a single view. ("Correspondence" 47)

The early "expressive compositions" accomplished Cole's objectives, not only by "surpass[ing] in beauty and effect" simple imitations, but also by "the silent energy of nature stirr[ing] the soul to its inmost depths" (Cole, "Essay" 104).

The landscapes of "more specific moral reference" have much in common with the expressive compositions. Perhaps the best example is Cole's Expulsion from the Garden of

Eden (1827-1828). The canvas is split into halves. A pastoral scene and sunlit sky fill the right side of the canvas. A savage wilderness with twisted trees and jagged rocks fills the left side, a wilderness enveloped by dark skies. Two miniscule human figures, Adam and Eve, are portrayed on a ledge on the left side of the painting, having just passed through a portal sculpted in rock. Shafts of light follow the two humans, effectively blocking a possible retreat. The obvious message is that mankind is not fit to inhabit the pastoral Eden; Adam and Eve must gain self-knowledge before they can regain Eden. Cole wrote, "We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly" ("Essay" 109).

In Expulsion, Adam and Eve are banished to the wilderness and must create a new life for themselves, much the same situation early American settlers faced. Cole feared that the new American civilization would destroy the wilderness, ruining the medium through which man could commune with God. Cole complained, "All the native beauty of the forest taken away by the improving man. And alas, he replaces it with none of the beauties of Art" (qtd. in Baigell 22). He also lamented that man's "meager utilitarianism seems ready to absorb every feeling and sentiment" ("Essay" 100), views that Whitman would later echo in Democratic Vistas.

This despair about the future of American civilization

is portrayed in The Course of Empire (1836), one of Cole's "epic and moralizing series." The Course of Empire series follows the development of civilization in five paintings--Savage, Pastoral, Consummation, Destruction, and Desolation. The paintings were based on the cyclical theory of history, portraying a civilization's development and ultimate destruction. Advertisements for the paintings stated that they are "the picture of man in the world, not of any particular nation or country" (qtd. in Wallach, "Cole, Byron . . ." 378). But Cole was pessimistic about the future of American society; unlike Whitman he did not believe that American democracy would ultimately triumph and break the cycle of history. He wrote,

The spirit of our society is to contrive but not to enjoy--toiling to produce more toil--accumulating in order to aggrandize. The pleasures of the imagination, among which the love of scenery holds a conspicuous place, will alone temper the harshness of such a state; and, like the atmosphere that softens the most rugged forms of the landscape, cast a veil of tender beauty over the asperities of life. ("Essay" 101)

But civilization's progress continued to destroy the very scenery that offered a possible redemption. As early as 1835 Cole wrote of the "sublimity of the wilderness . . . pass[ing] away" ("Essay" 102). Society's failures led Cole to shift his focus to the individual. His later cycle, The Voyage of Life (1839-1840), deals with personal salvation.

The Voyage of Life traces man's development through four stages--Childhood, Youth, Manhood, and Old Age. The cycle depicts man's journey through life and his personal

relationship with God. In Old Age, sunlight pierces the black clouds as the Voyager begins his ascension to the heavens and immortality. Cole turned to religion late in his life for consolation, joining the Episcopal Church, for even though he saw nature renew itself periodically he realized his own ultimate mortality. Unlike Whitman, Cole did not believe that he would merge with the elements and be forever be part of the universe. He looked to God for personal salvation with the belief that nature was God's work, but not God Himself. His despair grew when he saw his beloved nature being destroyed, so he turned inward and to religion.

This destruction led to Cole's pessimism about America's future. His effort to create a spiritual America and to share his appreciation of nature, much like Whitman's effort to be the national poet celebrating the common people, went for naught. The average American, while admiring his cycles and imaginative work, wanted to own realistic American scenes, imitations of nature. His cycles were not as popular as his early landscapes, but even those fooled the public, who believed the compositions were true to nature (Novak, American 69-73). He lamented,

I am not the painter I should have been had there been a higher taste. Instead of working according to the dictates of feeling and imagination, I have painted to please others in order to exist. Had fortune favoured me a little more than she has, even in spite of the taste of the age, and the country in which I live, my imagination should not have been cramped, as it has been; and I would have followed out principles of

beauty and sublimity in my works, which have been cast aside, because the result would not be marketable. (Noble 294-95)

This dichotomy of the real and the ideal in Cole's paintings led to two different types of work at the end of his career. The allegorical series that Cole was painting at the time of his death, The Cross and the World, was representative of his inner struggle for salvation. He was his own sponsor for this last series, for patrons for all of his series were hard to find. At this time the rural views that Cole painted to satisfy popular taste so that he could earn a living began to demonstrate new qualities. Another late landscape, The Oxbow (1836), painted as a "concession to public opinion," is

a painting that derives its composition and design not from an idea in the mind of the artist, not from a schema to which its parts conform, but rather from the configurations of nature itself . . . [it is] a fresh response to the actuality of nature. (Novak, American 76-78)

Instead of reverting to a standard picturesque composition, The Oxbow shows a new sensitivity to nature and is a precursor of luminist landscapes (Novak, American 75, 82).

After Cole, the Hudson River School split into two directions, the operatic sublime of Church and Bierstadt, and luminist landscapes which exhibited a more poetic handling of atmosphere and light (Novak, American 82). Landscapes like The Oxbow and View of the Falls of Munda (1847), were precursors of Durand's "brilliant nature

studies" and the luminist landscapes that offered an alternative to the standard picturesque.

Asher Durand replaced Cole as the leading American landscape painter of the time. While Durand painted Colean compositions, he also painted directly from nature, and his "Letters on Landscape Painting" set the guidelines for an entire generation of aspiring artists. His career began as an engraver, and he was highly successful at that trade. He also painted portraits. Not until the late 1830s did he begin painting landscapes. He wrote in a September 5, 1837, letter to his friend Thomas Cole,

I am still willing to confess myself a trespasser on your grounds, tho' I trust, not a poacher. Landscape still occupies my attention . . . the vast range of this beautiful creation should be my dwelling place. (qtd. in Lawall 17)

Durand's landscapes can be divided into two periods. The early landscapes, before Cole's death in 1848, were similar to Cole's style. These landscapes were combinations of nature and Durand's imagination, compromises between the real and the ideal. They were landscapes in which the artist arranged the work's details to best achieve the overall effect. Two examples of this early style, Sunset (1838) and Sunset (1878), (even later in his career Durand produced paintings in this style), are typical picturesque landscapes with foreground trees and rocks, an area the viewer can identify with; middleground lakes; background expanses of land and mountains; and

bright, clear skies. None of the features of either landscape have distinguishing qualities of a place or mood; they are landscapes for a public that was satisfied with simple American scenes (Novak, American 84-85).

The second period of Durand's landscape career could be said to have begun with Kindred Spirits in 1849, although there are qualities in The Beeches (1845) that foreshadow his coming style (Lawall 18). Whereas Cole liked to return to the studio and let time draw a veil over nature's fine details so that he could focus on the overall effect, Durand began to paint open-air studies that were meticulous imitations of nature. These "objective studies of nature" led to a luminist style, a heightened awareness and sensitivity to light and atmosphere (Novak, American 85).

Durand's "Letters on Landscape Painting," published in 1855 in The Crayon (an influential arts magazine that set the standards of aesthetic taste), explained the principles of his later style of landscape art. His first rule was a strict imitation of nature--

That is a fine picture which at once takes possession of you--draws you into it--you traverse it--breathe its atmosphere--feel its sunshine, and you repose in its shade without thinking of its design or execution, effect or color. These are after considerations: there is poetry in such a landscape, however humble. It will be great in proportion as it declares the glory of God, by a representation of his works, and not of the works of man. (Letter III 66)

Like Cole, Durand believed that nature is a channel

through which man can reach God. He wrote,

There is yet another motive for referring you to the study of Nature early--its influence on the mind and heart. The external appearance of this our dwelling-place, apart from its wondrous structure and functions that minister to our well-being, is fraught with lessons of high and holy meaning, only surpassed by the light of Revelation. (Letter II 34)

And like Whitman, who proclaimed, "Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be ceremonious?" ("Song of Myself" 398), Durand was also more comfortable away from organized religion, feeling at one with God in nature. He wrote in a journal in 1840--

To day again is Sunday. I have declined attendance on church service the better to indulge reflection unrestrained under the high canopy of heaven . . . fit place to worship God and contemplate the wonders of his power. This mode of passing the Sabbath became habitual with me in early life . . . The sounds of inanimate Nature, all partake of mournful solemnity . . . all then to awaken thoughtful meditation, and rational man in the open walks of Nature, needs no temple made with hands, and the silent thought of praise or supplication, accompanied by that fitting voice asks no other aid . . . to bear it to the mercy-seat of Heaven. (qtd. in Lawall 19)

Durand, unlike Cole, found God in nature, and adopted an optimistic transcendentalist faith (Lawall 19).

Durand's tribute to Cole, Kindred Spirits, exemplifies the differences between the men's religious visions. Instead of a wilderness and a moment of self-becoming, Durand portrays "a womblike enclosure that protects rather than threatens" (Wolf, "All the World's" 329). The foreground contains the traditional elements of the sublime, but then the scene opens into an enveloping

pastoral view. This juxtaposition leads to Bryan Wolf's conclusion, which could apply to Whitman as well as Durand, "Transcendence for Durand entails a twofold dialectic: an embrace of the natural world in all its particularity . . . and a moment of release when the natural is refigured as the spiritual" ("All the World's" 329). Instead of a Colean sublime landscape which recreates the moment of "artistic identity formation" or a cycle with philosophical and religious meaning, Kindred Spirits presents "modes of knowledge . . . accessible to all, and requiring neither genius nor education to achieve" (Wolf, "All the World's" 330).

Durand believed in a democratic art; he wrote in his "Letters on Landscape Painting,"

To appreciate Art, cultivation is necessary, but its power may be felt without that, and the feeling will educate itself into the desired appreciation, and derive from it a corresponding degree of pleasure, according to the purity or depravity, the high or low character, of the Art that awakens it. (Letter IV 98)

And he also believed, like Cole, in the power of art to improve the mind, in its "high mission" (Letter II 34).

In his second style of landscape painting, Durand attempted to resolve the real-ideal dilemma that befuddled Thomas Cole. He noted in Letter VIII of his "Letters on Landscape Painting," that "Realism signifies little else than a disciplinary stage of Idealism . . . and is misapplied when used in opposition to it" (354). Since his idealism was based on the real, Durand believed that "High

Landscape Art . . . [was a] truthful representation of nature" (Letter III 354). But even if the details were perfect, a great painting must also have spirit, for "There is the letter and the spirit in the true Scripture of Art, the former being tributary to the latter, but never overruling it" (Letter III 66). This spirit came from perceiving nature "in its fullness and purity, looking on it with childlike affection and religious reverence, ever watchful that no careless or presumptuous touch should mar its fair proportions" (Letter IV 98). Following these strictures Durand's art was idealistic, yet also highly realistic.

Some of Durand's paintings also exhibited the same poetic handling of light and atmosphere that characterized works like Cole's The Oxbow and luminist landscapes. An example of Durand's work in this style is Kaaterskill Clove (1866). The light in this landscape is softer and a haze covers the Clove, masking the fine details of the trees and mountains. The foreground has traditional elements--broken trees and rocks jutting into the scene--but they quickly give way to the grandeur of the scene. The real subject of the painting is light and atmosphere; Durand devoted himself to depiction of specific conditions unclouded by his imagination.

Luminous painters put even more emphasis on light and atmosphere than did Durand in Kaaterskill Clove. Sanford

Gifford's Kauterskill Clove (1862) is an excellent example. The Clove was a favorite scene for many of the Hudson River School, including Thomas Cole. Gifford's version, painted before Durand's, conveys feelings "of a dream or reminiscence," and has a "misty, elegiac character" (Avery, "Sanford R. Gifford" 224). These qualities are also present in Durand's Kaaterskill Clove, but not to the same extent. Gifford's treatment of light and atmosphere projects a hazy, sensuous feeling over the canvas and seems to envelope the viewer and make him part of the scene, the same effect Whitman strives for in "Song of Myself" when he invites the reader, "Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems" (33). The large open expanses of light and space lead the viewer to a contemplation of the infinite; "absorbed in contemplation of a world without movement, the spectator is brought into a wordless dialogue with nature, which quickly becomes the monologue of transcendental unity" (Novak, Nature 29).

Barbara Novak believes that Emerson's writings were responsible for the luminist style. She cites the following famous passage from "Nature," claiming it encapsulates the experience of looking at a luminous landscape.

Standing on the bare ground,--my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space--all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. (Emerson 10)

The distinguishing feature of luminism which creates this effect is light. Luminist light,

does not circulate . . . It does not unite with air and atmosphere to create, as with the painterly, a feeling of action. Rather, it produces a mirror-like plane that both disappears and assumes a glasslike tangibility. Thus, this light reminds us not only of the atmospheric realisms embraced by luminism but of its spiritual equivalences. (Novak, American 122)

In the nineteenth century, light was "a key symbol of God's immanence" (Novak, Nature 17). Since the light occupies so much of the canvas and gives the impression of spreading out beyond the limits of the canvas, luminist light projects a sense of ego-dissolving expansiveness, making the viewer experience "the currents of the Universal Being."

The absence of brushstroke is another important element of a luminist landscape. The viewer's experience replicates that of a direct communion with nature; no hint of the artist's brush is present. The artist presents nature directly to the viewer and removes himself as an intermediary; he wishes to abolish any barriers so that the viewer can be absorbed into the scene and reach a moment of transcendence.

The absence of stroke and the landscape's domination by large areas of air, sky and water project a sense of inactivity and silence. A luminist landscape "implies presence through the sense of thereness rather than through activity . . . everything happens while nothing does"

(Novak, "On Defining" 27-28). The activity comes from the viewer's immersion into the scene, not the landscape itself.

Luminist landscapes are constructed in a series of horizontal planes, "measured steps into space, parallel to the picture surface" (Novak, "On Defining" 23), that lead toward the infinite. The horizontal planes also help create the feeling that the picture continues beyond the canvas and that what the viewer sees is only a small section of the scene. They pull the viewer deeper and create a sense of involvement.

Water is present in most luminist landscapes. Water is, in Whitman's words, the "diffuse float" from which "all matter has cohered together" ("I Sing the Body" 93). It is symbolic of the all-inclusive Emersonian Oversoul (Adams 6). Water represents a deeper world that the viewer cannot see but only feel. The water's vastness, like the sky's, creates the feeling of God's immanence.

Interestingly, although sky and water occupy large portions of luminist landscapes, these landscapes are small. For example, Fitz Hugh Lane's Entrance to Somes Sound from Southwest Harbor (1852) is 23 3/4" X 35 3/4". In contrast, Frederic Church's The Icebergs (1861) is 112 1/2" X 64 1/4". A luminous landscape offers an intimate experience, but once the viewer enters the scene he is part of an infinite realm.

Luminist art is specific in its depiction of time. The landscapes capture a moment (and mood) frozen in time. Rather than capture the process of becoming, they encapsulate the moment of being (Novak, American 121).

These qualities of luminist landscapes are a far cry from the qualities found in the traditional sublime of Edmund Burke that Thomas Cole utilized so effectively. In luminist art,

the sublime experience was transformed into a new mode of landscape expression; the traditional sublime setting was augmented by the transcendental sublime sensibility, a sensibility that found its roots in man's internal perception of time and space. (Powell, "Luminism" 72)

The transcendental sublime offered a solution to the real-ideal dilemma, for

Technically, they [luminist painters] were extreme realists, relying on infinitely subtle variations of tone and color to capture their magical effects. Spiritually they were the lyrical poets of the American countryside and the most sensitive to its nuances of mood. (Baur 90)

Studies have shown that luminist artists used precise measurements, attempting to create highly realistic scenes (Novak, American 119). Yet the landscapes also offer spiritual transcendence. Realism and spiritualism were merged, neither taking precedence over the other, working together in unity.

Fitz Hugh Lane, who was the first of several American artists to be labeled a luminist painter, developed as an artist in the 1840s and 1850s. He exhibited several

paintings at the American Art Union in New York City in 1849 and the early 1850s, a time when Walt Whitman was writing art criticism for the local newspapers. His landscapes were based on "the notion that the inner or higher values of nature might be expressed through color and pure light" (Wilmerding, Fitz Hugh Lane 56). Although Lane spent most of his life in Gloucester, Massachusetts, he was familiar with the works of many artists of his time; his treatment of light was just one of the directions that American art took as it branched out from the roots planted by Thomas Cole. The operatic sublime of Frederic Church and Albert Bierstadt was the other major direction American art took in the 1850s, a direction quite the opposite of luminism.

Lane's Twilight on the Kennebec (1849) is an excellent illustration of a luminist's handling of a theme. Cole, Lane and Frederic Church all traveled to Maine to paint the coast. Cole's View Across Frenchman's Bay from Mount Desert Island, After a Squall (1845) is similar to his early works, depicting the powerful forces of nature (the pounding surf and darkened clouds) which overwhelm a tiny figure on the cliff and a sailboat caught in the storm. Lane's Twilight on the Kennebec contains no human figures; the only hint of man is in the ship that has run aground. The landscape is dominated by sky and water, and it invites

viewer involvement instead of invoking fear (Wilmerding, Fitz Hugh Lane 47-48).

Twilight on the Kennebec influenced Church, who saw it displayed in the American Art Union in 1849 and also met Lane during his trips to Maine (Wilmerding, "The Luminist Movement" 120). Beacon Off Mt. Desert (1851) is Church's version of the Maine coast. Church's landscape is also dominated by the sky and light, but it uses a softer and more diffuse light. The foreground portrays more action as waves batter the rocks surrounding the beacon. Instead of pulling the viewer into the picture, Church's landscape seems to spread out before him, giving a sense of vastness.

The wilderness theme continued to occupy Church's attention in a series of landscapes in the 1850s, culminating in his Twilight in the Wilderness (1860). Some of his works have luminist qualities, but while Lane and his luminist successors, Heade, Gifford and Kensett, painted intimate scenes invoking the transcendentalist sublime, Church's art expanded to what has been termed "the epic landscape" (Czestochowski 29) or the operatic sublime. The critical consensus is that

Walt Whitman's poetry can be less directly linked to the spare meditations of much luminist art, yet his exultant and celebratory songs of self and America do bear comparison with the large-scale pyrotechnics of Church and Bierstadt. (Wilmerding, "The Luminist Movement" 100)

Although Whitman's poetry does have much in common with luminist art, Wilmerding is correct that it also shares

similarities with epic landscapes, particularly those of Frederic Church.

Like Lane's landscapes, the epic landscapes of Church provide a direct experience with nature, with no brushstroke or trace of the artist between the viewer and the scene. But Church's landscapes do not portray a silent, still moment. Epic landscapes are cosmic views, revelations of man's history and his future. For example, standing before Twilight in the Wilderness, the viewer is stunned by the magnificent colors of the sunset contrasting with the peaceful serenity of the water. In this painting it seems as though God has spread across the heavens and proclaimed a divine moment. The viewer is swept into the scene, beyond the sublime elements in the foreground, to feel God's presence and realize His promise which is encapsulated in the wilderness.

Like the luminists, whose art reflects the direction Thomas Cole was taking late in his career, Church was also influenced by Cole, who was his teacher from 1844-1848. Cole's landscapes enacted dramas of the artist's identity crisis and were his commentary on what he perceived as a morally bankrupt society. Church kept the drama in his landscapes, but expunged the artist's ego. While following Cole's precedent of elevating landscape painting to the level of history painting, Church's landscapes took on universal significance. Paintings like The Andes of

Ecuador (1855) and Heart of the Andes (1859) are exacting studies of nature which depict, in Whitman's words, "the new garden the West" ("Ages and Ages" 5). Both landscapes feature crosses, symbolic of a new beginning for the "New Chosen People in the New World." Through landscapes like these Church became a "prophet-seer" for his generation (Huntington, Landscapes 26, 71).

The most distinguishing characteristic of the epic landscape is its size. Church's Niagara (1857) is three and a half by seven and a half feet; one viewer commented, "This is Niagara, with the roar left out!" Another commented, "Here there is room to breathe. Here the soul expands" (qtd. in Huntington, Landscapes 20, 69). The immense power and sweeping view in a landscape like Niagara symbolized the potential of the new Adam in his new world, similar to Whitman's "barbaric yawp [sounding] over the roofs of the world" ("Song of Myself" 1333).

