



CHAPTER 1.

NATURE.

TO GO INTO SOLITUDE, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write, though nobody is with me. But if a man would be alone, let him look at the stars. The rays that come from those heavenly worlds, will separate between him and vulgar things. One might think the atmosphere was made transparent with this design, to give man, in the heavenly bodies, the perpetual presence of the sublime. Seen in the streets of cities, how great they are! If the stars should appear one night in a thousand years, how would men believe and adore; and preserve for many generations the remembrance of the city of God which had been shown! But every night come out these preachers of beauty, and light the universe with their admonishing smile.

The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are always inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort all her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected all

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Three pages earlier, at the end of his introduction, Emerson had prepared readers for how he would use reflection as a major theme and construction throughout *Nature*: "In enumerating the values of nature and casting up their sum, I shall use the word in both senses;—in its common and in its philosophical import." A couple pages later, here is the first of dozens of passages in *Nature* that Emerson built around reflection.

Among the many artists who seem to have built upon Emerson's reflection constructions was Carleton Watkins. In 1861, Watkins first visited Yosemite Valley and the nearby Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias where he made a suite of thirty-four mammoth-plate pictures and as many as a hundred stereographs, pictures that introduced the East and Europe to one of the West's most spectacular sites, and that substantially motivated the national park idea.⁸

Watkins tried to build mammoth-plate compositions around reflections on that trip—the subject of the picture and its reflection in water made a circular whole in which each half needed the other, a tidy and popular metaphor for Union used by many artists in the late 1850s and early 1860s—but his lens technology enabled him to succeed just once.⁹ (He came closer to succeeding in stereograph.) When Watkins returned to Yosemite in 1865–66, just as the Union was being reconstituted, and in 1878–79, new lenses made such pictures possible. This is one of the best, a picture of the mountain Frederick Law Olmsted arranged for the state of California to name after Watkins and its reflection in Mirror Lake.¹⁰ (Olmsted asked California to name the peak for Watkins as a recognition of his role in the inauguration of the national park idea.)

5 Carleton Watkins, *Mount Watkins and Mirror Lake*, 1865–66. Library of Congress.



17 Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Sketch of Monadnock Mountain*, 1897. Detroit Institute of Arts.

18 Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Mount Monadnock*, c. 1911–14. National Gallery of Art.



19 Abbott Handerson Thayer, *Mount Monadnock*, c. 1918. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.



Thayer was born to a Boston family thirteen years after *Nature* was first published. He grew up surrounded by familial connections to the Emersons, and in a household that embraced transcendentalism.²¹

Thayer was among the American artists who found significance in making many paintings of individual mountains (see Frederic Edwin Church and Marsden Hartley at Maine's Mount Katahdin, or William Keith at California's Mount Tamalpais). Thayer's Siren was Mount Monadnock, a squat, 3,165-foot pile in southern New Hampshire. On a clear day, it could be seen from hills in Concord, which is surely one reason Emerson devoted one of his most significant poems to it ("Monadnoc," 1846) and called it "the new Olympus" (an Americanization of a European standard). Other Concordians were also drawn to Monadnock: Thoreau summited it four times and wrote a poem

about it ("With frontier strength ye stand your ground"). Nathaniel Hawthorne called it a "sapphire cloud against the sky."²²

Thayer's art, with its interest in America, nature, and primary experience, was substantially rooted in Emersonian ideas. These Monadnocks are the product of the attentive, repeated, varied observation for which Emerson advocates. Thayer had plenty of opportunity to paint Monadnock: he lived on Dublin Pond at the northern base of the mountain. His Monadnock paintings aren't numbly repetitive, they're easy to understand as views that Thayer had never seen before, and which he would not see again. Art historian Kevin M. Murphy wrote that Thayer's Monadnocks "are deceptively difficult to parse. Forms that resolve—or should resolve—as solid from a distance are insubstantial and indistinguishable up close."²³



20 Homer Dodge Martin, *Autumn*, c. 1865. Detroit Institute of Arts.

21 Jasper Cropsey, *Autumn at Mount Chocorua*, 1869. Brooklyn Museum.



Europeans painted the seasons as allegories that often joined the female figure to agricultural or other natural references to the relevant time of year. American painters, including Sanford Robinson Gifford, William Keith, John La Farge, Sarah Wyman Whitman, Frederic Edwin Church, Martin and others, knew of the European precedent, and held onto a portion of it—making individual paintings about an individual season—while giving it an Emersonian twist, both showing that season in America rather than as a European-derived allegory, and by painting it with the shimmering light Emerson detailed.