Church's attention to detail in the Andes' landscapes and Niagara reflected his interest in natural science, which he believed was the revelation of God's work. He was inspired by Alexander von Humboldt, a German scientist, whose work Cosmos led not only Church, but also Charles Darwin, to South America. Humboldt believed nature should be

considered rationally . . . submitted to the process of thought, [as] a unity in diversity of phenomena; a harmony, blending together all created things, however

dissimilar in form and attributes; one great whole
. . . animated by the breath of life. (1: 24)

The highly specific details visible in a Church landscape merge to form Humboldt's "one great whole." Church saw proof of God's hand in the minutest feature of nature, and scientific study simply confirmed his beliefs. He viewed the wonders of the continent as God's gift to a new people, and science served to support his religious beliefs.

Darwin's Origin of Species came too late to change Church's thinking; Church's nature was God's handiwork, and each rock, tree and drop of water was a spiritual revelation.

David C. Huntington calls Church's Cotopaxi (1863) "a geological parable, a proverb drawn from the sacred 'volume in stone.'" He claims Cotopaxi "mirrored the present ordeal [the Civil War]; it prophesized its outcome." The towering volcano is "the demon" of the scene, spewing sooty clouds across the horizon, blocking the sun's light. These clouds come between the sun and earth, metaphorically a test of faith "to waken the people from spiritual complacency." The entire landscape is a study of contrasts--sun and clouds, still water and waterfall, barren rock and lush vegetation, light and dark. The sun overcomes the clouds as "heaven's fair light" pervades the scene, overcoming the volcano's challenge, spreading to all corners of the canvas. The still water, mingling place for man's spirit, erupts into action as it spills over a cliff. A faint outline of a rainbow is visible in the waterfall, a

promise of a better future. A single man and llama inhabit the left foreground's garden, implying man in the garden. Although "the sun must suffer for the evils of the world," it ultimately triumphs. The cross imagery, which dominates the landscape, symbolizes a new beginning for those who have been spiritually reawakened. In gazing at Cotopaxi the American Adam is looking at his new world (Huntington, "Church and Luminism" 180).

Painted in 1863, Cotopaxi is a supreme optimist's view of the Civil War and the future of America. Yet in a broader context, Cotopaxi enabled man to "break in upon the cycle of natural history. The painting was the poetic equivalent of science delivering man from the errors of human history." David Huntington states,

Through the painting, the painter and the spectator could poetically step into an eternal cosmic Genesis. In this mythological territory created by the hour's Science of Design, Man could be psychically reborn as Adam before the Fall. (Landscapes 14, 16)

Frederic Church did more than paint landscapes for the new Adam; he attempted to create his own Eden at Olana, his home overlooking the Hudson River and Catskill Mountains. Church designed the house himself and filled it with artifacts from around the world. Equally well represented was American culture, as Church hung paintings by himself and Washington Allston, Thomas Cole, Martin Heade, and Thomas Doughty. Olana was Church's attempt to merge the world's cultures into Humboldt's "one great whole," similar

to Whitman's quest in "Passage to India" to bring together past and present, East and West (Huntington, Landscapes 115, 125).

Olana, like Church's art, was an idealization of reality. Church's landscapes were criticized for being "idealized in composition and materialized in execution, so that, though the details of the scenery are substantially correct, the scene as a whole often is false" (Jarves 191). Barbara Novak praised luminism as the true solution to the real-ideal conflict in American art, while writing the epic landscape off as popular art. Yet Church's landscapes were his vision of America's promise, just as Whitman's poetry depicted the promise of the new Adam in a new land. Both Church and Whitman idealized reality. This idealization was the reason the epic landscape, reflecting the optimism and spirit of the age of Jacksonian democracy, caught the imagination of America as luminism never did.

The operatic sublime and luminism were the culminating phases of the Hudson River School's landscapes and an important part of "the immediate age" that Whitman absorbed in the 1840s and 1850s. Another important influence on Whitman was genre painting, an art that portrayed the average American in the age of Jacksonian democracy. Landscape art portrayed man's personal relationship with God and defined his view of the world, while genre painting

depicted the common man and everyday occurrence, a depiction that ardent democrat Walt Whitman found appealing.

William Sidney Mount lived and painted at Stony Brook, Long Island, just a few miles from where Whitman grew up. He never ventured far, refusing offers to study in Europe, saying,

a visit to Europe would be gratifying to me, but I have had a desire to do something in art worthy of being remembered before leaving for fear I might be induced by the splendor of European art to tarry too long, and thus lose my nationality. We have nature, it speaks to everyone, and what efforts I have made in art have been appreciated by my countrymen--Originality, thank God, is not confined to any one place or country and this makes it very comfortable for those who are obliged to stay at home. (qtd. in Novak, American 144)

Mount never did visit Europe, but he associated with and was influenced by his fellow American artists, most notably his friend Thomas Cole. His philosophy was in line with Asher Durand's "Letters on Landscape Painting"; his credo was,

I shall endeavor to copy nature as I have tried to do with truth and soberness. There has been enough written on ideality and the grand style of Art, etc., to divert the artist from the true study of natural objects. Forever after let me read the volume of nature--a lecture always ready and bound by the Almighty. (qtd. in Cowdrey and Williams 10)

Mount's genre scenes were not "high art"; his subjects were average Americans in his community in their everyday moments. A painting like Farmers Noonning (1836) portrays a black man with his shirt collar unbuttoned, "loafing" in the straw. Mount's depictions of blacks, praised as a strong point in his art, avoided "stereotypical facial

characteristics that were often used to make the black man a comical figure" (Cassedy and Shrott 53). But Mount also ignored the racial issues of the day that led to the Civil War. His world was Eden, and he "refused to accept unhappiness in his Eden"; therefore he portrayed blacks as "inhabitants of a childlike Arcadia" (Flexner, That Wilder 30). This was the America Mount saw at Stony Brook, which was the setting for Farmers Noonning.

Farmers Noonning is representative of Mount's intense attention to detail and plein-air style. Another painting, Eel-Spearing at Setauket (1845), bears comparison to luminous paintings, especially in the painting's structure and Mount's depiction of water and light. The painting is composed of three horizontal planes, the first being the water, the second the land, and the third the sky. The reflections of the oar, the spear and the trees seem to lock the boat in place, giving the impression that the scene is frozen in time. Light pervades the scene, reflecting off the water and symbolically filling the canvas with God's presence. The simple act of eel-spearing is merged with a benevolent nature to imply a unity between the everyday world and the Oversoul.

Mount's work did not always contain luminist qualities. A more representative example of his work is The Power of Music (1847). A broadside advertising a print of the painting described the scene--

A brown jug and ax standing near inform us that he [the black field hand] has been to dinner after chopping all the morning, filled his jug with blackstrap or a mixture of vinegar, water, molasses, and ginger, . . . and was about to resume his labor for the afternoon when he was arrested by the notes of the violin. He has got his "stent" for the day, but thinks he can listen a little longer, work all the harder, and get through before sunset. (qtd. in Flexner, That Wilder 32)

Conspicuously absent from this description are any comments about the artistic qualities of the picture. Mount's audiences enjoyed his portrayals of everyday existence as narratives, without any pretensions to "high art." A list of his subjects reads much like a Whitman catalogue; Mount stated,

A painter's studio should be everywhere; wherever he finds a scene for a picture in doors or out. In the blacksmith's shop. The shoe makers--The tailors--The Church--The tavern--or Hotel, the Market--and into the dens of poverty and dissipation, high life and low life. . . . An artist should have the industry of a reporter, not be ashamed or afraid to plant his easel in the market place for figures or background or both. For painting is an honorable calling, and the artist will be respected let him sketch where he will. (qtd. in Novak, American 151)

The Power of Music captures an everyday occurrence and is Whitmanesque in the sense that these men (including a field hand) are spontaneously enjoying music in the middle of a working day, taking time out to enjoy a spiritual moment.

Another genre painter who captured the American spirit was George Caleb Bingham. Bingham's genre paintings were a westernized version of Mount's eastern scenes. The two men were acquainted, and Bingham's work might have influenced

Mount. Bingham's Fur Traders Descending the Missouri was exhibited at the American Art Union in New York in 1845, where Mount was sure to have seen it. Shortly thereafter Mount painted Eel-Spearing at Setauket. The two pictures are similar in structure and design, and luminist light floods both scenes, scenes which depict lower-class Americans (Bloch, The Paintings 28).

These luminist qualities appeared in Mount's and Bingham's works years before the luminist movement flourished, and were early influences. But more important to the average nineteenth-century American's taste, Eel-Spearing and Fur Traders depict American scenes, lower-class Americans and everyday occurrences to create a democratic American art. The original name for Fur Traders was Fur Trader and Half Breed Son, and E. Maurice Bloch considered the painting "primarily a commentary on the family unit and on a social structure already firmly established on the Missouri frontier through racial intermarriage" (The Paintings 29).

This type of subject matter left Bingham open to criticism that his art was undignified. Another of his famous works, The Jolly Flatboatmen (1846), was purchased by the American Art Union and 18,000 copies were distributed to its members (Rule, "George" 250). The painting, which depicts a group of flatboatmen floating down a river while one dances, two play accompaniment, and

the rest lounge around the boat, was criticized as giving

a death blow to all one's preconceived notions of 'HIGH ART' . . . [it] was tolerably well in its way, [but] by no means what a student of art would select as a standard of taste, and it contains no redeeming sentiment of patriotism. (qtd. in McDermott 172)

Yet, like Mount's The Power of Music, The Jolly Flatboatmen captures the flavor of being American, except this is Western America and a different type of man.

Towards the end of his life, Bingham crystalized his views on what art should be in his famous lecture "Art, the Ideal of Art, and the Utility of Art." Like Mount, he believed in imitating nature--"Artists who expect to rise to anything like eminence in their profession, must study nature in all her varied phases, and accept her both as his model and teacher" (396). Bingham went on to qualify that statement,

What I mean by the imitation of nature is the portraiture of her charms as she appears to the eye of the artist. A pictorial statement which gives us distant trees, the leaves of which are all seperately and distinctly marked, is no imitation of nature. She never thus presents herself to our organs of vision. Space and atmosphere, light and shadow, stamp their impress on all that we see in the extended fields which she opens to our view, and an omission to present upon our canvass a graphic resemblance of the appearance thus produced, makes it fall short of the truth which should characterize every work of Art. (396)

Whitman echoed these sentiments when commenting on his friend Walter Libbey's picture of a boy playing the flute. He wrote,

In the scene of the background, and in all the accessories, the is a delicious melting in, so to speak, of object with object: and effect that is

frequent enough in nature, though painters seem to disdain following it, even where it is demanded. ("Something" 238)

Bingham and Whitman also agreed on the higher moral purpose of art. Bingham's closing remarks were on the "Utility of Art," and he stated,

In the elevated sense in which we are discussing it [art], it addresses itself solely to that portion of man which is the breath of the Eternal--which lives forever,--which is capable of endless growth and progress, and the requirements of which are peculiar to itself. The beautiful, and all that is embraced in what is termed esthetics, together with all that contributes to mental development is the natural food of the soul, and is as essential to its growth, expansion and happiness, as is the daily bread we consume, to the health and life of our animal nature. (400)

Bingham's comments place him directly in the mainstream of the nineteenth-century American artistic aesthetic along with William Sidney Mount and the landscape painters. Bingham wrote of Frederic Church,

You can indeed almost safely assert that in our Church we have the greatest of landscape painters whether of the old or modern masters. His 'Heart of the Andes' and 'Falls of Neagara' [sic] seem literal presentations of nature herself as seen through the eyes of her most devoted worshiper" (qtd. in Bloch 30).

Artists like Church, Bingham, Cole, Durand, Lane and Mount depicted American nature and an American Eden. Their aesthetics were the beliefs of a new nation, a vision of life that permeated the nineteenth century. It was a vision that Walt Whitman absorbed at least partially from the artists of his age.

CHAPTER 2

WALT WHITMAN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN ART

From 1842, when he edited the Aurora, until 1849, Walt Whitman worked as a newspaper editor in New York (except for a short period in 1848 when he wrote for the New Orleans Crescent). From 1850 until the first edition of Leaves of Grass was published in 1855, Whitman lived in Brooklyn working at various enterprises and contributing free lance articles to New York newspapers. Whitman's journalism covered many topics, particularly politics, for those years were explosive and important ones in American history. And those years were also momentous years in American art, particularly from 1849-1855.

Although Thomas Cole died in 1848, he laid the groundwork for further artistic development. In the 1850s, Asher Durand was painting open-air objective nature studies. Frederic Church's work was being displayed in the American Art Union in New York; Church sold twenty-nine paintings to the Art Union before it disbanded in 1853 (Huntington, Landscapes 22). And the works of luminist painter Fitz Hugh Lane and genre painters William Sidney Mount and George Caleb Bingham were also being exhibited in New York, the mecca of the art world. Whitman often walked the streets of New York, mingling with people, visiting

theaters and opera houses, and also visiting the Art Union (Allen 78). He saw paintings by Thomas Doughty, Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, and many others, and he frequented the Brooklyn art studio of sculptor Henry Kirke Brown. Whitman engaged in discussions of artistic theory with many artists of the time, and in turn was influenced by them. His journalism is a partial record of his development.

The earliest existing articles by Whitman about American art were written in 1846 when he was editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle. Whitman's comments in an October 21, 1846, column entitled "Free Exhibitions of Works of Art," an article which urges the National Academy to provide free exhibitions, echoed the tenets of associationalist psychology. He wrote, "For the influence of beautiful works of art pervades the minds, and in due time the actions and character, of all who come in contact with them" (Gathering 2: 360). Several other articles during this period continue on this theme. On March 12, 1846, in an article for the Eagle entitled "Polishing the 'Common People,'" Whitman encouraged "the spreading of a sort of democratical artistic atmosphere among the inhabitants of our republic" (qtd. in Brasher 212). Like Durand and Bingham, Whitman believed in a democratic art which could improve the average man, if only he were exposed to it. For that reason he wished "that the National Academy were so endowed that they could make their exhibitions

perpetually free" (Gathering 2: 361). In a November 21, 1846, article entitled "About Pictures, Etc.," Whitman added,

We went into the [Brooklyn] Institute rooms in Washington street . . . to take "a last fond look" at the pictures--(which we blame ourselves much for not having noticed more fully before). If we may flatter ourselves that our readers remember any length of time what sentiments we advanced in these columns, they must be aware that we "go" partly for all the rational refinements and rose colorings of life--such as music, mirth, works of art, genial kindness, and so forth. We wish every mechanic and laboring man and woman of Brooklyn would have some such adornment to his or her abode--however humble that abode may be--a print hung on the wall, a pot of flowers or even the occasional noise of an accordeon. (Gathering 2: 363)

Other remarks by Whitman in the Eagle focused on the prints in current magazines, a type of art accessible to the common people. He criticized the prints as "the old style namby-pamby," the "usual sort of commonplace picture[s]," and remarked, "With their everlasting frontispieces of round-cheeked and wasp-waisted women, come the monthly periodicals again." Whitman labeled these pictures "the dishwater of art" (qtd. in Brasher 212). However, Whitman approved of some prints "dealing with American topics." At the time Whitman and the Eagle were promoting a "minor campaign for a native literature" (Brasher 212).

American landscapes were more to Whitman's liking than magazine art. He called Thomas Doughty, an early American landscape painter, "the prince of landscapists," and in a November 18, 1847, article for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle

which discussed paintings by local artists on exhibition at the Brooklyn Institute, Whitman wrote that he saw "three splendid pictures by the best of American painters [Thomas Doughty]" (qtd. in Brasher 214). A contemporary of Thomas Cole, Doughty became a landscape painter in the early 1820s, giving up a profitable business. Initially, he was very successful as his landscapes depicted the beauty of American nature, scenes that the public was anxious to own. These American themes are no doubt the reason Whitman was attracted to Doughty. But Frank Goodyear, in his book Thomas Doughty, makes the following criticism--

The taste of the time called for realistic landscapes. Cole lamented that the public preferred "things, not thoughts," a specificity to which Cole was unwilling to bend in order to increase his sales. Doughty's predilection, on the other hand, to detailed observations of nature was more in the public's taste. His early views of gentlemen's country seats, and important public building like the Fairmount Waterworks in Philadelphia, were highly prized landscape portraits, not mechanical imitations, but free of excessive imaginings, after originals not ideals. This work was admired for its "truth to nature," even after his less sophisticated public failed to realize that his compositions became standard formulas. (15)

Although Doughty worked outdoors, his paintings were composite views, not "unaltered response[s] to the realities of a particular scene" (Czestochowski 12). Unlike Cole, who also painted compositions, Doughty's art did not mature and develop; he simply fell into a pattern which caused his reputation to suffer. Whitman did not mention Doughty again in the early 1850s when he wrote

articles on art for the local newspapers; his interest shifted to local and more expressive artists.

On April 14, 1847, Whitman wrote an article for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle in which he noted of Asher Durand, "all he does is good" (qtd. in Brasher 214). This article was in response to the "twenty-second annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design" (Brasher 214). Interestingly, Whitman never mentioned Thomas Cole's works, although he surely was familiar with them. Cole's paintings were exhibited in various New York art galleries during these years, galleries that Whitman was known to frequent (Brasher 213). Also, Whitman probably discussed Cole and American art with William Cullen Bryant, Cole's close friend. Charles I. Glicksberg, in his article "Whitman and Bryant," wrote, "In the fifties, Bryant would occasionally cross the Brooklyn Ferry to have long talks and walks with Whitman" (33). Whitman recalled his relationship with Bryant in Specimen Days--

Off and on, along that time for years as they pass'd,
we met and chatted together. I thought him very
sociable in his way, and a man to become attach'd to.
We were both walkers, and when I work'd in Brooklyn he
several times came over, middle of afternoons, and we
took rambles, miles long, till dark, out towards
Bedford or Flatbush, in company. On these occasions he
gave me clear accounts of scenes in Europe--the cities,
looks, architecture, art, especially Italy--where he
had travel'd a great deal. (166)

Considering Bryant's close relationship with Thomas Cole (as the title of Asher Durand's painting of Bryant and Cole attests, they were "kindred spirits"), Whitman's

discussions of art with Bryant probably included Cole and American art. As Glicksberg noted, Bryant "participated in practically all the movements, social, literary, and political, which influenced the life of his age" (36). Whitman had great respect for Bryant, ranking him as the greatest of poets (Glicksberg 31). The older man's opinions and approval were important to Whitman. Even after the publication of Leaves of Grass in 1855 and Bryant's disapproval, Whitman's admiration did not abate (Glicksberg 35). Any discussions of American art with William Cullen Bryant were bound to make a great impression on the young and eager-to-learn Walt Whitman.

Another artist Whitman wrote about for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle was George Catlin, an artist who primarily painted the American West and the Indians. Whitman wrote a series of articles during July, 1846, urging the federal government to buy Catlin's collection of American Indian paintings before the artist would be forced to sell them abroad. Whitman argued that "we shall never again have the opportunity of restoring to our country these paintings and memorials, so emphatically American, and of such decided importance to Art and to our national History" (Gathering 2: 362-63).

The two men met before Catlin went to Europe with his work. (The American government did not purchase the collection.) Catlin gave Whitman a painting of Osceola, an

Indian chief, one of his most famous works, and possibly one other work. Whitman later told Horace Traubel,

"That picture on the wall over there was his [Catlin's]: he gave it to me over forty years ago. He was an interesting old codger. . . . I had that stowed away ten years, and when it came out it was in that shape. And there is the other, too: I took the better part of two days putting it together." (With 2: 348-49)

Whitman also urged Traubel to look over an immense catalog of Catlin's works written by Thomas Donaldson, a friend and later a biographer of Whitman (Todd 7-8). He said,

"You should have it at least a week. You don't want to read it but will find it full of interest at certain points. Catlin was a wise, informed, vital character--devoted, oh so devoted. I don't remember where we were when he gave me that picture"--pointing to the wall--"whether it was in New York or Washington, but it was before the War, maybe as many as forty years ago. The subject of this book always attracted me--indeed, fascinated me: does so still." Turned over the pages and commented on the portraits, pausing as he came to the Indian pictures: "As for them, you will not find them interesting from the art side, but from the human side: the side of experience, emotion, life. What is it that appeals to me in Egyptian art? Nothing technical, purely technical: at least, not to me: no, no, no: something human, everyday--a bit of strange distant history--a touch of human struggle reflected in the work of an ancient people." (Traubel, With 2: 354)

The portrait of Osceola was kept in a prominent place in Whitman's collection; Whitman, writing under the name George Selwyn, mentioned the portrait in an article about his home. He wrote,

Hung or tacked on the walls are pictures, those of his father, mother and sisters holding the places of honor, a portrait of a sweetheart of long ago, a large print of Osceola the Seminole chief. (Traubel, With 2: 60)

Loyd Haberly, Catlin's biographer, described the circumstances behind the portrait and the work itself--

For six years he [Catlin] had secretly exulted in the bravery and skilled war craft of the Seminoles. Under their chief Osceola, the Tiger of the Everglades, they had eluded and outfought the best regiments of our army. Now news came that Osceola, with four of his sub-chiefs and two hundred warriors, had been tricked into meeting our commanders under a flag of truce, and in violation of his safe-conduct and every principle of honor, had been seized, bound to his horse, and carried off with his manacled warriors to the South Carolina fort.

Hot with righteous anger, Catlin went there post-haste, with his palette and brushes, and painted a portrait of Osceola so moving, so poetic, so masterly, that it makes any decent American ashamed that such unspeakable treachery was ever practiced by our army officers and condoned by our government.

Osceola was no common mortal. Born to lead and to plan, he was handsome as a Phidian statue, vivacious, just energetic, indomitably determined, and passionate for freedom. He was the best woodsman, hunter, and athlete of his tribe. Catlin put all this, and a mystical something more, into his beautiful tragic portrait. (104-5)

Although Haberly is guilty of a biographer's exaggeration when describing the portrait, it was admired and treasured by Whitman. The painting obviously portrayed "experience, emotion, [and] life" while depicting the spiritual side of Osceola, a quality Whitman would later claim to be the most important in a work of art. In 1890 Whitman wrote "Osceola," a poem based on the painting that Catlin gave him.

When writing for the Brooklyn Daily Eagle during 1846 and 1847, Whitman visited three galleries--the National Academy of Design, the American Art Union, and the Brooklyn Institute (Brasher 213). The above articles attest to his

growing interest in American art. Shortly after losing his job as editor of the Eagle in January, 1848, Whitman and his younger brother Jeff traveled to New Orleans, where they both worked for the New Orleans Crescent. When he returned to New York later in 1848, Whitman began a new newspaper, The Brooklyn Freeman, which was primarily devoted to the political cause of "free soil." The paper lasted into 1849. During the years from 1850-1855, years Allen calls "The most important period in the life of Walt Whitman as a poet" (Solitary 106), Whitman lived in Brooklyn, writing about and associating with contemporary artists.

Whitman recalled an important association with artists during the early 1850s in a later conversation with Horace Traubel. He said,

"About the same time that Longfellow was preaching in Brooklyn I fell in with Brown, the sculptor--was often in his studio, where he was always modelling something--always at work. There many bright fellows came--Ward among them: there we all met on the freest terms. I have been in contact with the Longfellow circles, but they were literary, polite: I was not their kind--was not au fait--so preferred not to push myself in, or, if in, to stay in. The Brown habitues were more to my taste. There I would meet all sorts--young fellows from abroad stopped here in their swoopings: they would tell us of students, studios, the teachers, they had just left in Paris, Rome, Florence: one sparkling fellow in particular I fancied: he spoke of Beranger--I was greatly interested; he either knew Beranger or knew a heap about him. In the crowd I was myself called Beranger: my hair had already commenced to turn gray." (With 2: 502)

The reference to Pierre Jean de Beranger probably inflated Whitman's ego considerably, as Beranger was "a liberal

French poet of the time, with a wide following among the masses of the French people" (Zweig 127n). More importantly, Whitman was present when Brown was doing for sculpture what Cole and Durand did for American landscape--creating an American tradition.

Henry Kirke Brown wrote in 1856,

My feeling is that all art to become of any national importance or interest must grow out of the feelings and the habits of the people and that we have no need of the symbols or conventionalities of other nations to express ourselves. Our country has a rich and beautiful history to illustrate, full of manliness and grandeur and every American artist should endeavor to infuse into his works all the vitality and national policy in his power that when future generations shall look back upon his work they may see that he has expressed himself with truthfulness and honesty. (qtd. in Craven 58)

Brown studied in Italy from 1842-1846, but then he made a conscious decision to return home and establish an "American Art from American subjects" (Craven 44). He made an effort to free himself of the neoclassical influences he was exposed to in Italy; he wrote,

I begin to rejoice in my freedom from old masters both ancient and modern; I have received from them my patrimony and have gone out into the world to work for myself, and to work back if possible into the simple boyish love of nature which I came near losing sight of. (qtd. in Craven 48)

Like many artists of the time, Brown's love of nature took on religious significance. His sentiments in an 1846 letter are similar to Asher Durand's, which were later expressed in "Letters on Landscape Painting." Brown wrote,

neither man nor bodies of men were ever benefited to the expense of the violation of any of Nature's laws,

and . . . the further we study and understand these laws, the stronger will be our faith, not only in the Creator of all things, but in the equal and just distributions of his blessings. (qtd. in Craven 48)

Brown and Durand formed a close friendship in 1846, and no doubt their aesthetic theories reflected each other's thinking.

Brown's "American" style consisted of a "vigorous naturalism" which he "held to be the appropriate means of expression for the rendering of American subjects" (Craven 54). Indian and Panther, one of Brown's most famous works, displays these naturalistic qualities. A contemporary critic commented on the work--

The figure is that of a young Indian, in the act of striking a panther, which crouches at his feet. . . . [Brown] has placed the youth in an attitude of withdrawal [sic], and with the right arm raised to strike. The action is instantaneous, and calls the whole muscular system into activity. The strongly planted right foot, from which he draws back, resting his weight on the elastic left leg, the left hand, partially clenched, drawn up to the inflated chest, all unite to make the immediate action most powerful and effective. . . . The head of the Indian is in a just keeping with the body, the lips parted, and the brow knit under the angry impulse which impels the blow, heighten the impression of the action in the whole. (qtd. in Craven 54)

The subject matter and naturalism of this statue were part of a new movement in sculpture, and Whitman was present at its inception.

Brown passed along his naturalistic art to a student who was to become the next generation's leading sculptor, John Quincy Adams Ward. Like Brown, Ward chose American subjects and the outstanding characteristic of his style

was naturalism (Sharp 20). He grew up in rural Ohio and went directly to Brown's studio, where he was a student from 1849 to 1856. Ward's first influence was Brown, and he "adopted Brown's credo as his own" (Sharp 30).

Apparently a friendship between Ward and Whitman was established and continued through the years; they exchanged a series of letters in April of 1876 in which Ward ordered copies of Whitman's works. Both men were no doubt influenced by Brown. Ward wrote of Brown in 1852,

I find in the companionship of Mr. Brown a purer, nobler, & more exalting influence than it is possible for young persons to impart. When he speaks of art 'tis no boyish thought, it leaves an impression, & I always try to keep at such a distance from him as may give respect to his words. He is my Master in art & as such I will ever regard him. Nor does that prevent him from being pleasant and agreeable. (qtd. in Sharp 34)

And Brown was not the only influence on Ward. Brown's studio was frequented by many artists and critics, including,

Mr. [Sanford R.] Gifford, the painter, and such connoisseurs as Mr. Daniel Huntington, Mr. Henry Gurdon Marquand, Mr. Richard Willis, Mr. Bromley Brown, Mr. Henry Peters Gray, Mr. Samuel Colman, Mr. William Page, Mr. Asher Brown Durand, Mr. William James Stillman, Mr. William Cullen Bryant & his family, Mr. William Ames, and the young Quincy Ward and Larkin Mead, and a host of others. (qtd. in Sharp 31)

Gifford and Durand were well-known painters, Bryant a famous poet, and Ward and Mead students at the studio. The other men were the leading art critics and patrons of the day. In their company, Whitman was on the cutting edge of American art theory.

Discussions in Henry Kirke Brown's studio must have covered a broad range of topics. According to Gay Wilson Allen,

There are no written records of the ideas Whitman heard discussed in Brown's studio, but Horatio Greenough, one of America's most famous contemporary sculptors and her first critic of architecture, had been discussing his theories for the past decade in such magazines as the Democratic Review, and in 1851-1852 he was publishing these in books. Greenough's ideas were so vital for Whitman's generation that they were sure to be debated wherever American artists gathered, and many were acutely aware of the fact that his perennial battle with prudery was their battle too. (Solitary 109)

While Henry Kirke Brown, Thomas Cole and Asher Durand were creating an American tradition in sculpture and landscape painting, Greenough was calling for the same advances in architecture. He had no quarrel with forms of the past, but he saw these forms being copied wholesale without any regard to function and believed that the forms of the past were inadequate for the needs of the present. Greenough called for an architect to serve the needs of a growing America, as Emerson called for a truly American poet. Unfortunately, Greenough did not live to see the coming of an architect who could carry out his principles. Greenough's theories were not put into practice in America until the 1880s and later by architects like Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

Greenough was highly critical of buildings in Washington that he felt were not built functionally. He wrote,

The treatment of the Treasury buildings, where the granite basement has been painted of one color, the columns of a second, and the wall behind them of a third, where even the lampposts have been daubed with divers tints, like a barber's pole, is noticed with priceless naivete' in an important public document as a neat piece of work. What shall we say of the balustrades, where massive iron bars have been driven bodily into the columns as though a column in a first-class building might be treated like a blind wall in the basest structure, and that, too, without a shadow of need? What shall we say of the iron railings that obtrude upon the eye about the blockings of the Patent Office, and veil, with their inharmonious blackness, the organization of that building? . . . Do not such absurd and ignorant malpractices look as if a barbarous race had undertaken to enjoy the magnificence of a conquered people, and not known how to set about it? Does anyone fancy that the uninstructed multitude does not feel these incongruities? (12-13)

Greenough believed that an architect must "begin from the heart as the nucleus, and work outward" (62). If the forms of the past were copied wholesale without any regard to the needs of the present, the work was bound to fail.

Greenough believed in "Greek principles, not Greek things" (22). The same genius that inspired the Greek architects was necessary to inspire American architects to design buildings suited for American needs. Greenough wrote of the Greeks, "We believe firmly and fully that they can teach us; but let us learn principles, not copy shapes; let us imitate them like men, and not ape them like monkeys" (64).

Greenough believed a building's form should be based on its function; he wrote, "The adaptation of the forms and magnitude of structures to the climate they are exposed to, and the offices for which they are intended, teaches us to

study our own varied wants in these respects" (66). He stressed the "subordination of details to masses, and of masses to the whole" (58). Charles Metzger, in his study Emerson and Greenough: Transcendental Pioneers of an American Esthetic (Emerson and Greenough were friends and their aesthetics were similar), labeled these three levels (details, masses, and whole) "the protestant, the metaphysical, and the prophetic. Each is essentially religious in tone, and each corresponds more or less exactly to a similar aspect of Emerson's transcendental esthetic" (81). The protestant relates to "proportion and correspondence," the metaphysical is concerned with the interaction of form and function to achieve a unified whole, and the prophetic entails the relationship of an object to a larger whole (Metzger 40-43). An architect must design his buildings with all three levels in mind to be successful.

Greenough goes on to define "Beauty as the promise of Function" and to condemn "embellishment as false beauty" (71, 73). This idea reappears in the 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass:

In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and

revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made to happen. (722)

Whitman's belief in the sanctity of "the human form" also echoes Greenough's words--"If I be told that such a system as mine would produce nakedness, I accept the omen. In nakedness I behold the majesty of the essential instead of the trappings of pretension" (75).

Greenough's battle against prudery began long before Whitman's. In 1831, his statue "Chanting Cherubs," a group of children which was the first sculpture by an American exhibited in this country, was shown in Boston (Greenough 8). Greenough's biographer, Nathalia Wright, recounts the incident:

Others objected so strongly to the nudity of the figures that about the third week of the exhibition dimity aprons were tied around them. Repercussions were immediate. "C." in the Courier denounced this "deforming" of the work "by a vile covering" and declared that any lady who feared she was courting the attraction of men by liking them had "corruption eating at her." A correspondent of the New York Evening Post suggested that the aprons be left behind when the group was brought to New York, to furnish Bostonians with night caps. Within a week or so the figures were restored to their pristine state. "We are happy to hear," announced one of the city's editors, "that the gentlemen nurses who have the care of Mr. Greenough's Chanting Cherubs intend to 'change the diaper' of the group in a few days.

Greenough was suprised and chagrined when the news of this episode reached him in the fall of 1831. "I had thought the country beyond that," he wrote Allston. "There is a nudity which is not impure--there is an impurity which pierces the most cumbrous costume." (72)

The controversy about nudity resurfaced later in Greenough's career. His famous statue of George Washington offended some; Greenough wrote, "the same purblind

squeamishness . . . awoke with a roar at the colossal nakedness of Washington's manly breast" (8). These nudity controversies and Greenough's ideas on form and function were important issues of the day which were surely discussed in Henry Kirke Brown's studio and were an important influence on Whitman's developing aesthetic.

Another major art critic that Whitman was sure to have discussed in Brown's studio is John Ruskin. The first volume of Modern Painters was published in America in 1847 (the English version was published in 1843). Whitman read the first volume when he was editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle (Rubin 261-62), and he was just one of many to be influenced by Ruskin. According to Roger B. Stein, "By 1855 Ruskin felt that he had a more significant audience in America than in England" (263). Therefore, his works were reprinted quickly in America after their original publication in England (Stein 265). Volume 2 of Modern Painters was published in England in 1846, so both volumes were available to America readers in the early 1850s and helped to shape American art theory.

The purpose of the first volume of Modern Painters was to promote English artist J. M. W. Turner as the greatest landscape painter. Ruskin claimed Turner was "true to nature and Claude merely to tradition" (Stein 37). He wrote that "the cause of the evil . . . in the system of ancient landscape art . . . consists . . . in the painter's

taking upon him to modify God's works at his pleasure, casting the shadow of himself on all he sees" (3: 24-25). The work of the elder masters "has never taught us one deep or holy lesson; has never made us feel the wonder, nor the power, nor the glory of the universe" (3: 22). Ruskin went on to write of English landscape artists that,

although frequently with little power and with desultory effort, . . . [they] have yet, in an honest and good heart, received the word of God from clouds, and leaves, and waves, and kept it, and endeavoured in humility to render to the world that purity of impression which can only render the result of art an instrument of good, or its labour deserving of gratitude. (3: 44-46)

Truth to nature in landscape painting was essential because artists were portraying God's work to their fellow men; "failure to reproduce the natural facts of nature accurately on the canvas seemed to Ruskin to be a form of blasphemy" (Stein 38). But the artist is not a simple copier of nature. Ruskin distinguished "two types of truth--truths of fact and truths of thought: truths to nature only and truths to the artist's perception of nature" (Kirchhoff 31). The first kind of truth is accurate representation of reality, but Ruskin wrote of the technical aspect of painting, "with all its technicalities, difficulties, and particular ends, [it] is nothing but a noble and expressive language, invaluable as the vehicle of thought, but by itself nothing" (3: 87). Truths of thought are what differentiate the artist from the average man; "they can only be understood by the few and are commonly

misjudged by the unqualified" (Kirchhoff 31). Ruskin labeled the artist who can see these special truths a "master-mind"--

to trace among the grass and weeds those mysteries of invention and combination by which nature appeals to the intellect; to tender the delicate fissure, and descending curve, and undulating shadow of the mouldering soil, with gentle and fine finger, like the touch of the rain itself; to find even in all that appears most trifling or contemptible, fresh evidence of the constant working of the Divine power "for glory and for beauty," and to teach it and proclaim it to the unthinking and the unregarding; this, as it is the peculiar province and faculty of the master-mind, so it is the peculiar duty which is demanded of it by the Deity. (3: 483)

Although the artist's eye is at work and he portrays truths the average man cannot see, "the moment the artist . . . can make us think that he has done nothing, that nature has done all, that moment he becomes ennobled, he proves himself great" (3: 470).

This theory explains the discrepancy between the real and the ideal, a conflict inherent in American art at the time. The artist, with his greater vision, perceives an ideal world and portrays scenes not immediately familiar to the average man. It is the artist's job to "let us see more than we could ourselves, and bring nature up to us and near to us" (3: 137). In Ruskin's view, "the artist is at once a natural historian and a kind of divinity" (Kirchhoff 33). Ruskin called Turner "as much of a geologist as he is of a painter" (3: 429). Mountains and rocks were God's

creations, and their accurate portrayals were both science and worship, as no split had yet occurred between them.

With the idea that nature and beauty were God's works, Ruskin went on in volume 2 of Modern Painters to discuss beauty, for if "beauty is expressive of Divine qualities he had to be very careful to prove that beauty was an independent and objective reality" (Hewison 55). Ruskin did not believe in art for art's sake; "Its purpose was to express the nature of God, and there must be no confusion between this function and the incidental pleasure it gave man" (Hewison 55). Proper appreciation of beauty consisted of a series of Wordsworthian steps--

it is necessary to the existence of an idea of beauty, that the sensual pleasure which may be at its basis should be accompanied first with joy, then with love of the object, then with the perception of kindness in a superior intelligence, finally, with thankfulness and veneration towards that intelligence itself. (4: 48)

The important concept here is that beauty is a moral quality, "not sensuous or intellectual" (Stein 39). Ruskin related beauty and religion (God), claiming that nature was God's truth and man's perception of it through art brought him closer to God. Robert Hewison called this an "Evangelical theory of beauty" (61), a theory that Ruskin later repudiated. Yet these ideas found an attentive following in America, perhaps because of the special significance of nature in the nineteenth century American mind. Ruskin's theories certainly found their way to Whitman, directly and through his many artist friends.

Because of his interest in theorists like Greenough and Ruskin and his association with artists at this time, "Whitman's occasional journalism changed. . . . Even when he was writing for the abolitionist National Era, it was about music and painting" (Zweig 122). Whitman assumed the role of "little Ruskin" (Rubin 265), writing articles about his artist friends to try to attract critical and financial support. One such article was published in the New York Evening Post on February 1, 1851. The Brooklyn Art Union was opened in 1851, and Whitman wrote "Something About Art and Brooklyn Artists" to encourage the public to support the Art Union. He wrote,

A great reason why the very large majority of our painters are distressingly feeble, is, the absence of enough of such encouragement. How would the cause of education stand now, were it not for the powerful favor which is extended to it from so many quarters, apart from those who are directly interested? (236)

Whitman believed, like Ruskin, that artists are "the nobler specimens of our race." He described them as having "warm, impulsive souls, instinctively generous and genial, boon companions, wild and thoughtless often, but mean and sneaking never." He urged support for artists, writing, "Nearly all intelligent boys and girls have much of the artist in them. . . . What a glorious result it would give, to form of these thousands a close phalanx, ardent, radical and progressive." Whitman concluded with, "A sunny blessing, then say I, on the young artist race!" ("Something" 236-237). He too viewed artists as the

leaders of society, as "priests of the natural church" (Novak, Nature 9).

The remainder of "Something About Art and Brooklyn Artists" was devoted to Whitman's artist friend Walter Libbey. Whitman wrote,

One of the most promising of these [painters] is Walter Libbey; the reader may have noticed some of his pictures in the exhibitions of the Academy, or the New York Art Union. One, lately finished, of a boy playing the flute, is a charming production, and would do credit to a master. I don't know where to look for a picture more naive, or with more spirit or grace. The young musician has stopped, by the way-side, and, putting down his basket, seats himself on a bank. He has a brown wool hat, ornamented with a feather; rolled-up shirt sleeves, a flowing red cravat on his neck, and a narrow leather belt buckled round his waist--a handsome, healthy country boy. The face, the position of the hands holding the flute, the expression of the features, are exquisitely fine. I have looked several long looks at this picture, at different times, and each one with added pleasure and admiration. The scene in the background, clear and sunny, is yet subdued as a subordinate part--a servant to the main purpose; and it is a beautiful scene, too. The basket, half of which you see, the light resting here and there on the wide withes; the folds of the trousers, and their shadowed creases made by the open legs; on all these, the work shows the true artist. There is richness of coloring, tamed to that hue of purplish gray, which we see in the summer in the open air. There is no hardness, and the eye is not pained by the sharpness of outline which mars many otherwise fine pictures. In the scene of the background, and in all the accessories, there is a delicious melting in, so to speak, of object with object; an effect that is frequent enough in nature, though painters seem to disdain following it, even where it is demanded.