The many American paintings of America-in-autumn may also have been the fulfillment of Emerson's prompt that

artists use America to address that which was particularly American, such as republicanism. In the mid-to-late-nineteenth century, especially after the Civil War, Americans felt that their republican revolution had survived a trauma, allowing it to have matured, and was now at its fullest and most spectacular.²⁴ The profusion of late and post-Civil War autumn paintings may also stand as an Emersonian metaphor for the mass death that American soldiers experienced during the war, for the way in which Americans who fought to save republicanism were cut down as crops might be. Poetically, the metaphor is presented with particular fullness in Mrs. James Neall's poem "The Harvest-Field of 1861."²⁵

2. The presence of a higher, namely, of the spiritual element is essential to its perfection. The high and divine beauty which can be loved without effeminacy, is that which is found in combination with the human will, and never separate. Beauty is the mark God sets upon virtue. Every natural action is graceful. Every heroic act is also decent, and causes the place and the bystanders to shine. We are taught by great actions that the universe is the property of every individual in it. Every rational creature has all nature for his dowry and estate. It is his, if he will. He may divest himself of it; he may creep into a corner, and abdicate his kingdom, as most men do, but he is entitled to the world by his constitution. In proportion to the energy of his thought and will, he takes up the world into himself. "All those things for which men plough, build, or sail, obey virtue;" said an ancient historian. "The winds and waves," said Gibbon, "are always on the side of the ablest navigators." So are the sun and moon and all the stars of heaven. When a noble act is done,—perchance in a scene of great natural beauty; when Leonidas and his three hundred martyrs consume one day in dying, and the sun and moon come each and look at them once in the steep defile of Thermopylae; when Arnold Winkelried, in the high Alps, under the shadow of the avalanche, gathers in his side a sheaf of Austrian spears to break the line for his comrades; are not these heroes entitled to add the beauty of the scene to the beauty of the deed? When the bark of Columbus nears the shore of America;—before it, the beach lined with savages, fleeing out of all their huts of cane; the sea behind; and the purple mountains of the Indian Archipelago around, can we separate the man from the living picture? Does not the New World clothe his form with her palm-groves and savannahs as fit drapery? Ever does natural beauty steal in like air, and envelope great actions. When Sir Harry Vane was dragged up the Tower-hill, sitting on a sled, to suffer death, as the champion of the English laws, one of the multitude cried out to him, "You never sate on so glorious a seat." Charles II., to intimidate the citizens of London, caused the patriot Lord Russel to be drawn in an open coach, through the principal streets of the city, on his way to the scaffold. "But," to use the simple narrative of his biographer, "the multitude imagined they saw liberty and virtue sitting by his side." In private places, among sordid objects, an act of truth or heroism seems at once to draw to itself the sky as its temple, the sun as its candle. Nature stretcheth out her arms to embrace man, only let his thoughts be of equal greatness. Willingly does she follow his steps with the rose and the violet, and bend her lines of grandeur and grace to the decoration of her darling child. Only let his thoughts be of equal scope, and the frame will suit the picture. A virtuous man, is in unison with her works, and makes the central figure of the visible sphere. Homer, Pindar, Socrates, Phocion, associate themselves fitly in our memory with



"Nature is thoroughly mediate," Emerson writes. "It is made to serve." Is it made to serve a supernatural or man—or both? Emerson's circular/reflecting construct, the Emersonian trinity by which nature reflects God and man reflects nature, is by now familiar. While scholars have noted many sources for Emerson's construction, one of the clearest is Emanuel Swedenborg, the eighteenth-century Swedish polymath and theologian.³⁹ Emerson took close note of Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondence, the idea that there was a relationship between nature and the spiritual.

Like Emerson, George Inness was fascinated by Swedenborg.⁴⁰ As early as

1863, reviewers pointed to how Inness's art seemed to reflect Emerson's writing, among the earliest published associations of Emerson's ideas with a specific American artist.⁴¹ While *The Wheat Field* is not one of Inness's most spiritual canvases, it nonetheless reflects the circularity that Emerson built from Swedenborg (as well as Inness's own interest in science): the rich soil at the valley bottom had eroded from and washed down the mountain in the top half of the painting, and that very soil and the same rain that had delivered it sustained the wheat grown and harvested by man.