I returned, the other day, after looking at Mount's last work--I think his best--of a Long Island negro, the winner of a goose at a raffle; and though it certainly is a fine and spirited thing, if I were to choose between the two, the one to hang up in my room for my own gratification, I should take the boy with his flute. This, too, to my notion, has a character of Americanism about it. Abroad, a similar subject would show the boy as handsome, perhaps, but he would be a

young boor, and nothing more. The stamp of class is, in this way, upon all the fine scenes of the European painters, where the subjects are of a proper kind; while in this boy of Walter Libbey's, there is nothing to prevent his becoming a President, or even an editor of a leading newspaper. (237-38)

This long review is an important statement of Whitman's developing aesthetic principles. First, he appreciated the sense of "social awareness" present in Libbey's painting, for Whitman wanted an art that spoke of the common man's condition. Second, the naturalism of Henry Kirke Brown and his pupil Ward carried over to Whitman's taste in painting. The natural blending of colors as they appear in nature is what Whitman admired in Libbey's work. In an October 25, 1850, letter to the National Era, Whitman expressed the same preference--

It is a distressing fault of our painters--and one sees it all over the walls at this exhibition--that they strain so hard to make every material thing so clean-lined and clear, lest a body may fail to understand what they mean. Nearly every picture seems to thrust itself from its frame, and "stand out" as they call it. This effect is openly sought after. It is fatal to the truth and life of art. Not protruding but retiring--not staring out of its frame, but retiring in--must be that picture which deserves a place among the things of genius. Nature never thrusts anything forward in this way--it will do for a melodrama on the stage, but is no part of true greatness, either in life or in art. (Silver 305-6)

The occasion for the above remark was the exhibition of the American Art Union in 1850. Whitman praised a painting by Richard Caton Woodville entitled "Old '76, and young '48"; he wrote "the whole picture is good, and free from that straining after effect, whose attempt is too evident,

(that's the fault,) which mars most of the pictures here" (Silver 305).

Whitman, while agreeing with Ruskin that the painter is a "master-mind" who transcribed God's works to the average man, seemed to veer away from Ruskin's insistence on a labored, analytic style. Ruskin also insisted that even if all the details were accurate, the picture was still not complete; it must also contain "truths of thought" in addition to its technical excellence. Whitman's emphasis in the Libbey review was on these "truths of thought," what he would term the "soul" of the picture. Perhaps this was one reason why he was not as impressed with landscapists like Church and Gifford as he later would be with Millet. The landscapists strove for precise reproductions of nature, and Whitman might have felt that the spiritual content in their works was only second priority.

Whitman preferred a natural blending in of colors instead of the hard lines found in many landscape paintings, and he believed that art should not only portray objects, but also highlight soul. He criticized another picture at the 1850 exhibition of the American Art Union, "The Death of Bayard," because "There is too little soul in the picture, whose subject demands that it should be specially full of the element" (Silver 305). He wrote,

The principal aim of a work of art, to which all others are subordinate, is to embody the spiritual expression.

Whatever the piece may be, landscape, historical composition, portrait, comic groups, or even still life, it is the spiritual part of it you want above all the rest. That is its soul, its animus, and makes art live. . . . The most exquisite draughting, the finest coloring, and the minutest truth, the mere forms of nature, are but the cold, dead corpses of art, if they have not the vivifying principle. (qtd. in Rubin 265)

Walter Libbey's paintings satisfied Whitman's criteria for a social statement, naturalism and attention to the spiritual. Libbey was "flattered by Whitman's prophecy that his name would be heard in high places" and asked Whitman to pose. "In these sessions Whitman heard at first hand the artist's aspirations and vexations; for if much had been done, more remained undone" (Rubin 264). Yet Libbey would not accomplish his goals. He died the next year, leaving practically no record behind. Whitman spoke of him thirty-seven years later to Horace Traubel,

"The other picture," he said, "is in oil--belongs to my sister in St. Louis." Who was the artist? "Libbey," he answered, even going so far as to spell the name out for me: "Libbey: he was quite young--a friend of mine: Walter Libbey: bright, versatile, full of promise, it was everywhere recognized: but died young with nothing practically accomplished--not even a name won." (With 2: 506)

Whitman again remembered Walter Libbey in the last line of his will--"My portrait by Walter Libbey is to go to my brother Jeff" (Notebooks 2: 919). The portrait obviously meant a great deal to Whitman; it is unfortunate that more about his relationship with Walter Libbey is not known.

William Sidney Mount, the artist Whitman compared to

Libbey, probably was also personally acquainted with Whitman. Whitman grew up at Stony Brook during the time that Mount was painting there, and "Whitman's descriptions of his childhood on Long Island in Specimen Days and elsewhere provide an incredibly precise verbal parallel to Mount's paintings" (Frankenstein 14). Whitman's article attests to the fact that he was familiar with all of Mount's work up to that time, and just as Mount attempted to portray the common man realistically, without "the grand style of Art" interfering, Whitman later tried to put himself into his book (Matthiessen 597-99).

Another artist that Whitman knew personally was Jesse Talbot. The extent of their relationship is still a mystery, but according to a list of letters to Walt Whitman in E. H. Miller's The Correspondence of Walt Whitman, Mrs. Talbot Buckny (Jesse Talbot's daughter) wrote to Walt Whitman on November 25, 1891. This letter "recalled the association of her father Jessie Talbot with Walt Whitman in 1832" (5: 346). Unless this is a misprint, Whitman met Talbot at the age of thirteen, and the association continued until at least 1860 and possibly beyond. There are notations in three surviving Whitman notebooks, dated approximately 1850, 1857, and 1860, of Jesse Talbot's address, which has changed in each notebook.

Joseph Jay Rubin's The Historic Whitman offers the most information about Jesse Talbot--

A modest landscape painter, Jesse Talbot, now in his mid-forties, became Whitman's frequent host and aesthetic tutor. Some years ago he had painted "The Happy Valley" after reading Rasselas. On that canvas, according to Whitman, he lavished color and intense light on grass, sky, and water until the exuberant final statement proved that nature is filled with "glowing blood." Since then Whitman had followed the career of this "least pushing" of artists and catalogued his progress from magazine engravings to hangings in the National Academy and the homes of Fifth Avenue patrons. By now their intimacy had grown to the stage where Talbot could confide his plans for a vast triptych. When he completed a group of scenic idylls his townsman ranked him with Allston and Cole, for in the best of these--"Indian Woods," "Rocky Scene on the Juniata," and "The Startled Deer"--he joined simplicity, boldness, and purity. (263)

Whitman published four articles about Talbot in various New York newspapers (Rubin 379n). In one of them he explained his friend's success by writing,

[Talbot] has studied the great source of Art and Beauty, Nature herself; spending months in the mountains and woods, and by the borders of rivers and the sea--watching the sunset and the sunrise, and transferring to his canvas the play of light and shade, in its very reality. . . . We are sure that this is better than even "visiting Europe." Has Europe any better models in her galleries than Nature offers on American hill tops, and all over the broad spread of our fertile fields? Is the copy of a copy to be chosen, before the great Original itself? (qtd. in Rubin 263)

Whitman owned an oil painting of Talbot's titled "The Christian and the Cross," a scene from Pilgrim's Progress. In a letter dated September 28, 1869, concerning a debt Whitman owed a Mr. Parton, Whitman wrote,

I consider the debt paid--(though if I had wealth, today, I should certainly pay it over again, in cash.) Among the goods I rendered I remember an oil painting, an original of marked beauty and value, by Jesse Talbot, illustrating a scene from Pilgrim's Progress,

worth from four to five hundred dollars" (Traubel, With 3: 238).

Unfortunately, Talbot's work and reputation have not survived. His work is relegated to a footnote in Gerdt's and Burke's, American Still-Life Painting--

Many very competent, if secondary, Hudson River School landscape painters created still lifes, though in most cases these are, like Ward's, known today by exhibition records rather than by extant examples. Their number includes Jesse Talbot (1806-1879). (245n)

However, Talbot's pictures were displayed in the National Academy and the National Gallery of Design in New York (Rubin 263; Kaplan 167); he was evidently successful and Whitman's close friend.

Another artist that Whitman associated with in the early 1850's was Frederick A. Chapman (Kaplan 167). Very little is known of Chapman today; a brief entry in The New-York Historical Society's Dictionary of American Artists, 1564-1860 notes,

Portrait, historical, and landscape painter, stained glass designer . . . in 1850 he exhibited landscape and historical paintings at the American Art-Union. In August 1850 he was at NYC and he soon after settled in Brooklyn (N.Y.), remaining there until after 1860. He was the first president of the Brooklyn Art Association, and his oils, especially a series of Civil War scenes, attracted much attention in the 1860's. He died January 26, 1891. (Groce and Wallace 120)

Chapman's and Jesse Talbot's addresses appear in Whitman's notebook, entered around 1854 (Kaplan 187). Chapman is but another mysterious artist acquainted with Whitman during these key years in the poet's life.

Another acquaintance was photographer Gabriel

Harrison, who became friends with Whitman in 1854. Whitman recounted their meeting to Horace Traubel--

I was sauntering along the street: the day was hot: I was dressed just as you see me there. A friend of mine--Gabriel Harrison (you know him? ah! yes!--he has always been a good friend!)--stood at the door of his place looking at the passers-by. He cried out to me at once: 'Old man!--old man!--come here: come right up stairs with me this minute'- and when he noticed that I hesitated cried still more emphatically: 'Do come: come: I'm dying for something to do.' This picture was the result. (With 2: 506)

Harrison was also a painter, although he was primarily known for his photography. He founded the Brooklyn Dramatic Academy in 1853, and fought against the American Daguerre Association, "founded by prominent photographers to set a high standard of 'good taste,'" arguing that the association "would have to be democratic and its tastes could not be aristocratic" (Folsom 63-64), a conviction his friend Whitman shared and would demonstrate shortly in Leaves of Grass. The men shared other common interests, for Harrison was also involved with the theater and was an author (Folsom 63). Judging from Whitman's comments to Traubel, the poet's friendship with Harrison was a long one.

Because of his interest and his help in publicizing local artists, the Brooklyn Art Union asked Whitman to give an address at its first drawing for pictures. The Art Union was a short-lived affair; it only operated for a year and had only one drawing for prizes. In 1852 the New York Supreme Court ruled against the American Art Union in a

lawsuit questioning the legality of the prize distribution, a decision which, in effect, declared art unions in New York illegal. Therefore, the Brooklyn Art Union was forced to close its doors (Marlor 3-4).

Unfortunately, the disbanding of the Brooklyn Art Union undermined Whitman's aim of promoting local art and artists, but his speech at this prize distribution was an important statement of his aesthetic principles and perhaps the best proof that he was discussing Ruskin and Emerson at the time. He began his address by examining the role of the artist in society, like Ruskin claiming that the artist was society's moral guide, stating,

Among such a people as the Americans, viewing most things with an eye to pecuniary profit--more for acquiring than for enjoying or well developing what they acquire--ambitious of the physical rather than the intellectual; a race to whom matter of fact is everything, and the ideal nothing--a nation of whom the steam engine is no bad symbol--he does a good work who, pausing in the way, calls to the feverish crowd that in the life we live upon this beautiful earth, there may, after all, be something vaster and better than dress and the table, and business and politics. . . .

It is the glorious province of Art, and of all artists worthy the name, to disentangle from whatever constructs it, and nourish in the heart of man, the germ of the perception of the truly great, the beautiful and the simple. ("Art" 241)

Whitman went on to equate God's works, beauty, and nature, as Ruskin did. He wrote that after the creation, "God looked forth and saw everything that he had made, and pronounced it good. Good because ever reproductive of its first beauty, finish and freshness. For just as the Lord left it remains yet the beauty of His work" ("Art" 242).

And as artistic "seer," it is "With this freshness--with this that the Lord called good--the Artist has to do" ("Art" 242).

He went on to say,

To the artist, I say, has been given the command to go forth into all the world and preach the gospel of beauty. The perfect man is the perfect artist, and it cannot be otherwise. For in the much that has been said of Nature and Art there is mostly the absurd error of considering the two as distinct. . . . true art [is] identical with a perception of the beauty that there is in all the ordinations as well as all the works of Nature . . . ("Art" 243-44)

By fulfilling their functions, artists can "sanctif[y] that community" in which they live; "A halo surrounds forever that nation" ("Art" 244). Whitman asked rhetorically, "May not death itself, through the prevalence of a more artistic feeling among the people, be shorn of many of its frightful and ghastly features?" ("Art" 242). Whitman's treatment of death in many of his major poems proved this early statement true.

To illustrate his point about the influence of art on society, Whitman discussed the ancient Greeks. Because that country had artist "seers" to guide it, its members were "noble," the nation "glorious and manly and beautiful," the "imagination loves to dwell there," and to Greece "all ages have loved to turn as to one of the most perfect ideals of man" ("Art" 245). In contrast, "Man of the present time" has "contempt for all there is in the world, except money can be made of it. . . . his religion

[is] what is written down in the books, or preached to him as he sits in his rich pew, by one whom he pays a round sum, and thinks it a bargain" ("Art" 245). The American society Whitman described was not motivated by the artistic impulse, and its members led an empty existence.

Whitman concluded by equating "heroic action" with the "artistic impulse." He said, "I think of few heroic actions which cannot be traced to the artistical impulse. He who does great deeds, does them from his sensitiveness to moral beauty. Such men are not merely artists, they are artistic material" ("Art" 246). Whitman urged artists to look to these heroes for inspiration--

Talk not so much, then, young artist, of the great old masters, who but painted and chiselled. Study not only their productions. There is a still better, higher school for him who would kindle his fire with coal from the altar of the loftiest and purest art. It is the school of all grand actions and grand virtues, of heroism. ("Art" 246).

Whitman quoted from his own poem "Resurgemus" to illustrate that these heroes attain a type of immortality, an immortality also attainable by the artist through his works--

Those corpses of young men,
Those martyrs that hung from the gibbets,
Those hearts pierced by the gray lead,
Cold and motionless as they seem,
Live elsewhere with undying vitality:
They live in other young men, O kings,
They live in brothers again ready to defy you;
They were purified by death,
They were taught and exalted. ("Art" 247)

This eternal artistic impulse which inspires heroes and

artists caused Whitman to be optimistic about the future of American and its art--"we even now see the growth that is to be expected among a people pervaded by love and appreciation of beauty" ("Art" 246).

At the core of the Art Union Speech was Whitman's desire to remake individual priorities through art. The ideal vision that art can provide, brought to the masses, could awaken the artistic impulse in an entire generation of artists and heroes. Whitman echoed his earlier journalism when he wrote in the Art Union Speech, "It is a beautiful truth that all men contain something of the artist in them" ("Art" 242). By appealing to that something, the materialistic American society that Whitman described could be changed.

Although the Art Union was disbanded shortly after Whitman's speech, his associations with artists continued throughout his life. Besides the biographical information presented above which ties Whitman to the art world prior to 1855, two critics have noted passages in Whitman's poems based on paintings he viewed in New York during these early years. Although he could not find any mention of George Caleb Bingham in Whitman's writings, Henry B. Rule points to the following passage in "Song of Myself" as evidence that Whitman knew Bingham's painting Shooting for the Beef (1850)--

The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some
lean on their rifles, some sit on logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his
position, levels his piece;. . . (283-84)

Rule claims that

Whitman's two lines contain all of the pertinent details of Bingham's painting; the young men . . . and the old man with a cane . . . anxiously awaiting the results of the shot; the other spectators sitting on logs or leaning on rifles, and the marksman, dramatically isolated from the crowd, taking 'his position' and leveling 'his piece' ("George" 249).

Shooting for the Beef was shown at the American Art Union in New York City from January, 1851, to December, 1852, when it was sold, a time when Whitman was frequently a visitor (Rule, "George" 249). Whitman probably found inspiration in the painting, much like he did with George Catlin's Osceola.

Rule also points to the following lines in "Our Old Feuillage" as possibly being inspired by Bingham's The Jolly Flatboatmen (1846)--

On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their
boats under shelter of high banks,
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo
or fiddle, others sit on the gunwale smoking and
talking. (38-39)

The similarities between the painting and poem are not exact, and Rule admits that Whitman's lines might be modeled on scenes he saw during his trip to New Orleans ("George" 250). However, approximately 18,000 copies of The Jolly Flatboatman were distributed during 1846-47, as it was selected for distribution to American Art Union members. It is highly probable that Whitman saw the

painting and drew upon it in "Our Old Feuillage" (Rule, "George" 250).

Another scholar who found a direct correlation between a painting and lines in Whitman's poetry is Edgeley W. Todd. He claims that the following lines from "Song of Myself" are based on Alfred Jacob Miller's painting The Trapper's Bride (1-2)--

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in
the far west, the bride was a red girl,
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and
dumbly smoking, they had moccasins to their feet
and large thick blankets hanging from their
shoulders,
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in
skins, his luxuriant beard and curls protected his
neck, he held his bride by the hand,
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse
straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs
and reach'd to her feet. (185-88)

As Todd notes, Whitman's lines are an exact transcription of the details of The Trapper's Bride. Exactly when Whitman viewed the painting is not known, but Miller produced a "pretty calendarlike picture . . . (and later a huge oil) . . . [which] became a staple of his studio trade." Whitman had many opportunities to see the painting, and he might have owned a copy (Todd 3-4).

Besides borrowing scenes from paintings for his poetry, Walt Whitman also incorporated the ideas that he discussed with his artist friends into his developing philosophy of what poetry should be. The evidence proves that he was immersed in the art world of New York City during one of the most vibrant periods in the growth of

American art. Interestingly, the first edition of Leaves of Grass in 1855 coincided with Frederic Church's first epic landscape, The Andes of Ecuador (1855). Both men's new visions in their respective genres erupted simultaneously, both products of some similar influences.

CHAPTER 3

WHITMANIAN AESTHETICS, ART AND "SONG OF MYSELF"

Before the first edition of Leaves of Grass, Walt Whitman's most successful work was Franklin Evans, a melodramatic temperance novel. He also published poems and sentimental short stories in New York magazines and newspapers and was a prolific journalist, but these works showed little or no trace of the genius that would soon emerge in Leaves of Grass. Whitman's association with art and painters was an important influence on his developing aesthetic, or his ideas about what art (literature and painting) should be. This aesthetic was based on his beliefs about democracy and the relationship of the artist to society. He wrote in the 1855 Preface that the great poet

is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. . . . What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. (713-14)

Asher Durand concurred in his 1855 "Letters on Landscape Painting," writing that the artist and poet employed

a more perfect exercise of perception . . . They have only depicted it [nature] as they saw it, in its fullness and purity, looking on it with childlike affection and religious reverence . . . " (Letter IV 98)

As "seer" for the masses, Whitman's role was "to indicate the path between reality and their souls" (1855

Preface 714). This role was also the task of nineteenth-century landscape painters. The painters portrayed nature as a manifestation of God, thereby merging the spiritual and physical. Whitman's conception of nature also merged spirit and matter, but his subject was not the American landscape but the landscape of the American soul. "Song of Myself" is, in a sense, an epic landscape of the American soul, sharing many stylistic and thematic similarities with the work of the landscape and genre painters of his day.

Whitman's beliefs about American society and the nature of democracy are the starting point for a study of his aesthetic. The work of the landscape painters, like Whitman's, was very nationalistic, a celebration of a special blessing, the new Eden. The genre painters, in turn, celebrated the chosen people. Art was seen as a moral guide for the people, reminding them of their unique responsibility to be fit to live in this new land.

However, Whitman, like Thomas Cole, had misgivings about the direction American society was heading. Unlike Cole, who felt the upper class had the responsibility of guiding America, Whitman looked to the common man. His opinions about the lack of spirituality in American society, clearly stated in his 1851 speech to the Brooklyn Art Union, were echoed throughout his career. An 1856 pamphlet which Whitman never published, entitled The Eighteenth Presidency!, expressed many of the same views. He

distinguished a ruling class in America, and wrote of them,

At present, the personnel of the government of these thirty millions, in executives and elsewhere, is drawn from limber-tongued lawyers, very fluent but empty, feeble old men, professional politicians, dandies, dyspeptics, and so forth, and rarely drawn from the solid body of the people. (19-20)

Whitman lamented, "Where is the real America? Where are the laboring persons, ploughmen, men with axes, spades, scythes, flails?" (Eighteenth 23), the men and women the genre painters of the day portrayed. He called for an abolition of political parties and for the American worker to step forward and lead the country. Whitman pleaded, "Workmen! Workwomen! Those immense national American tracts belong to you; they are in trust with you" (Eighteenth 32); he believed the "representative man" held the key. Of this man he wrote,

Never was the representative man more energetic, more like a god, than to-day. He urges on the myriads before him, he crowds them aside, his daring step approaches the arctic and the antarctic poles, he colonizes the shores of the Pacific, the Asiatic Indias, the birthplace of languages and of races, the archipelagoes, Australia; he explores Africa, he unearths Assyria and Egypt, he restates history, he enlarges morality, he speculates anew upon the soul, upon original premises; nothing is left quiet, nothing but he will settle by demonstrations for himself. (Eighteenth 43-44)

This "representative man" was more Whitman's ideal man, the persona he created in "Song of Myself." But he believed that "all men contain something of the artist in them . . . the perfect man is the perfect artist." He strongly believed in the capacity of the masses to improve

and realize their artistic potential, a belief that fit into the spirit of the age. As Paul Zweig noted,

Even as forebodings of civil war were paralyzing the nation's political life; even as urban poverty and the extension of factory labor were making a mockery of Jeffersonian ideals, Americans talked piously, almost frantically, about the wholesale improvability of virtually everything. (17)

According to Whitman, the artist's/poet's role was, as he later phrased it in his 1871 work Democratic Vistas, to be "the divine literatus" (365), to show the people the way to a more spiritual existence.

Democratic Vistas was Whitman's most complete statement about the relationship of the artist to society. Although it was written fifteen years after The Eighteenth Presidency!, Democratic Vistas echoed the ideas expressed there and in the Art Union speech of 1851. The theme was essentially the same--to develop Americans' spiritual and moral capacities, a great national literature (art) must be developed. American culture, according to Whitman, had no soul, but was crass and materialistic. Politics were run by corrupt political parties as true democracy, or what Whitman called "The Third stage" in the democratic process, based on "native expression-spirit," was still in the future (Democratic 410). This view of a developing democracy looked to the artist as "prophet-seer" of a new kind of life, as Whitman elevated himself, as poet, into the role of "priest of the natural church," the same role the landscape artists fulfilled.

Whitman's characterization of American society was harsh--

society, in these states, is cankered, crude, superstitious and rotten. . . . Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. The underlying principles of the States are not honestly believed in (for all this hectic glow, and these melodramatic screamings), nor is humanity itself believed in. . . . We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the litterateurs is to find something to make fun of. A lot of churches, sects, etc., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion. Conversation is a mass of badinage. From deceit in the spirit, the mother of all false deeds, the offspring is already incalculable. . . . I say that our New World democracy, however great a success in lifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and aesthetic results. (Democratic 369-70)

Whitman believed that the identity of the United States should be a "moral and artistic one," not based on "self-interest, or common pecuniary or material objects" (Democratic 368).

The democracy of the future, Whitman's "Third stage," would be,

evidenced by original authors and poets to come, . . . by native superber tableaux and growth of language, songs, operas, orations, lectures, architecture--and by a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command, dissolving the old, sloughing off surfaces, and from its own interior and vital principles, reconstructing, democratizing society. (Democratic 410)

Democracy's hope lay in its individuals, "its own

interior," finding a meaning deeper than materialistic gain to bind society. Whitman called for,

Intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man . . . which seems to promise, when thoroughly developed, cultivated, and recognized in manners and literature, the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States . . . (Democratic 414)

In a long footnote to these lines, Whitman explained,

It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship . . . that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences; but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, food and loving, pure and sweet, strong and life-long, carried to degrees hitherto unknown--not only giving tone to individual character, and making it unprecedentedly emotional, muscular, heroic, and refined, but having the deepest relation to general politics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself. (Democratic 414-15n)

So Whitman's "Third stage" of democracy would realize its potential through individuals' spirits, since Whitmanian democracy was not dependent on government but was based on the interrelationship of human beings. The purpose of democracy was to provide its citizens the opportunity to grow, and from this growth to establish laws to govern themselves and society. The individual's responsibility was to establish laws based on morals and religion, not economics, laws that would guarantee future generations the opportunity for artistic growth. . Whitman believed that

"the great master . . . sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it" (1855 Preface 720). In the society based on the art principle, the general law benefited all men.

As a model of a society based on the artistic principle, Whitman once again (as in the Art Union speech) praised ancient Greek society and its art, in particular its literature. He wrote,

Few are aware how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. . . . Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems. . . . the genius of Greece, and all the sociology, personality, politics, and religion of those wonderful states, resided in their literature or aesthetics. . . .
(Democratic 366)

The artist/poet became the hero, the shaper of man and society, in Whitman's scheme, for

a single new thought, imagination, abstract principle . . . put in shape by some great literatus . . . may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war, or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic, or commercial overturn.
(Democratic 366)

As shaper and moral guide to society, the works of the artist/poet assumed religious significance. Whitman, at one point in his career, called his work on Leaves of Grass "The Great Construction of the New Bible" (Complete IX: 6). He made the same type of religious analogy in Democratic Vistas--

the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. The priest departs, the divine literatus comes. (365)

The "divine literatus" will create

a literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men--and, as perhaps the most precious of its results, achieving the entire redemption of woman . . . (Democratic 372)

Instilling literature with didactic qualities was an idea Whitman shared with Ruskin and the American artists of the Hudson River School. Ruskin criticized the old masters for having "never taught us one deep or holy lesson, . . . never mak[ing] us feel the wonder, power, or glory of the universe." Whitman repeated that sentiment when, quoting a Librarian of Congress, he asked in Democratic Vistas, "The true question to ask respecting a book, is, has it helped any human soul?" (420). The American landscape painters glorified nature as the physical manifestation of God's spiritual world, and their paintings put men in touch with that spiritual world and deepened their souls. Whitman echoed this philosophy that the purpose of art, nature, and the natural world is to lead men to a spiritual realm. He wrote,

Man, so diminutive, dilates beyond the sensible universe, competes with, outcopes space and time, meditating even one great idea. Thus, and thus only, does a human being, his spirit, ascend above, and justify, objective Nature, which, probably nothing in itself, is incredibly and divinely serviceable, indispensable, real, here. And as the purport of objective Nature is doubtless folded, hidden, somewhere here--as somewhere here is what this globe and its

manifold forms, and the light of day, and night's darkness, and life itself, with all its experiences, are for--it is here the great literature, especially verse, must get its inspiration and throbbing blood. Then may we attain to a poetry worthy the immortal soul of man, and which, while absorbing materials, and in their own sense, the shows of Nature, will, above all, have, both directly and indirectly, a freeing, fluidizing, expanding, religious character, exulting with science, fructifying the moral elements, and stimulating aspirations, and meditations on the unknown. (Democratic Vistas 419)

Whitman's descriptions of the "divine literatus" and his role in society also described the mid-nineteenth-century American artists and their achievements. However, Whitman believed poetry was the only way to reach the people; it was,

the only general means of morally influencing the world. Painting, sculpture, and the dramatic theatre, it would seem, no longer play an indispensable or even important part in the workings and mediumship of intellect, utility, or even high aesthetics. (Democratic 367)

This statement is surprising, considering his close relationship with artists. It was written sixteen years after the first edition of Leaves of Grass. Perhaps he believed that painting was not effectively reaching the people after the Art Unions were disbanded in 1852. Painting, sculpture, and theater were accessible only to an elite minority, and Whitman's early campaigns while editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle to bring art to the common man were largely unsuccessful. Or perhaps he felt that landscape and genre paintings were too confining in their visions, one being limited to nature and the other focusing

on man. The elements that Whitman would later admire in Millet's and Eakins' works were present in mid-nineteenth century American art, but not all on one canvas. Whitman wanted an art that combined Church's epic sweep and the genre painters' depictions of the common man, an art that embraced the individual, societal and universal as his poetry did. But even Whitman's poetry was not well received; he was not embraced as the national poet as he had hoped. Perhaps he simply saw painting, sculpture, and theater sharing what he perceived to be the failure of his poetry, the inability to reshape society.

Whatever the reason for his disparagement of painting, theater, and sculpture, the following statement in Democratic Vistas was as true of painters as it was of Whitman--

The great literatus will be known . . . by his cheerful simplicity, his adherence to natural standards, his limitless faith in God, his reverence, and by the absence in him of doubt, ennui, burlesque, persiflage, or any strained and temporary fashion. (414)

And the subject matter of Whitman and painters, especially Church, was the same--

Nature, true Nature, and the true idea of Nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems. . . . I do not mean the smooth walks, trimmed hedges, posys and nightingales of the English poets, but the whole orb, with its geologic history, the cosmos, carrying fire and snow, that rolls through the illimitable areas, light as a feather, though weighing billions of tons. (Whitman, Democratic 416-17)

Finally, most importantly, the purposes of painting and

Whitman's poetry were similar; as Whitman phrased it,

[to] link and tally the rational physical being of man, with the ensembles of time and space, and with this vast and multiform show, Nature, surrounding him, ever tantalizing him, equally a part, and yet not a part of him, as to essentially harmonize, satisfy, and put at rest. (Democratic 421)

These similarities are not mere coincidence.

Whitman's choice of subject matter and style were conscious decisions, based on his belief that the painter/poet was society's guide. Whitman saw the landscapes of Cole, Durand and the early luminists glorify nature and portray it as a manifestation of God's spirit, idealizing God's works so that man could see the hand of the Almighty and realize that he, too, was divinely created. He saw the people assign religious and nationalistic significance to these landscapes. He saw genre painters portray the "representative man" of the East and West, the new, democratic American. But he also saw a materialistic society lacking spirituality; the American nation did not primarily consist of these representative men, but was dominated by the greedy and manipulative. In Whitman's view Americans were not spiritually fit to inhabit the glorious land that American artists portrayed. Yet the promise of this new land and democracy was overwhelming, an opportunity for a spiritual society in a new Eden. Whitman sought to awaken soul in a materialistic American society and to reestablish that society's priorities through poetry.

This conception of poetry's function led to Whitman's first great poem, "Song of Myself," a poem which is thematically and structurally similar to the paintings of the day, in particular luminist paintings and Frederic Church's epic landscapes. Critics generally agree on its theme--Edwin Haviland Miller calls "Song of Myself" a "meditation on the nature of the self . . . the reverie of the outsider . . . who struggles to reassert the collective dream" (86); Gay Wilson Allen writes that the poem expresses the "perception of the nature of the self (the 'I' of the poem) and its relations to the world" (New 76); V. K. Chari calls it "an epic of the self set in the framework of heroic and cosmic concepts" (127); James E. Miller labels it a "mystical experience in which the individual gains sudden, fleeting insight or transcendent knowledge" (8); and Inger Christensen claims that the poem "point[s] out the underlying spiritual meaning of existence. . . . [it] reflect[s] the multifarious life of the American continent, both as regards the wider perspective and the smallest detail" (95). All of these observations also describe the themes of a luminist or epic landscape or the viewer's internal reaction when contemplating a painting like Twilight in the Wilderness. Both painting and poem are designed to illuminate the spiritual essence of nature and being.

Whitman's only possible subject matter for this

endeavor was himself. His goal was societal reform, but as he later wrote, "Even for the treatment of the universal, in politics, metaphysics, or anything, sooner or later we come down to one single, solitary soul" (Democratic 393-94). The soul he sought to portray was that of "the divine literatus" singing his cosmic vision of the new American. But first he had to remake himself, confronting the real-ideal dilemma that haunted nineteenth-century art. Whitman became the man he described in his 1855 anonymous review of Leaves of Grass--

One of the roughs, large, proud, affectionate, eating, drinking, and breeding, his costume manly and free, his face sunburnt and bearded, his postures strong and erect, his voice bringing hope and prophecy to the generous races of young and old. ("Walt Whitman and His Poems" 531)

But Whitman's brother George recalled that Walt's "association with neighbors and strangers" was something new at the time. Before that, "he was scarcely so apt to chime in--establish an acquaintance" (Traubel, "Notes" 34). That description hardly matched Whitman's characterization of himself in the review--

Right and left he flings his arms, drawing men and women with undeniable love to his close embrace, loving the clasp of their hands, the touch of their necks and breasts, and the sound of their voices. All else seems to burn up under his fierce affection for persons. ("Walt Whitman and His Poems" 537)

Walt Whitman was an average man, far from his conception of the "divine literatus." But since the "perfect man is the perfect artist," Whitman had to become that man; as artists

idealized nature in their paintings, Whitman wrote his idealized vision of a man. But this idealization was not a sham, for Whitman actually assumed and lived his new role; he became the persona of his poem, admitting as much in "So Long" when he wrote, "Camerado, this is no book, / Who touches this touches a man" (53-54). The remade Walt Whitman emerged in "Song of Myself," a poem which employed the themes and techniques of luminist art, the epic landscape, and genre painting, a poem which was written so that man could see the God in himself.

Whitman's closest tie to luminism is his depiction of nature. His conception of nature is a fusion of the real and ideal, matter and spirit, and is identical to the transcendental sublime. He had to reconcile these opposites to restore the proper balance to American life, but his theory of nature did not reconcile opposites so much as claim that they were never divided. Matter and spirit, or body and soul, are one. This unity is the basis for his entire conception of the universe. In her article, "From Spears to Leaves: Walt Whitman's Theory of Nature in 'Song of Myself,'" Diane Kepner claims, "There is a unity in the universe, according to Whitman, and it exists in every particular object at every moment in time" (184). Whitman's unity is based on a merging of science and religion. Science has "ignored or denied the soul and concentrated upon the body in order to find the basis of

our existence. [It has] taught us that what is permanent and changeless in the universe is the atom." Religion has "assumed that we must ignore or deny the body and concentrate upon the soul in order to find the truth of our being. [It] taught us that what is permanent and changeless in the universe is God or spirit" (Kepner 186). Science is a study of matter and religion is spiritual, but Whitman believed that each atom, the basic unit of science, was,

a unit composed equally of matter and "immaterial" energy; and second, that the immaterial energy within each atom makes that atom act purposely, not chaotically. It turns each atom into a provoker, a prober, a lover, always creating new forms by endlessly acting out its incessant desire for union with other atoms. (Kepner 190)

In other words, each atom is charged, is filled with Whitmanian "electricity," is made up of matter and spirit. The world is made up of an infinite number of atoms, constantly shifting and reuniting, but also constantly staying the same. According to Whitman, "To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow"¹ (404), and "To be in any form, what is that? / (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither)" (611-12). He illustrates this point by writing about animals--

They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them
plainly in their possession.

¹ All references to Whitman's poetry in this chapter are to "Song of Myself" unless otherwise noted, and will be cited parenthetically by line number.

I wonder where they get those tokens,
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop
them? (693-95)

Each "token" (atom), the smallest unit of energy, is a fusion of matter and spirit; man, made up of atoms, is a fusion of matter and spirit; and the universe, made up of an infinite number of atoms, is also a fusion. God is "the sum total of all of the energy in the universe, all purposely directed" (Kepner 191), the spirit which inhabits all things. While the individual atom is too small to be seen, and the totality of all atoms (God) is too large, man could be seen, "and the unseen is proved by the seen, / Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn" (52-53). For Whitman, an understanding of the self and the immediate surroundings leads to a deeper understanding of the mysteries of the universe.

Since every atom is composed of matter and spirit, Whitman can triumphantly claim in "Song of Myself," "I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the soul" (422); section five describes the moment when he realizes that body and soul are inseparable. That moment is the creation of the self, the moment when Walt Whitman becomes whole. Barbara Novak notes, "Behind much landscape art in America was a desire to approximate the moment of Creation itself. . . . the urge to touch origins became a quest for primal truths that would redeem the present" (Nature 47), an accurate description of what occurs in the following

lines describing the union of body and soul--

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer
morning,
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently
turn'd over upon me,
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged
your tongue to my bare-stript heart,
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till
you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and
knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my
own,
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my
own,
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers,
and the women my sisters and lovers,
And that a kelson of the creation is love . . . (87-95)

The sexual imagery of this scene reinforces the idea of constant merging and reassociation--"Urge and urge and urge, / Always the procreant urge of the world" (43-44). The individual is a small, but vital, part of the whole; Whitman states, "Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the current and index" (505). According to Whitman, "nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is" (1271), since the self is the seen and accessible part of the overall spirit that is God. His conception of nature assures him that "the hand of God is the promise of my own, . . . and the spirit of God is the brother of my own," and that everything is joined. The truth of his vision provides him with a kind of "cosmic consciousness" which he describes in Section 33--

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd
at,
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,

What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars
of the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-
gaps,
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,
I am afoot with my vision. (710-16)

This conception of nature is the Emersonian conception that luminist paintings portray. Luminist light floods a luminist landscape, implying spirituality everywhere and in everything. The atmosphere created by this light is very still and silent, but at the same time it is full, almost bursting with a spiritual presence. While the physical space of a luminist landscape is small, like an atom, the receding horizontal planes and the large areas devoted to light, atmosphere, and water imply a greater corresponding spiritual realm, just as to Whitman one atom or one man represents a larger totality (the seen and the unseen). This is the "transcendental sublime sensibility, a sensibility that found its roots in man's internal perception of time and space" (Powell, "Luminism" 72). Like the luminists, Whitman's perceives spirit and matter, ideal and real, merged in a totality of being.

Whitman was familiar with William Sidney Mount's Eel-Spearing at Setauket and George Caleb Bingham's Fur Traders Descending the Missouri, two early paintings employing luminist light. They no doubt appealed to him, for these genre painters depicted Whitman's "common man" in his everyday world, and through luminist light conveyed the

spirituality underlying American life. And Whitman's conception of spirituality in all things not only included nature and man, but also man's works. He realized that,

not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, sea--but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great--in this profusion of teeming humanity--in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships--these hurrying, feverish electric crowds and men, their complicated business genius (not least among the geniuses), and all this mighty, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here. (Democratic 371)

Whitman celebrates nature, man, and American civilization, believing that man's works would not destroy the treasured wilderness if employed in the proper spirit. That spirit is his primary concern; man's personal identity and his relationship with the All, the theme of luminist art, is the theme he promises at the beginning of "Song of Myself"--

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess
the origin of all poems,
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun,
(there are millions of suns left,)
You shall no longer take things at second or third
hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor
feed on the spectres in books,
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take
things from me,
You shall listen to all sides and filter them from
yourself. (33-37)

The luminist's depiction of God's all-pervading presence in nature coincides with Whitman's beliefs about God, expressed eloquently in "Song of Myself"--

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,
For I who am curious about each am not curious about
God,

(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about
God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand
God not in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful
than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four,
and each moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own
face in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every
one is sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that
wheresoe'er I go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever. (1278-
1288)

As opposed to luminist light, Whitman uses the grass
as his symbol of a spiritual presence, the "letters from
God dropt in the street." When asked by a child, "What is
the grass?" (99), he gives a variety of answers--

. . . it is the handkerchief of the Lord. (102)

I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe
of the vegetation. (105)

It may be you [grass] transpire from the breasts of
young men. (112)

It may be you [grass] are from old people, or from
offspring taken soon out of their mothers' laps.
(114)

The grass is composed of atoms which once could have been
part of all these things, and these atoms, now remerged as
grass, are still charged with "electricity," are a fusion
of matter and spirit. The grass spreads out across the
earth, Whitman's symbol of spirituality and immortal life,
for "The smallest sprout shows there is really no death"

(126). Even Whitman's title, Leaves of Grass, emphasizes this point. The grass, which is not leaves, but spears, is in a constant state of reassociation. By using the title Leaves of Grass, Whitman points out that what is now the grass will someday be leaves, or perhaps air or man himself (Kepner 199). Whitman's grass and luminist light are both symbols of "God's immanence," ("a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars" [663]) and as light floods entire luminist landscapes, Whitman's atoms flow everywhere in a spiritual universe in which man, and grass, are but "part or particle of God."

Another similarity between "Song of Myself" and luminism is the emphasis on "the stopped moment, the frozen continuum" (Novak, American 121). This is one of those places where Whitman contradicts himself, for "Song of Myself" is also a drama, or as James E. Miller phrased it, a "mystical experience in which the individual gains sudden, fleeting insight or transcendent knowledge" (8). But that single moment of insight is also Whitman's realm; he claims,

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is
now,

Nor any more heaven or hell that there is now. (40-43)

Like the luminists who sought to pull the viewer into the infinite planes of their landscapes to be part of the All, Whitman's goal was "less to state or display any theme or

thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought--there to pursue your own flight" (Whitman, Complete 3: 58). He described the poet's role using the key image of luminism--"He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing" (1855 Preface 713). The purpose of "Song of Myself" is to illuminate nature for the reader so that he will experience "the stopped moment" of transcendence for himself ("Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you, / You must travel it for yourself" [1210-11]).

In luminist paintings this effect was achieved with a lack of visible brushstroke, thereby putting the viewer in direct contact with nature, removing the artist as an intermediary. Whitman strove for the same effect, writing that "What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me" (1855 Preface 717). Like the landscape artists the poet sought "to touch origins [in] a quest for primal truth"; Whitman wrote in another anonymous review,

He [the author of Leaves of Grass] certainly leaves him [the reader] what the serpent left the woman and the man, the taste of the Paradisiac tree of the knowledge of good and evil, never to be erased again. ("Leaves of Grass: A Volume" 539)

Closely related to that single, frozen, moment of being is luminist silence, also present in "Song of Myself." Again, Whitman contradicts himself, for he is

better remembered for his "barbaric yawp [sounding] over the roofs of the world" (1333). But the poem also has moments of silence when the persona "will do nothing but listen, / To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward it" (582-83). In that moment the senses are completely open to nature and a transcendence can be achieved, or as Emerson phrases it, "the currents of the Universal Being circulate through [him]."