35 George Inness, *The Wheat Field*, c. 1875–77. Cleveland Museum of Art.

is never weary of working it up. He forges the subtle and delicate air into wise and melodious words, and gives them wing as angels of persuasion and command. More and more, with every thought, does his kingdom stretch over things, until the world becomes, at last, only a realized will,—the double of the man.

2. Sensible objects conform to the premonitions of Reason and reflect the conscience. All things are moral; and in their boundless changes have an unceasing reference to spiritual nature. Therefore is nature glorious with form, color, and motion, that every globe in the remotest heaven; every chemical change from the rudest crystal up to the laws of life; every change of vegetation from the first principle of growth in the eye of a leaf, to the tropical forest and antediluvian coal-mine; every animal function from the sponge up to Hercules, shall hint or thunder to man the laws of right and wrong, and echo the Ten Commandments. Therefore is nature

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36 John Frederick Kensett, *Twilight in the Cedars*, 1872. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Kensett is among the American painters most often suggested as having been informed by Emerson's work. (For reasons rarely specified—perhaps as a general nod to Emerson rather than as a specific argument about a key passage—art historians have tended to link Kensett to Emerson's "transparent eyeball" passage on page 52 instead of to broader themes.)⁴² Kensett's close friend George Curtis was a transcendentalist who had lived at Brook Farm, the utopian project southwest of Boston. Curtis connected Kensett to many of the New England intellectuals in Emerson's circle.⁴³

In this passage, as in the rest of this chapter, Emerson draws from Swedenborg and his belief in connection between nature and the spirit, a supernatural.

Visually, nature could hardly be given more religious ceremony and sentiment than in this Kensett of a cedar grove, a picture that seems to argue that European-style stained glass church windows are unnecessary in America, where nature has replaced the site of European worship, where men and women may have direct experiences of their God in the forest, and where nature itself can offer a colorful stained glass-like glow. (Still, Kensett's painting embraces one bit of Old World tradition that even the most Emersonian Americans were eager to affiliate with American Christianity: cedar groves, a reference to some of the oldest forests in the Holy Land, forests mentioned throughout the Bible.)



Whittredge's composition of this scene may be rooted in Emerson's presentation of man, nature, and the divine as being interconnected through a circular system. The site of action in the painting is the wagon in the center-foreground onto which two men are piling up wheat. Just to the wagon's left is the home of the farmer whose wheat is being harvested; just above the wagon on the right is the rain that sustains the community's flora and fauna. Directly above the house, compositionally, is the first of two church steeples in the painting (discovering the nearest one guides the eye to the more distant church). As Emerson points to how nature provides for man, how God converts every end into a new means, how man builds on what nature provides to build community and country, so too Whittredge builds his composition. (Note also the American flag to the left of the farmers' home.)

This canvas, painted during 1861's tumult, also builds landscape into a

metaphor for Northern agrarian republicanism and self-sufficiency, for how free labor built strong communities.⁴⁴ (Note that the white farmers at right are wearing red, white, and blue. While white American painters made scores of canvases of scenes such of this, the farmers, the carriers of agrarian self-sufficiency, are almost without exception, white.) Whittredge was a keen Unionist and tried to enlist in New York's 7th Regiment—he purchased a uniform even before being accepted into it—only to find the unit full. "I began to see that there were many things I could do to help on the war if I stayed at home," Whittredge wrote, noting that he contributed to the fairs that raised money for the care of Union soldiers.⁴⁵ (Whittredge routinely loaned paintings from his own collection to the art galleries of US Sanitary Commission-benefiting fairs, such as Philadelphia's.)⁴⁶

37 Worthington Whittredge, *Landscape with Haywain*, 1861. Cleveland Museum of Art.

always the ally of Religion: lends all her pomp and riches to the religious sentiment. Prophet and priest, David, Isaiah, Jesus, have drawn deeply from this source.

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This ethical character so penetrates the bone and marrow of nature, as to seem the end for which it was made. Whatever private purpose is answered by any member or part, this is its public and universal function, and is never omitted. Nothing in nature is exhausted in its first use. When a thing has served an end to the uttermost, it is wholly new for an ulterior service. In God, every end is converted into a new means. Thus the use of Commodity, regarded by itself, is mean and squalid. But it is to the mind an education in the great doctrine of Use, namely, that a thing is good only so far as it serves; that a conspiring of parts and efforts to the production of an end, is essential to any being. The first and gross manifestation of this truth, is our inevitable and hated training, in values and wants, in corn and meat.