This insight can be the cause of silence; "Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself" (56). Whitman here uses another important symbol of luminist art, water. He viewed water and the sea as,

that suggesting dividing line, contact, junction, the solid marrying the liquid--that curious, lurking something, (as doubtless every objective form finally becomes to the subjective spirit,) which means far more than its mere first sight, grand as that is--blending the real and ideal, and each made portion of the other. (Specimen Days 138-39)

The sea "represent[s] the source and end of all" (Adams 6); it is a place where the poet can engage in his "joyful, though imagined, union with all men" (Quinlan 189).

Whitman's most famous use of this symbol in "Song of Myself" is in Section 11, where he describes this scene--

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;
Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so
lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of
the window. (199-203)

In that "vast fluid element" where the "real and ideal" merge, the woman, in her imagination, can go "Dancing and laughing" down to the shore and pass "An unseen hand . . . over their bodies" (208, 212). She too imagines her "union with all men."

Luminist landscapes depict small, intimate scenes, and although small in size, they seem to spread beyond the limits of the canvas. In contrast, the epic landscape offers dramatic views of nature that spans continents, symbolic of the era of Manifest Destiny and unlimited aspirations. Church's art demands a new conception of space in accordance with "the New World's space. . . . The old ratios of height to width . . . are rejected as too confining for Americans" (Huntington, Landscapes 69). Whitman's vista is as large, if not larger, encompassing "Endless unfolding of words of ages!" to become "the word En-Masse" (477-78). "Song of Myself" contains "multitudes" (1326)--

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as
well as forward sluing,
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or
object missing,
Absorbing all to myself and for this song. (232-34)

Nor is the persona limited by time and space--

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-
wash'd babe, and am not contain'd between my hat
and boots,

And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one
good,
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts
all good. (133-35)

Like a Church landscape, Whitman "encompass[es] worlds and volumes of worlds" (565). While "Song of Myself" contains a luminist sensibility, it also contains an epic landscape's scope.

Although Frederic Church is remembered primarily for his epic landscapes, his use of light (in, for example, Twilight in the Wilderness) also places him in the luminist school. However, Church, like his teacher Thomas Cole, portrayed dramas in his landscapes instead of capturing that single moment of being. Twilight in the Wilderness is infused with a luminous, celestial light, but by using the traditional elements of the picturesque, Church shifted the focus of the landscape from a frozen moment in time to a process of becoming.

Twilight in the Wilderness features the traditional elements of the sublime, "nature's threatening visage," in the foreground--fallen trees and gnarled stumps. The sublime represents death and destruction while inspiring awe and fear of the unknown. But the centerpiece of the landscape is a calm river, reflecting heaven's light. The earth and the sky seem to merge as the light is reflected in the water. Those two elements, water and light, regenerate the scene, as the viewer's eyes move away from death and destruction to the beautiful and a moment of calm when the viewer can feel the spirit within himself (God's presence) that is immortal. Bryan Jay Wolf, writing about

the Durand landscape Kindred Spirits, which also has a "circular substructure [in] the foreground" presenting elements of the sublime, and then opens into a beautiful pastoral view where Bryant and Cole are protected in a "womblike enclosure," asserts that

the immersion of self in the world of nature and natural process [the foreground] leads only to death without a corresponding movement through (and perhaps beyond) nature to the truths--those values and spiritual laws--that nature incarnates. ("All the World's" 329)

Whitman's theory of nature also refigures the sublime into the beautiful in much the same way as Durand's Kindred Spirits and Church's Twilight in the Wilderness. Death is the great theme of Whitman's poetry; he wrote in Democratic Vistas that we need "great poems of death." These poems are needed to explain that "death is not the ending, as was thought, but rather the real beginning--and that nothing ever is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul, nor matter" (420). He illustrates this principle in "Song of Myself"--

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but
that does not offend me,
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd
breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of
many deaths,
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times
before.) (1294-98)

Whitman's poetry equates death and life ("Has any one supposed it lucky to be born? / I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it" [131-32]) so

the reader will comprehend his immortality in nature around him--

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not
wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and
luckier. (126-32)

This personal transcendence that Twilight in the Wilderness offers distinguishes it from Church's epic landscapes like Cotopaxi and Niagara, which speak not only to the individual but to all of society. Cotopaxi, that "geological parable," reflects Church's interest in science, an interest that Whitman shared. By merging an exacting study of nature with his religious vision, Church put "scientism firmly in the service of religion" and produced a landscape that spoke of the unity of all creation.

Whitman also saw science and religion working together. His philosophy was similar to art critic Jackson Jarves', who wrote, "As nature is His art, so science is the progressive disclosure of His soul" (40). He praised science in the 1855 Preface, writing,

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The outset and remembrance are there . . . there the arms that lifted him first and brace him best . . . there he returns after all his goings and comings. The sailor and traveller . . . the anatomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and

their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . . of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. (718)

He echoed those thoughts in "Song of Myself"--

I accept Reality and dare not question it,
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact
demonstration! Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and
brances of lilac,
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made
a grammar of the old cartouches,
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown
seas,
This is the geologist, this works with the scalpel, and
this is a mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my
dwelling,
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling. (483-92)

The area of Whitman's dwelling was not the exacting world of science, but was poetry, a place where he could examine the similarities between objects and find common threads that link man, nature, and God. Whitman's interest was in "association," not in the scientific study of specifics (Kepner 197). "Song of Myself" is about Humboldt's "one great whole animated by the breath of life."

Just as Whitman leaves science behind to move to "an area of [his] dwelling," so he leaves old religions behind. His thoughts on the ancient gods are,

Taking them all for what they were worth and not a cent
more,

Admitting they were alive and did the work of their
days,
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to
rise and fly and sing for themselves,) Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better
in myself, . . . (1033-36)

And of priests, he writes,

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of
faiths,
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between
ancient and modern, . . . (1096-98)

But it is time to move beyond the old religions and the
teachings of the old priests; Whitman claims,

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is
done. They may wait awhile . . . perhaps a generation
or two . . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed
shall take their place . . . the gangs of kosmos and
prophets en masse shall take their place. A new order
shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and
every man shall be his own priest. (1855 Preface 727)

This "superior breed" will recognize the order of the
universe as Whitman has and worship in "the churches of men
and women." They will recognize the "divinity of
themselves" and be "interpreters of men and women and of
all events and things" (1855 Preface 727). They will see
the facts of science and the spirituality of religion
merged in a totality--as scientist Alexander von Humboldt
phrased it, "a unity in diversity of phenomena; a harmony,
blending together all created things, however dissimilar in
form and attributes; one great whole . . . animated by the
breath of life." Even after 1859 and Origin of Species,
Whitman's belief in the compatibility of science and
religion was not shaken, as "Passage to India" attested.

Like Church in Cotopaxi, Whitman moved beyond natural science and old religions to create a new vision of life.

Since Whitman, like Church, saw a unity in nature, he also shared an attention to detail, to all those things which blend together to create that unity. Spectators often attended showings of Church's landscapes with binoculars and scanned sections of the landscapes. This close inspection revealed myriad details. Whitman provided the reader with catalogs of people and experiences, for as Church viewed specifics as representative of a larger unity, Whitman saw all people related as part of a larger whole ("In all people I see myself" [401]). He wrote of the moment of his creation, "My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air" (6), and Whitman believed this true of all people. Therefore he believed that they were all part of him--

And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to
them,
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.
(327-29)

As a result, Whitman's landscape is also crowded; it contains all types of people, "A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker, / Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest" (347-48).

And Whitman, like Church, pulls the audience directly into the work, including him in that unity and forcing him to react directly to the experience of the poem. Whitman

states,

. . . each man and each woman of you I lead upon a
knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and
the public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself. (1207-11)

In a Church landscape the viewer's perspective is slightly raised with no solid foreground beneath his feet, a device Church borrowed from his teacher Thomas Cole. As a result the viewer is immersed in the scene, becoming the new man in Church's New Eden.

"Song of Myself" bears another similarity to the work of Church's mentor, Thomas Cole. Cole's early landscapes enacted a drama of personal growth. In Cole's Snow Squall, Winter Landscape in the Catskills, the viewer must move through a dark, desolate valley and confront "the moment of angst and unmasking when the individual finds himself alone and confronted with a world that is an estranged version of himself." Whitman duplicates this experience in "Song of Myself," an experience James E. Miller labels "the dark night of the soul" (21).

"The dark night of the soul" begins in Section 33, as Whitman achieves transcendence--"now I see it is true . . . I am afoot with my vision" (710, 716). This vision transports Whitman across continents--"Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead" (722), "Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island" (748),

"Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical firs" (722). But then the images become darker and more threatening as the poet descends into Cole's "abysmal valley," the depths of the human soul. He becomes "the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken" (847), tells the story "of the murder of the four hundred and twelve young men" (896), witnesses "The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw" (942), and suffers with the cholera victim: "My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people retreat" (956).

But Whitman, like the viewer of Snow Squall who traverses the valley and is rewarded with a pastoral scene, emerges from "the dark night of the soul"--

Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an
average unending procession,
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary
lines,
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth
. . . (969-972)

He realizes his error, "a usual mistake" (962), the "exclusion of the Divine, the Infinite." The gruesome encounters and realities in "the dark night of the soul" are "illusion, false reality" (James E. Miller 25)--

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of
doubtful news, the fitful events;
These come to me days and nights and go from me again,
But they are not the Me myself. (72-74)

The real "Me, myself" has gone beyond the summit of Cole's centerground peak and is spiritually united with the

beautiful landscape depicted in the background; he recognizes the suffering and darkness in the world but transcends it and leaves the moment of despair behind.

In Cole's world, however, while the viewer might temporarily be in touch with God through nature, the cycle of life ultimately ended in death and destruction. Cole possessed none of Church's and Whitman's optimism about society. Unlike Church, whose landscapes portrayed transcendence and new beginnings, and Whitman, who believed in a regenerative nature, Cole looked to traditional religion for his salvation. Whitman borrowed his portrayal of personal growth and added to it immortality here on earth as part of the process of nature.

These important beliefs and techniques of American landscape artists--their intense nationalism and celebration of America; their conception of God in all things, manifested through luminist light; their refiguring of the sublime into the beautiful, seeing death as just one part of the cycle of spiritual life; Church's scope and merging of science and religion to form a unified conception of nature where all things have their place; and Cole's landscapes of personal growth--are concepts that Walt Whitman incorporated into "Song of Myself." As American landscape painters portrayed America so that people could see the unity of God, nature and themselves, so Whitman portrayed the American soul, striving to show

that man is divine and to change the materialistic course of American democracy.

Whitman saw "comradeship" as the savior for American democracy. This comradeship was based on people recognizing their interrelatedness and creating strong emotional bonds, not devoting their time and energies solely to making money. The common man was Whitman's hope, and he believed that painting and poetry should glorify the average man. He recognized his relationship with all people ("In all people I see myself" [401]; "I acknowledge the duplicates of myself" [1080]), and therefore genre painting held particular interest for him. "Song of Myself" is filled with genre scenes which capture the spirit of Americans in their everyday environments, reflecting Whitman's interest in being "the poet of the Body and . . . the poet of the soul" (422).

Like genre painters, Whitman believed, the genius of the United States is . . . always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships--the freshness and candor of their physiognomy--the pictureque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom--their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean . . . their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy--their susceptibility to a slight--the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors . . . their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness . . . these too are unrhymed poetry. (1855 Preface 710)

The actions of these people fill the landscape of "Song of Myself"--"The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or

sharpens his knife at the stall in the market" (217); "The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags underneath on its tied-over chain" (225); "The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders through a countenance white as a sheet" (932); the marksmen of George Caleb Bingham's Shooting for the Beef who "takes his position, levels his piece" (283-84); and the trapper of Alfred Jacob Miller's The Trapper's Bride who marries an Indian girl (185-88). These people are Whitman's America, the "brothers and sisters" (1316) whom he wished to reach.

Whitman agreed with Mount that "A painter's studio should be everywhere . . . high life and low life," and Bingham's belief that "Artists . . . must study nature in all her varied phases." Yet even these artists did not portray man as naturalistically as Whitman did. Whitman's belief in the divine nature of all things, coupled with his celebration of the common man, led to passages like

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be
the spread of my own body, or any part of it,
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of
my life!
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be
you!
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of
guarded duplicate eggs! it shall be you! (527-35)

Believing that "Divine am I inside and out" (524), Whitman also believed that these lines were not obscene but were

merely a celebration of the physical, an inseparable part of all people. With lines like these Whitman joined Horatio Greenough's battle against prudery. But critics who rejected Greenough's statue of Washington because of a naked breast and who labeled Bingham's The Jolly Flatboatmen undignified were by no means ready to accept Whitman's depiction of man and his claim--"Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd" (518).

Whitman believed his naturalistic portrait of the self was pure, since man was part of God ("Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest" [58]). Perhaps Whitman was influenced by Henry Kirke Brown's naturalistic sculptures, and, like Brown, was determined to portray Americans as they were and not as an abstract ideal. In any case, Whitman's naturalism went far beyond that of the genre painters, but he did learn from them that the middle or lower class American, like Walter Libbey's boy playing the flute, was the appropriate vehicle for his ideas.

Whitman's conception of man and his role in the universe, his desire to see individual, societal, and universal themes portrayed in painting and poetry, is very much like Horatio Greenough's and Ralph Waldo Emerson's aesthetics, which also had three levels. "Song of Myself" is primarily about the nature of the individual and his growth; it is a celebration of the self, body and soul. It

is an attempt to bridge the gap between the real and ideal, a journey the poet completed, but then he stopped, waiting for the reader to follow. Equally important is the individual's bond to his fellow man, for we are all "the journeywork of the stars" (663), and if the poet's thoughts "are not yours as much as mine they are nothing" (356). Whitman's ideal democracy is based on the spiritual interrelationship of all people, "loving comradeship" (Democratic 415n). Finally, man, his creations, and nature merge into a totality, the result of the actions of all time, lives and deaths, remergings and reassociations. Science and religion provide the framework, but they are just background to that spiritual moment that is Whitman's "now." The sublime is refigured into the beautiful in each cycle of nature that will be repeated infinitely, for there is no death; nature and man are filled with immortal soul. And as society's seer, Whitman, like Church, provides the "gigantic and generous treatment" (1855 Preface 710) that his conception of the universe demands.

This vision of life that "Song of Myself" presents is remarkably like the vision that nineteenth-century painters portray on their canvases. It is the prophet-seer's vision of America as the promised land and Americans as the chosen people. Art (painting and poetry) was the vehicle by which this vision would reach the masses, and in that sense this art failed, for America did not become an Edenic paradise.

The mid-century optimism present in American landscapes and the 1855 Leaves of Grass was destroyed by the Civil War. After the war, American art went in new directions. But the painting of mid-century and the poetry of Whitman was not a failure, for history works in cycles, and the vision they expressed has returned and reasserted itself in the American psyche.

CHAPTER 4

ARTISTIC THEMES AND TECHNIQUES IN WALT WHITMAN'S EARLY POETRY

"Song of Myself" is a poem which defines the nature of the individual, society, and the universal, and Whitman continued exploring these themes. As a result, he continued to utilize the ideas and techniques of mid-nineteenth-century art. The "Children of Adam" poems are a case in point. Whitman makes these claims in "Song of Myself"--

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any
man hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none
shall be less familiar than the rest. (57-58)

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler
babes,
(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant
republics.) (1006-7)

He went on to develop these themes in the "Children of Adam" poems, stating that "The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred" ("I Sing the Body" 84), and if people could overcome their prudishness and recognize their true natures then they would be fit to reinhabit Eden.

Whitman reversed Cole's depiction of Adam and Eve in Expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The pessimist Cole portrayed Adam with his hand held to his forehead in awe-filled trepidation and Eve with her head down in shame, beginning their journey into the wilderness. Cole accepted

the traditional myth that Adam's and Eve's disobedience and sins of the flesh were responsible for their being cast out of Eden, but Whitman reversed it, believing that through recognition and fulfillment of the physical aspects of life the individual could regain an Adamic state. Like Cole, Whitman believed "the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly," but unlike Cole, Whitman envisioned mankind following his precedent and "To the garden the world anew ascending" ("To the Garden the World" 1).

"Children of Adam" shares this vision of a new Eden with many of the mid-nineteenth-century American landscapists. A late Cole painting, The Oxbow, is a forerunner of future works. In The Oxbow the traditional elements of the sublime give way to an expansive view of an Edenic scene, the lush Connecticut River valley. Cole died before fully exploring this new direction in his art, but the landscapes of Asher Durand and Frederic Church continued Cole's depiction of an American paradise.

Durand painted idyllic scenes like The Beeches based on his philosophy of a strict adherence to nature and looking upon nature with "a childlike reverence." The same could be said for Whitman's depiction of the new Adam. He would recognize his physical nature as natural and pure. He would not feel shame in the pleasures of the body, but he would understand that "All things please the soul, but

these [the pleasures of the body] please the soul well" ("I Sing the Body" 51). The shame and fear of Adam and Eve in Cole's Expulsion are expurgated from Whitman's Eden, as he urges, "Be not afraid of my body" ("As Adam Early in the Morning" 5). The "Children of Adam" poems restore Adam to Eden, just as in The Oxbow the viewer traverses the wilderness and regains Eden. Whitman's Adam would turn and walk through the portal separating Eden from the wilderness in Cole's Expulsion, and he would blend in perfectly with sheep and shepherd in The Beeches.

But a major difference between Whitman's and the landscapists' Edens is that Whitman's vision is of "the new garden the West, the great cities calling" ("Ages and Ages" 5). Whitman believed that the new Eden could be established in the midst of a modern society. Man's spirit would be the basis for the "new garden," not materialistic wealth, so outward appearances would not matter (James E. Miller, Jr. 44).

The age's vision of a social Eden was presented by the genre painters. Scenes like Bingham's Jolly Flatboatmen and Mount's Farmer's Nooning capture the "Adamic spirit, always present when man engages in innocent physical action unself-consciously without shame" (James E. Miller, Jr. 43), and rival Whitman's description in Section 3 of "I Sing the Body Electric" of the eighty-year-old farmer. But nothing in mid-century American art parallels Whitman's

frank and intimate sexual imagery. Perhaps he was carrying out Horatio Greenough's principles--

The normal development of beauty is through action to completeness. . . . If I be told that such a system as mine would produce nakedness, I accept the omen. In nakedness I behold the majesty of the essential, instead of the trappings of pretension. The agendum is not diminished; it is infinitely extended. We shall have grasped with tiny hands the standard of Christ, and borne it into the academy, when we shall call upon the architect and sculptor and painter, to seek to be perfect even as our father is perfect. The assertion that the human body is other than a fit exponent and symbol of the human being, is a falsehood, I believe. I believe it to be false on account of the numerous palpable falsehoods which have been necessary in order to clinch it. (75-76)

But Greenough's words were only theory, while Whitman took the audacious step of applying that theory in his poetry.

A more exact parallel exists between Church's The Andes of Ecuador (1855) and The Heart of the Andes (1859) and Whitman's "Children of Adam" poems. The only poem in the 1855 Leaves of Grass contained in "Children of Adam" is "I Sing the Body Electric." While this poem's theme is the Adamic condition and the purity of the body, it does not include the garden of Eden motif that is such an important part of "Children of Adam" in its final arrangement. According to James E. Miller, Jr., "The first, eighth, and last of the sixteen poems are given over entirely to this myth [the garden], and it permeates and gives heightened significance to all the other poems" (36). The first and eighth poems, "To the Garden the World" and "Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals" were added in 1860, and the

sixteenth poem, "As Adam Early in the Morning," was added in 1861. These poems relate the unabashed sexuality of poems like "I Sing the Body Electric" and "A Woman Waits For Me" to the overall myth--a restoration of the Adamic spirit which will bring about a new Eden here and now. That spirit has traveled "Ages and ages returning at intervals, / Undestroy'd, wandering immortal" ("Ages and Ages" 1-2) and now lives in Whitman. He says to us, "Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass" ("As Adam" 4), urging us to become Adams with him and create "the new garden the West" ("Ages and Ages" 5).

Frederic Church created that garden in The Andes of Ecuador and The Heart of the Andes, landscapes that were displayed in New York at the same time Whitman's garden was taking shape in his mind. Writing of the viewer's reaction to The Andes of Ecuador, David Huntington claims,

Like Adam at the dawn of human consciousness the beholder awakens to the beauty of the earth which has been so long preparing for him. . . . As he 'soars' suspended between earth and heaven in the presence of Andes of Ecuador, the spectator becomes a "demi-god." ("Church and Luminism" 158)

And The Heart of the Andes displays "'Arcady,' 'Elysium,' 'Eden.' . . . The elemental palette of Paradise, in the glory and the flux of the millennium. This is the visionary art of the uncommon common man." Like Whitman's poems, this painting "declared that the divine and the material are one and the same . . . Here there is no real death, only 'that death which is but the commencement of a

new state of being" (Huntington, Landscapes 52-53). Most importantly, Whitman and Church employed the same symbol to convey their themes. Be it Whitman's "pent-up aching rivers" ("From Pent-up" 1) or the streams that cascade through the center of Church's Andes' scenes, water is the magic conveyor of rebirth and regeneration.

Both of Church's scenes feature crosses, symbolic of a new beginning for mankind in the garden. While Church's myth is more traditional than Whitman's, their portrayals are parallel, a world recast as Eden infused with God's presence (soul) and man's presence (body). In both The Andes of Ecuador and The Heart of the Andes mountain ranges reach up to the heavens, implying the union of God and man. Streams flow from the mountains into the tropical gardens below, "giver[s] of life, [which] will pass on to the sea and thence again to the mountain summit[s]," proving that "Regeneration is immanent in the processes of nature" (Huntington, Landscapes 52-53).

Whitman's streams are the "pent-up aching rivers" that flow through his body, the product of thousands of years and the impetus for thousands more, the aching sex drive that carries humanity forward. He writes of woman,

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and
 America,
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and
 athletic girls, new artists, musicians, and
 singers,

The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their
turn,
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-
spendings,
I shall expect tham to interpenetrate with others, as I
and you interpenetrate now,
I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of
them, as I count on the fruits of the gushing
showers I give now,
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life,
death, immortality, I plant so lovingly now. ("A
Woman Waits" 31-39)

Whitman's streams, like Church's which flow from the
heavens and give sustenance to man, are physical and
spiritual, for to Whitman the body is the soul; the streams
are regenerators of life in an eternal garden which all
people could inhabit if they recognized their true natures.

Whitman continues his use of water/river/sea imagery
in "Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd." In "I Sing the
Body Electric," he refers to the sea as a "diffuse float"
from which "matter has cohered together" (93). Then in
"Out of the Rolling Ocean" Whitman addresses a lover as a
"drop" who has come "Out of the rolling ocean" (1). He
writes to this lover,

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,
Return in peace to the ocean my love,
I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much
separated,
Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how
perfect! ("Out of the Rolling Ocean" 6-9)

Again the sea serves as a mystic pool where spirits merge,
just as it did for the solitary woman and twenty-eight
bathers in "Song of Myself." Whitman's "pent-up aching
rivers" and Church's mountain streams eventually empty into

the sea, "the oceanic womb of all" (Adams 6), where they are recycled and the process of life begins anew.

Whether Whitman viewed Church's The Heart of the Andes and The Andes of Ecuador is a matter of pure conjecture. However, the paintings attracted a huge amount of attention in newspapers and by word of mouth at a time when Whitman lived in New York. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mark Twain, among many others, commented on Church's work (Huntington, Landscapes 52). It is difficult to believe Whitman was not familiar with the paintings.

In any case, Whitman's development of the "Children of Adam" section from a single poem to a cluster built around the theme of man in the garden occurred at the same time Church displayed his two paintings of tropical paradise. Although their themes coincide, Church's focus was broader, as his huge landscapes portrayed a universal garden. Whitman was more concerned, in both the "Children of Adam" and "Calamus" poems, with individual perceptions and social relationships. The "Calamus" poems continue to advocate a return to Eden, but in "Calamus" Eden takes the form of an idealistic democracy based on male "comradeship."

Whitman's program of building an Edenic democracy is clearly stated in the "Calamus" poem "For You O Democracy"--

I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone
upon,

I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades. (2-5)

This Eden will be built on "adhesiveness" ("Not Heaving" 16), the loving friendship between men. While "Children of Adam" celebrates the sexual urge and glorifies motherhood, "Calamus" clearly states the superiority of manly attachment. The "Calamus" poem "Fast Anchor'd Eternal O Love!" emphasizes the physical attraction in heterosexual love--"O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought of you!" (2). But the love of men is more spiritual--"I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man, / O sharer of my roving life" ("Fast Anchor'd 5-6). The foundation of Whitman's democracy would be manly love, for he places women in traditional roles. Although it is "as great to be a woman as to be a man," Whitman repeatedly glorifies the mothering role--"there is nothing greater than the mother of men" ("Song of Myself" 426-27). Women were fit instruments to receive "the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these States" ("A Woman Waits for Me" 28), but only "the manly love of comrades" ("For You O Democracy" 9) could bring about Whitman's "Third stage" of democracy.

The preparation for the spiritual involvement adhesiveness entails is harsh. Whitman warns,

The way is suspicious, the results uncertain, perhaps
destructive,
You would have to give up all else, I alone would
expect to be your sole and exclusive standard,

Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity
to the lives around you would have to be abandon'd
. . . ("Whoever You Are" 7-10)

The follower would have to give up the materialistic urges Whitman railed against in Democratic Vistas; he would have to open his soul to his comrades; he would have to undergo an intense self-examination. To become Whitman's disciple the reader would not only have to accept the poet's philosophy but would also have to duplicate the poet's experiences so that his understanding of his new life is complete (Francis 19).

Whitman describes his own initiation into a new way of life in "These I Singing in Spring." He is collecting "tokens . . . for lovers" (1, 14)--"Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass the gates, / Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not the wet" (4-5). Once again using water as a place of mystic joining, Whitman merges with the spirits of his friends, dead and alive--

Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around
me,
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace
my arms or neck,
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker
they come, a great crowd, and I in the middle,
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with
them,
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever
is near me . . . ("These I Singing" 10-14)

Significantly, this transcendence occurs after the poet has "pass[ed] the gates [of] the garden the world" ("These I

Singing" 4); it is a spiritual encounter in which love transcends death and the spirits of lovers can be reunited--("O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again never to separate from me" ["These I Singing" 19])).

Since death is the ultimate merger with the universe when man's atoms will reassociate in uncountable new combinations, Whitman views death as "the real reality," since all things are inextricably linked, and life as only a "show of appearances" ("Scented Herbage" 33, 36). In death the poet's spirit would be united with his lovers' spirits; he would no longer be alone "In paths untrodden / . . . Here by myself away from the clank of the world" ("In Paths Untrodden" 1, 8). Whitman almost seems to prefer death--

O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my
chant of lovers, I think it must be for death,
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the
atmosphere of lovers,
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines
to prefer,
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes
death most,)
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely
the same as you mean . . . ("Scented Herbage"
12-16)

Whitman's "leaves" do "mean precisely the same" thing as death. They preach that death is not an end but a beginning because we are all vital parts of the larger totality that is God. Only by recognizing the true nature of the universe can man find fulfillment.

It is this internal perception of the universe that is the primary subject of the "Calamus" poems. Whitman's inner journey, which brings him to the realization that all things in the universe are inextricably merged, is experienced "In the growth by the margins of pond-waters" ("In Paths Untrodden" 2) and then in the pond as Whitman wades in. This inner journey prepares him for "a voyage on the sea of the Collective Unconscious" (Francis 22). "Calamus" documents the new-world man, fresh from his voyage and proselytizing to the world.

The "voyage on the sea of the Collective Unconscious" that Whitman takes the reader on in the "Calamus" poems is also the journey of the viewer of a luminist painting. The viewer is pulled into a world where luminist light fills every corner, signifying God's all-pervading presence. The light reflects off the water, its mirror image, and both worlds are part of the Emersonian Oversoul that encompasses all things. Like the poet in the "Calamus" poems, the viewer of a luminist painting, caught in the horizontal planes that extend from the sea up to infinity, realizes that the infinite is but an extension of the present, and there is no beginning or end but a world of constant flux.

Whitman expresses this perception of the world in the final "Calamus" poem, "Full of Life Now." The poem is written "To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence, / To you yet unborn these, seeking you" (3-4). The

poet tells this new reader,

When you read these I that was visible am become
invisible,
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,
seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and
become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I
am now with you.) ("Full of Life" 5-8)

In the Whitmanian vision of the world, the poet is still
with us in some form, and perhaps is even a part of us.

But Whitman also has his moment of doubt in the
"Calamus" poem, "Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances,"
wondering if "we may be deluded, / . . . That may-be
identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only / . . .
and the real something has yet to be known" (2, 4, 6). But
he takes reassurance in "dear friends" (10)--

When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long
while holding me by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that
words and reason hold not, surround us and pervade
us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I
am silent, I require nothing further . . . ("Of
The Terrible Doubt" 11-13)

Once again, "the unseen is proved by the seen" ("Song of
Myself" 53]), as that moment of communion with a "comrade"
is proof enough for Whitman that the universe is built
around love ("a kelson of the creation is love" ["Song of
Myself" 95]). That moment settles his doubts; "He ahold of
my hand has completely satisfied me" ("Of The Terrible
Doubt" 16).

This adhesive love which Whitman believes should be

the ruling passion of society, based on man's recognition of the universe as a spiritual unity, is the theme of the "Calamus" poems. It is not only an individual perception that he is preaching, but he hoped to inspire a new Eden, an idealistic democracy, to replace the society he called "cankered, crude, superstitious and rotten."

Unfortunately, this vision never came to pass. Democratic Vistas is evidence of Whitman's frustration in trying to instill a new social order. Society continued to be "an almost complete failure in its social aspects, . . . [in] religious, moral, literary, and aesthetic results" (370). This failure must have been horribly frustrating for Whitman--in effect, a personal failure. He wrote in the 1855 Preface, "The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it" (729). But the country was oblivious to Whitman's vision.

This failure led to moments of self-doubt, dramatized in poems like "Of The Terrible Doubt of Appearances." There Whitman is reassured by the loving touch of a friend. "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is also a poem of reaffirmation. Whitman utilizes an economic symbol, the ferry, and "translates the dollar sign, the money figure which actually stimulated urban activity, into the poetic figures of water and sun, and so instills soul into his city" (Thomas 109).

The poem is framed by sections on appearances, what

Whitman earlier called a "show." The poet wonders at these appearances,

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes,
how curious you are to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that
cross, returning home, are more curious to me than
you suppose . . . (3-4)

In 1855 the ferry carried the upper-crust of New York society to their fashionable new homes on Brooklyn Heights. Many of these wealthy people moved to Brooklyn for the lower tax rates (Thomas 106). These citizens were symbols of the materialistic ills that Whitman complained of, and they must have been "curious" indeed to the poet. In order to reaffirm his "meaning" ("Crossing" 97), he painted a transcendent, luminist vision, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," another "voyage on the sea of the Collective Unconscious." His conclusion was that "Appearances [are a] necessary film [that] envelop the soul" and that those appearances, "beautiful dumb ministers, / . . . Great or small, . . . furnish . . . parts toward the soul" ("Crossing" 126, 132).

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is set at twilight, "sun there half an hour high" (2). Twilight was a special time for luminist painters, as seen in many of their works: Sanford Gifford's Sunset (1863); Church's Twilight, Short Arbiter Twixt Day and Night (1850), Sunset (1856), and Twilight in the Wilderness; and John Kensett's Sunset, Camel's Hump, Vermont (1851). At sunset "the sun . . . appears closest to earth as it touches the horizon. Since

the sun is traditionally associated with the divine, twilight implies God immanent on earth" (Adams 3-4). And the spectacular colors of twilight seen in a work like Twilight in the Wilderness are also present in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." Whitman describes scenes that he has witnessed when crossing the ferry--

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in
the air floating with motionless wings,
oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their
bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging
toward the south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round
the shape of my head in the sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-
westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with
violet . . . (27-35)

Light is the element "which unifies these different timescapes into a single landscape" (Thomas 103). And the light will also unite the present and future--"Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me, or the men and women generations after me!" ("Crossing" 103). Whitman creates a transcendent scene ("time nor place--distance avails not" [20]) through the use of light.

Whitman also employs one of his and the luminists' favorite symbols, water. The opening line of the poem sets the stage--"Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!" ("Crossing" 1). He uses the sea as a symbol just as he did in "I Sing the Body Electric" where he called the ocean a

"diffuse float" which is the source of all matter. Here he writes, "I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution" ("Crossing" 62). The "oceanic womb of all" is at high tide, bringing to mind the cycle of birth, death and renewal. The river is symbolic of that cycle, as Whitman rides "The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far away" ("Crossing" 10). The poet realizes that although the river will carry him away, "others . . . are to follow." He writes,

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from
shore to shore,
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and
west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and
east,
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross,
the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years
hence, others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-
tide, the falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.
("Crossing" 11, 13-19)

Using river and sea imagery, Whitman again unites past, present and future in a frozen moment of time.

Unlike the luminists, however, Whitman includes people in his art. His moment of spiritual transcendence must also be a moment of spiritual joining with mankind. He writes,

The men and women I saw were all near to me,
Others the same--others who look back on me because I
look'd forward to them,
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-
night.) ("Crossing" 51-53)

The only artistic parallel to Whitman's luminist landscape

filled with people are works like Mount's Eel-Spearing at Setauket, Bingham's Fur Trader's Descending the Missouri, and Robert Salmon's Boston Harbor from Constitution Wharf (1833), a landscape that depicts dozens of sailors and dockhands on the wharf and tall clipper ships. These paintings employ luminist light as a backdrop to everyday American scenes, illuminating not only the atmosphere but also people with a spiritual light. Whitman achieves this effect also with the image of "the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water" ("Crossing" 33). This line combines light, water and man to create a scene illustrating the Emersonian principle that man is "part or particle of God."

Another characteristic of luminist art that "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" shares is the frozen moment in time. That silent, still moment "represents not a void but a palpable space, in which everything happens while nothing does" (Novak, "On Defining" 28). Throughout the poem Whitman is standing by the ferry's rail. The entire poem is a psychological journey, as the images are his thoughts of past ferry rides and future travelers, which lead to his vision of the fusion of time. The reaffirmation occurs in that "palpable space," not as a result of any drama. Finally, in section nine, Whitman releases the frozen elements of the poem with a series of commands that last nineteen lines. He begins,

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with
the ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your
splendor me, or the men and women generations
after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of
passengers! ("Crossing" 101-4)

Until this point the river, tide, waves, clouds, and people
were stopped for an instant while the poet meditated upon
their natures. Now he releases these participants so that
the cycle of life can continue. The moment of darkness
that he describes in section six is now forgotten in the
transcendent vision; like the journey undertaken by a
viewer of Thomas Cole's Snow Squall, Winter Landscape in
the Catskills, Whitman has passed the middleground peak,
overcome "the moment of angst and unmasking," and now
experiences a mystical union with nature.

That union occurs in section eight, where Whitman
summarizes the key images of the poem. First he recalls
the sights--

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me
than mast-hemm'd Manhattan?
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in
the twilight, and the belated lighter? ("Crossing"
92-94)

Then he reasserts his union with his fellow man,

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand,
and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly
by my highest name as I approach?
What is more subtle than this which ties me to the
woman or man that looks in my face? ("Crossing"
95-96)

And finally it is this tie "Which fuses me into you now,

and pours my meaning into you? ("Crossing" 97). Like a luminist landscape, these lines are constructed in a series of horizontal planes, first the sights, then people, then the future. But they are all part of the same scene in Whitman's mind and they all melt together, unified in one continuum by the spirit (luminist light) which pervades everything. After describing this continuum there is no need for further contemplation, for an acceptance of the poet's "meaning" occurs on an instinctive, emotional level--

We understand then do we not?
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not
accepted?
What the study could not teach--what the preaching
could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?
("Crossing" 98-100)

What has been understood, communicated and reaffirmed through Whitman's "imaginative fusion" (James E. Miller, Jr. 80) is his conception of nature. Appearances, which were so "curious" to the poet, are now "receive[d] . . . with free sense at last"; they too are "perfection" ("Crossing" 127, 130). Using the techniques of luminist art, Whitman creates a luminist vision in poetic form, a merger of matter and spirit which is timeless.

While "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is a poem of reaffirmation, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" is Whitman's drama of becoming. At first glance "Out of the Cradle" appears to share the qualities of luminist art, especially the first song of the mockingbirds by the

seashore--

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together. (32-40)

The sun, sea, and spiritual oneness of the mockingbirds could comprise a luminist painting, but the scene is quickly disrupted by the disappearance of the female. What results is a drama identical to the drama in Thomas Cole's Snow Squall, Winter Landscape in the Catskills. Both Cole and Whitman depict "drama[s] of [their] intellectual maturation[s]"; their works are "arena[s] in which to work out the project of artistic selfhood" (Wolf, Romantic 178, 180).

Bryan Jay Wolf compares the juxtaposition of the foreground and middleground peak in Snow Squall to "an oedipal encounter." He writes, "The mountain thus appears as a paternal continuation and fulfillment of the vertical aspirations of the foreground promontory." The mist-covered valley, "a barrier of almost metaphysical proportions," separates the foreground from the peak. Wolf sees this as a metaphor for the separation of child from parent, that moment "when the individual finds himself alone and confronted with a world that is an estranged

version of himself." The individual must traverse the valley and go beyond the centerground peak in order to establish his own identity. In Snow Squall, this journey rewards the viewer with a pastoral scene, a world of beauty where harmony and order are once again established (Romantic 177-88).

However, if the viewer's eye continues to follow the pattern Cole establishes the journey becomes a cycle which ultimately ends in death. The angle of the foreground promontory pulls the viewer's eye toward the right center of the canvas, which contains the middleground peak. The almost vertical peak pulls the eye up to the background sunlight, which then flows to the left rear of the landscape. There the eye encounters mist which flows down to a desolate tree stump in the foreground, symbolic of death. Metaphorically, Snow Squall depicts the cycle of life and death, beginning with the moment of "Romantic identity formation." In that moment "the soul receives an influx of power, which it experiences in an ecstasy of liberation and release." Using that power, Cole constructs a "reintegrating myth" in the form of the beautiful (Wolf, Romantic 177-180).

"Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" depicts the same drama. Edwin Haviland Miller calls the poem "a veiled reenactment of the oedipal conflict" (178). Miller, using the same phrase as art critic Wolf, writes that "The bird,

consumed by his grief, is estranged from his environment" (177). The "outsetting bard" ("Out of the Cradle" 143) shares that estrangement, the alienation of Cole's abysmal valley. Its cause is "the first separation of infancy, the first anguish of infantile love" (Bychowski 205). But through the mockingbird's song the poet reaches an epiphany--

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting
me,
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease
perpetuating you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the
reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from
me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was
before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell
within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me. ("Out of the
Cradle" 150-59)

"The peaceful child" is no more; an identity has been formed.

But the child is still not ready to inhabit the pastoral world of Cole's landscape. First, he must create "a meaningful life out of universal psychic loss. . . . [and offer] a metaphorical and psychological order" (E. H. Miller 185). This task is accomplished when the sea, "the fierce old mother" ("Out of the Cradle" 133), a substitute for the female love denied the mockingbird and a child when he breaks away from the mother figure, whispers "the low and delicious word death, / And again death, death, death,

death" ("Out of the Cradle" 168-69). Death is the ultimate consolation since in death all elements will be remerged in the vast pool of the universe, resulting in a reunion and reunification. As Whitman wrote in "Scented Herbage of My Breast," "The high soul of lovers welcomes death most" since death is "the real reality" where "this entire show of appearances" will "dissipate."

These "appearances," the "necessary film [which] envelop[s] the soul," serve to separate human beings. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Whitman overcomes these obstacles and claims, "Not you [appearances] any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us" (128). But like a child after its separation from its mother's womb, all people are individual entities and are alienated by the nature of their beings. In Whitman's cosmos mankind shares a spiritual bond which overcomes this alienation. But that bond is broken in "Out of the Cradle," and the poet learns the pain of alienation. The bird is adrift, a "singer solitary" (150), for he unsuccessfully attempts to reform his bond with his mate. The poet's consolation for life's alienation is death, the ultimate spiritual merger. Another consolation is the merger he achieves through his artistic vision of the universe's true order, where all things are interconnected, expressed as luminist vision in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." In that poem the poet is truly the "uniter of here and hereafter" ("Out of the Cradle" 20),

bringing the same spirituality to life that he envisions in death. Yet this consolation is sometimes inadequate, as Whitman yearns for a real relationship to replace the "psychological order" that he has used as a substitute, the same theme expressed in the "Calamus" poems. When the poet is consoled by the love of comrades, as in "Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances" and "When I Heard at the Close of the Day," he is content. Yet when his love is not returned, he writes,

But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is
certain one way or another,
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not
return'd,
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)
("Sometimes with One I Love" 2-4)

Poetry is a way for the "solitary singer," the phrase Gay Wilson Allen so adeptly chooses for the title of his Whitman biography, to construct a "reintegrating myth," just as Cole does in Snow Squall. But even poetry cannot totally satisfy Whitman. In "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing," he concludes that he could not bear "life without a friend a lover near" (12). Poetry is a shallow substitute, especially since Whitman's poems did not reform society as he had hoped, and his societal vision of "the manly love of comrades" ("For You O Democracy" 9) never came to be. These personal failures are at least partially responsible for Whitman's poems of darkness and despair.

"As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" is the bleakest of

Whitman's dark poems, offering no redeeming vision. It proves the earlier claim in "Song of Myself"--

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected,
dishearten'd atheistical,
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment,
doubt, despair and unbelief. (1112-14)

Whitman uses sea imagery again in "As I Ebb'd" when he claims,

I too Paumanok,
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float,
and been wash'd on your shores,
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped
island. (41-44)

But the tenor here is diametrically opposed to a poem like "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" when Whitman was riding the "Flood-tide." Now the tide has ebbed, symbolic of the separation between the "fierce old mother" and the poet; the high tide of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" occurs at a moment of unity. The poet is "but a trail of drift and debris," alienated from the father ("Paumanok") and mother figures. He writes,

I throw myself upon your breast my father,
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
I hold you so firm till you answer me something. ("As I
Ebb'd" 45-47)

But there is no answer, no reconciling "secret" ("As I Ebb'd" 50).

Nor does Whitman's art offer any comfort in this dark time. He doubts his vision and mocks himself--

Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my
mouth,

Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil
upon me I have not once had the least idea who or
what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me
stands yet untouch'd, untold, altogether
unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory
signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I
have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the
sand beneath. ("As I Ebb'd" 26-31)

According to Edwin Haviland Miller, the bleakness of "As I Ebb'd" is due to the fact that Whitman's poetry failed to fill completely "the emotional void . . . the despair and isolation he endured from day to day." Furthermore, his poems "estranged him from his family and from the common people he most admired" (46). Like Cole, who complained "I am not the painter I should have been had there been a higher taste," Whitman's poetry was not attuned to the masses he fervently hoped to attract. If Thomas Cole were to paint a landscape depicting only the desolate valley of Snow Squall, it would very likely be a visual counterpart to "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," revealing even more completely "the inner turmoil of his assumption to artistic power" (Wolf, Romantic 179).

But even Whitman's darkest moment has a hint of hope. The ocean now ebbs, but "the flow will return" ("As I Ebb'd" 51). In "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" the flow does return, taking Whitman from his lowest point to a reunion with the sea. "As I Ebb'd" only describes one point in Whitman's life; the cradle is "endlessly rocking"

and life will go on. And like Whitman, Thomas Cole also completes the cycle, although death for Cole had a different meaning than Whitman's reassociation with the universe.

While Whitman and Cole, "the heroic pessimist," shared moments of doubt, the majority of Whitman's works express a vision more attuned to Thomas Cole's pupil, "the heroic optimist" Frederic Church (Huntington, Landscapes 26). Whitman's "Song at Sunset," a poem so optimistic and joyful that it seems impossible that it was written by the same poet who wrote "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," is a poetic analog to Church's Twilight in the Wilderness. The first two stanzas recreate Church's landscape--

Splendor of ended day floating and filling me,
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,
Inflating my throat, you divine average,
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I sing.

Open mouth of my soul uttering gladness,
Eyes of my soul seeing perfection,
Natural life of me faithfully praising things,
Corroborating forever the triumph of things. (1-8)

Like the painter portraying the earth at the close of day, Whitman writes from the perspective of looking back over his life. He claims that there is not "one imperfection in the universe" ("Song at Sunset" 57). Church achieves the same effect by filling his canvas with divine light. This light is Whitman's "electricity" or soul which infuses everything--

How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon,
stars, dart on and on! -

How the water sports and sings! (surely it is alive!)
How the trees rise and stand up, with strong trunks,
 with branches and leaves!
(Surely there is something more in each of the trees,
 some living soul.)
O amazement of things--even the least particle!
O spirituality of things!
O strain musical flowing through ages and continents,
 now reaching me and America! ("Song at Sunset" 34-40)

All these things make up the "divine average," Whitman's phrase for the Godlike within us all. He celebrates, "To be this incredible God I am! / To have gone forth among other Gods, these men and women I love" ("Song at Sunset" 29-30).

But the poet does not forget death. Like the traces of the sublime in the foreground of Twilight in the Wilderness, death is present in "Song of Sunset." But there is "Good in all / . . . In the superb vistas of death" ("Song at Sunset" 15, 21). In the same manner as the sublime is refigured as the beautiful, Whitman claims "Nature continues, glory continues" ("Song at Sunset" 55), and his role is to "take [nature's] strong chords, intersperse them, and cheerfully pass them forward" ("Song at Sunset" 41).

The conclusion of "Song at Sunset" is also a reaffirmation of the power of Whitman's vision, for here he states,

Wherever I have been I have charged myself with
 contentment and triumph. . . .
O setting sun! though the time has come,
I still warble under you, if none else does,
 unmitigated adoration. (52, 59-60)

Alienation and artistic failure are no longer issues, for the poet contains a knowledge that surpasses day-to-day concerns. He looks at nature and envisions its unity. David Huntington, writing on Twilight in the Wilderness, describes the experience as "The spectator engaged in the supreme moment of cosmic time" (Landscapes 82). In one sense, the painting and poem could be products of the same mind.

"Song at Sunset" appeared in the 1860 edition of Leaves of Grass, which was interesting since Whitman was far from the end of his life and poetic output. Yet critical opinion is that the early poems are fresher and more original than the later works. Edwin Haviland Miller believes that "The 1860 edition of Leaves of Grass in many respects marks the culmination of Whitman's poetic career" (134). He praises the unity of the 1855 edition, but claims that the addition of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life," and "Calamus" distinguish the 1860 edition. More important for the purposes of this study is the fact that in these early years Whitman was closest to American art. The 1850s were years when Whitman's associations with artists flourished, and those years were spent in New York, where the poet was literally "on top" of the art world. Whitman's interest in art did not decline after 1860, for his interest was ongoing and varied. But in

December of 1862 Whitman left New York for Virginia to find his brother George, a Civil War casualty. He stayed in the hospitals attending to young men. These years were invigorating to Whitman, and his poetry reflects his new experiences. Paul Zweig calls the Civil War "the great event of Whitman's life" (20). Although the themes and techniques of American art remain a part of Whitman's poetry throughout his career (F. O. Matthiessen discusses Whitman's attempts in poems like "A Sight in Camp" and "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" to create "living pictures" in the mode of "open-air painting" [599]), these borrowings are more influential in his early poetry.

"Passage to India" is an exception, however, perhaps because, according to Whitman, it gives "freer vent and fuller expression to what, from the first, and so on throughout, more or less lurks in my writings, underneath every page, every line, every where" (Preface 1876 745n). It is also Whitman's most telling treatment of technology and its effects on nature. Whitman's welcoming of technological advancements did not jibe with artists' fears of civilization destroying God's works.

As early as 1835, Thomas Cole wrote in his "Essay on American Scenery,"

It was my intention to attempt a description of several districts remarkable for their picturesqueness and truly American character . . . Yet I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away--the ravages of the axe are daily increasing--the most noble scenes are made

desolate, and oftentimes with a wantonness and barbarism scarcely credible in a civilized nation. The way-side is becoming shadeless, and another generation will behold spots, now rife with beauty, desecrated by what is called improvement; which, as yet, generally destroys Nature's beauty without substituting that of Art. (109)

But even Cole recognized the inevitable, continuing,

This is a regret rather than a complaint; such is the road society has to travel; it may lead to refinement in the end, but the traveller who sees the place of rest close at hand, dislikes the road that has so many unnecessary windings. (109)

If Cole really believed "refinement" ultimately would be attained by destroying the wilderness, he did not

illustrate that fact in his Course of Empire series.

Nature is depicted in its savage and pastoral states in the first two landscapes of the series, but then nature is replaced by man's works in the Consummation stage.

Civilization leads to the final two stages of the cycle, Destruction and Desolation. In Desolation nature begins to reappear as man's works fade, hardly symbolic of the compatibility of civilization and the wilderness.

Instead of civilization destroying the wilderness, some artists (and Whitman) envisioned "an industrialized version of the pastoral idea" (Marx 222). George Inness's The Lackawanna Valley (1855), described by Barbara Novak as "a shocking picture" (Nature 172), is the best example of the "industrialized pastoral." Inness attempts to reconcile technology (the train) and the pastoral, and according to Leo Marx he is successful. Marx writes,

It [The Lackawanna Valley] is a striking representation of the idea that machine technology is a proper part of the landscape. Like Thoreau's extended metaphor at the end of Walden, the springtime thawing of the sand in the railroad bank, Inness's painting seems to say that 'there is nothing inorganic.' Instead of causing disharmony, the train is a unifying device. The hills in the background and the trees of the middle distance gently envelop the industrial buildings and artifacts. No sharp lines set off the man-made from the natural terrain. Nor is the Lackawanna's smoke unpleasant. The cottony puffs that rise from the engine and the roundhouse are merely duplicates of a puff that rises from behind the church--an ingenious touch! Instead of cutting the space into sharp, rectilinear segments as railroad tracks often do, the right-of-way curves gracefully across the center of the canvas where it divides in two, forming the delicately touching ovals that dominate the middle plane. It is noteworthy, too, that the animals in the pasture continue to graze or rest peacefully as the tidy, diminutive train approaches. Still, this is not a lament for Goldsmith's cherished land; the stumps indicate that the pasture has just been hewn out of a wilderness. But, of course, it is the solitary figure reclining beneath the dominant vertical, the tree in the foreground, who finally establishes the quiet, relaxed mood. He holds no crook, but he contemplates the sight in the serene posture of the good shepherd looking out across Arcadia. (220-21)

Like Inness, Whitman sees no conflict between technology and spirituality. In "Passage to India," the three "great achievements of the present" (2), the Suez Canal, the transcontinental railroad, and the oceanic cables, lay the groundwork for "Nature and Man [to] be disjoin'd and diffused no more" (114).

But as important as those three achievements are, Whitman spends little time discussing them. Only the first and third sections of "Passage to India" refer directly to these technological wonders. Whitman quickly moves beyond them to "an area of [his] dwelling," the soul's journey.

Frederic Church's Cotopaxi is similar. Church's attention to geology is specific and exacting; the knowledgeable viewer could read millions of years of history in the rock formations. But the viewer's eye is quickly captured by the drama of the landscape; his soul is overwhelmed by the light which overcomes the volcano's soot and extends to the canvas's limits. The subject of Cotopaxi is not science but man's spiritual future, although science is an essential backdrop to the scene.

"Passage to India" is constructed similarly, as Whitman claims technology has made a spiritual union of all countries possible--

Passage to India!
Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in
marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together. (30-35)

Not only are the "lands . . . welded together," but time is also compressed. Whitman perceives time as a continuum--

For what is the present after all but a growth out of
the past?
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain
line, still keeps on,
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)
("Passage" 13-15)

The past is part of the present, and its events have led to the future spiritual union. In the following passage, Whitman abolishes time and spreads the events of history before us just as Church did in his epic landscapes--

Along all history, down the slopes,
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the
surface rising,
A ceaseless thought, a varied train--lo, soul, to thee,
thy sight, they rise,
The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;
Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,
Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,
Lands found and nations born, thou born America,
For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd.
("Passage" 72-80)

With history's events laid out before him, Whitman
returns to the garden of Eden. He describes Adam and Eve
descending from the garden in a scene similar to Thomas
Cole's Expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after
them,
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless
explorations,
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with
never-happy hearts,
With that sad incessant refrain, Wherefore unsatisfied
soul? and Whither O mocking life? ("Passage" 88-
92)

Whitman goes on to ask,

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth? ("Passage" 93-
95)

If Cole was correct and "We are still in Eden; the wall
that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and
folly," who will lead man back to the promised land?

Of course, the answer is "the poet worthy that
name, / The true son of God shall come singing his songs"
("Passage" 104-5). The result--

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and
 inventors, shall be justified,
 All these hearts as of fretted children shall be
 sooth'd,
 All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret
 shall be told,
 All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and
 hook'd and link'd together,
 The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth,
 shall be completely justified, . . .
 Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
 The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.
 ("Passage" 106-10, 114-15)

Whitman, "The true son of God," will bring the spirituality
 of death, a state of reunion with the father ("the Comrade
 perfect" ["Passage" 200]) and the mother (the sea), to
 life. He will merge with God, the totality of spirit in
 the universe--"Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee, /
 I and my soul to range in range of thee" ("Passage" 192-
 93). The word "mounting" implies an upward and sexual
 journey; the soul will "swellest full the vastnesses of
 space" ("Passage" 211) and merge completely with the
 elements. And at the end of "Passage to India," Whitman
 set sail on "the seas of God" (254). Once again, he
 employs the two key images of landscape painting, the sky
 and sea, in a poem of transcendence. In much the same way
 a viewer becomes involved in a luminist landscape, Whitman
 sets out across the sea and ascends to the infinite
 spiritual realm. "Passage to India" only begins as a poem
 about science; it ends, like most of Whitman's poetry and
 mid-nineteenth-century art, in spiritual fusion with God.

"Passage to India" depicts more than an individual

vision; it covers continents as the "rondure of the world [is] at last accomplished" ("Passage" 80). Its scope is universal, like an epic landscape, and it includes mankind, like a genre painting. Whitman's individual, societal, and universal visions are intertwined, just as they are intertwined in American art. But both poet and artists depict individuals filled with soul (light), men and women interacting against a spiritual backdrop, and a world infused with God's presence. The poems discussed above are representative of the thematic and technical similarities between Whitman's poetry and mid-nineteenth-century American art, and the poems and paintings reflect a utopian spirit which would change dramatically after the Civil War. But the basic themes that Whitman and American artists shared continue to appear in American art.

CONCLUSION

Joseph Stella, a twentieth century artist who was an avid reader of Whitman's poetry, wrote, "A true art is always more or less a reflection of everything that is going on in its epoch" (Jaffe 35). Leaves of Grass fits that description. The "long foreground" that Ralph Waldo Emerson was curious about was a time when Whitman said that he "flood[ed] himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides" "merge[d] in the general run and wait[ed] his development," and became "the age transfigured." An important part of that age, particularly the years immediately preceding the first edition of Leaves of Grass, was American art. Certainly Whitman was not influenced by art alone; he openly acknowledged his debt to Emerson, a debt the luminist painters shared. Transcendentalist thought found its way to Whitman through both Emerson and art. And Whitman's political activities, his journalism, and his reading all helped to shape his poetry. But because he shared in the creation of an American school of art while associating with many American painters, he absorbed their themes and techniques and recast them as his own, while continuing to search for an art that would meet all of his specifications--a celebration of the individual which was still a democratic, socially involved art and which also depicted a transcendental universe. Whitman believed he found "his" painters in Millet and Eakins in

the 1880s, and his poems continued to inspire the next generation of painters, as they still do today.

Interestingly, the reputations of Walt Whitman and the Hudson River School have followed a somewhat similar course. Whitman's name was kept alive by a group of devoted followers, and he steadily gained a following as the twentieth century progressed. The work of Gay Wilson Allen in the 1940s and 1950s helped to establish Whitman's reputation as the great American poet he had longed to be. The Hudson River School suffered through a period of critical abuse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Only in the last forty years have these artists made a critical comeback. Perhaps the present popularity of Whitman and his contemporary artists is linked. Whitman, at the end of Specimen Days, pinpoints the common thread. He wrote,

Perhaps indeed the efforts of the true poets, founders, religions, literatures, all ages, have been, and ever will be, our time and times to come, essentially the same--to bring people back from their persistent strayings and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine, original concrete. (295)

Leaves of Grass and the works of Cole, Durand, the luminists, Church, Mount, Bingham, Eakins and Millet do exactly that.

EPILOG

The artistic expression that began with Whitman and the mid-nineteenth century artists and continued with Millet and Eakins did not end after their generations died. The two elements in Whitman's poetry that roughly correspond to the works of Thomas Eakins and Jean Francois Millet--social awareness and individuality--are reflected in twentieth century art. Modern painting is an immense field, and it is beyond the scope of this study to examine its relationship to Whitman in detail, although that subject would surely benefit from further exploration. However, a quick glance at several twentieth-century artists reveals that Whitman's ideas continued to flourish after his death.

Shortly after the turn of the century, a group of painters called "The Ashcan School" began to paint the common, everyday life of New York City. This group included artists George Bellows, Robert Henri, and John Sloan, among others. Henri and Sloan studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts under Thomas Anshutz, who was Thomas Eakins' student. Their social realism was based on the teachings of Eakins.

Bellows was introduced to Whitman's poetry in 1901 at Ohio State University. He was inspired by his English professor, who was also interested in his art, and as a result "The student responded by manifesting a new and

exciting curiosity for the English language, particularly for the poetry of Walt Whitman (which many Americans thought scandalous)" (Braider 11). In particular, two paintings are reminiscent of Whitman (and Eakins). Forty-two Kids (1907) depicts children swimming nude and gathered on a platform above the lake. It captures the same innocence as Eakins' The Swimming Hole and Whitman's "Calamus" poems. And Bellows' fight scenes, especially Both Members of this Club (1909), "reveal a rude subject selection and a measure of sympathy with lower class life" (Blaser 114). A contemporary critic, James Huneker, compared Bellows' imagery with Whitman's; unfortunately, it was not meant as a compliment (Braider 75).

Robert Henri was a friend of Bellows, and is perhaps most remembered for his teaching and organizing a showing of eight painters ("The Eight") in 1908. Several members of "The Eight" were also dubbed members of "The Ashcan School." Like Bellows, this group painted city scenes realistically. Henri's art, like Whitman's, was multifaceted. He urged his students--"draw your material from the life around you, from all of it. There is beauty in everything if it looks beautiful to your eyes. You can find it anywhere, everywhere" (Henri 13). A democratic art resulted. Yet he also urged his students to be unique. In his book The Art Spirit, he used Whitman as an example while preaching individuality to his students-- "Walt

Whitman was such as I have proposed the real art student should be. His work is an autobiography--not of haps and mishaps, but of his deepest thought, his life indeed" (59). In combining democratic and individualistic art, Henri subscribed to Whitman's tenet, "These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands, they are not original with me, / If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or next to nothing" ("Song of Myself" 355-56).

John Sloan was another member of "The Eight" and a student of Henri. He too was devoted to city scenes, social realism and Whitman. He followed Henri's advice "to fight for their ideas and beliefs, and his injunction to 'forget about art and paint pictures of what interests you in life'" (qtd. in Brooks 18). In Henri's studio he was involved in discussions "on social questions," and heard his teacher discuss "Emerson and Whitman, to whom [he] was deeply drawn already" (Brooks 19). Like Whitman, Sloan "found it exciting and wonderful . . . to have whole days to himself to wander about the streets [of New York] and see new things" (Brooks 41). Those wanderings inspired paintings of the city which depict

the movement of crowds, of automobiles, of el trains, of wind, of blowing snow and rain; the drama of city lights; the glamor and excitement of the city. . . . He was painting cityscapes from a poetic viewpoint like that of the landscapist. In these new paintings an important role was played by light--nature's light, and the lights of the city. (Goodrich 53)

Sloan answered Whitman's call for an artist who would celebrate "the artificial, the work of man," since that "too is equally great."

The modernist painters were also interested in Whitman, but they were attracted more to his "glorification of individuality, and . . . courageous effort to find new forms of expression" (Blaser 116-17). One modernist, Joseph Stella, could "quote endlessly from Walt Whitman" (Jaffe 119). In an article he wrote for an art magazine, Stella equated futurism and Leaves of Grass.

Futurism strives to be absolutely free of any tradition: its effort chiefly lies in creating a new sort of language to express the feelings and the emotions of the modern artist. . . . I think that America should follow this glorious example--America which is so young and energetic and has the great futurist work first achieved by Walt Whitman. (qtd. in Jaffe 35-36)

Stella's embracing of "the work of man" with a Whitmanesque uniqueness is reflected in Battle of Lights, Coney Island (1913), which depicts the "forms and lights of industrial-age America" in a "large, colorful, agitated, futurist-influenced" canvas (Scott 539).

A continued list of artists who were influenced by Whitman's poetry contains such names as architects Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, painters John Marin, Charles Sheeler, Claes Oldenberg, Jackson Pollock and even Vincent Van Gogh. The wheel comes full circle as Whitman's borrowings from art are recycled to influence later artists, and there is a great deal of truth in Whitman's

words, "Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)" ("Full of Life Now" 8). Walt Whitman's artistic legacy is with us, in many shapes and forms, and it is sure to enjoy continued growth.¹

¹ See Kozloff; Edwin Haviland Miller, "The Radical Vision of Whitman and Pollack"; Schwind; Abernethy; and Blaser for further information on Walt Whitman and modern art.

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