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It has already been illustrated, in treating of the significance of material things, that every natural process is but a version of a moral sentence. The moral law lies at the centre of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. All things with which we deal, preach to us. What is a farm but a mute gospel? The chaff and the wheat, weeds and plants, blight, rain, insects, sun,—it is a sacred emblem from the first furrow of spring to the last stack which the snow of winter over takes in the fields. But the sailor, the shepherd, the miner, the merchant, in their several resorts, have each an experience precisely parallel and leading to the same conclusions. Because all organizations are radically alike. Nor can it be doubted that this moral sentiment which thus scents the air, and grows in the grain, and impregnates the waters of the world, is caught by man and sinks into his soul. The moral influence of nature upon every individual is that amount of truth which it illustrates to him. Who can estimate this? Who can guess how much firmness the sea-beaten rock has taught the fisherman? how much tranquillity has been reflected to man from the azure sky, over whose unspotted deeps the winds forevermore drive flocks of stormy clouds, and leave no wrinkle or stain? how much industry and providence and affection we have caught from the pantomime of brutes? What a searching preacher of self-command is the varying phenomenon of Health!

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Herein is especially apprehended the Unity of Nature,—the Unity in Variety,—which meets us everywhere. All the endless variety of things make a unique, an identical impression. Xenophanes complained in his old age, that, look where he would, all things hastened back to Unity. He was weary of seeing the same entity in the tedious variety of forms. The fable of Proteus has a cordial truth. Every particular in nature, a leaf, a drop, a crystal, a moment of time is related to the whole, and partakes of



38 David Johnson,
Study of a Cedar, c. 1867.
Saint Louis Art Museum.

In arguing that elements of nature and landscape “preach to us,” that we might read meaning into the natural world, Emerson again points his audience to how flora might serve as metaphor. American Christians were well-familiar with the cedars of Lebanon, thousand-year-old stands of which still stood in the Holy Land. During the Civil War, old and large trees became popular metaphors for the

strength of the Union and the (hoped-for) lasting history of the American republican experiment. If there, here too.

When Johnson made this study of a richly animated tree shortly after the end of the Civil War and as the Union was reconstituting itself, he presented it as weathered, gnarled, maybe even a little battered, but also enduring, like the reconstituted nation, as well as its republicanism.

the perfection of the whole. Each particle is a microcosm, and faithfully renders the likeness of the world.

Not only resemblances exist in things whose analogy is obvious, as when we detect the type of the human hand in the flipper of the fossil saurus, but also in objects wherein there is great superficial unlikeness. Thus architecture is called ‘frozen music,’ by De Stael and Goethe.

‘A Gothic church,’ said Coleridge, ‘is a petrified religion.’ Michael Angelo maintained, that, to an architect, a knowledge of anatomy is essential. In Haydn’s oratorios, the notes present to the imagination not only motions, as, of the snake, the stag, and the elephant, but colors also; as the green grass. The granite is differenced in its laws only by the more or less of heat, from the river that wears it away. The river, as it flows, resembles the air that flows over it; the air resembles the light which traverses it with more subtile currents; the light resembles the heat which rides with it through Space. Each creature is only a modification of the other; the likeness in them is more than the difference, and their radical law is one and the same. Hence it is, that a rule of one art, or a law of one organization,



39 Frederic Edwin Church, *Katahdin Lake, Maine*, not dated. Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.

Emerson’s argument that even the most specific element in nature is part of a broader whole offered painters both instruction to detail and an opportunity to merely suggest. Here, in one of his most dramatic oil sketches, Frederic Edwin Church offers the faintest suggestion of Katahdin Lake, a single brushstroke. Church’s shorthand, which includes the

exact colors from which he has made the sky above Katahdin, completes the circularity of his image (circularity which Emerson repeatedly called for across this chapter) and calls attention to the idea that the most specific element—the water, the lake—is related to the whole: the sky and the drainage shed (the mountain’s slopes) from which the water came.



Not for the first time in *Nature*, Emerson calls on creative men to build metaphors from nature, to use the natural world to address the human world, to build ideas that reflect the landscape. That painters would build ideas or address of country from visual metaphors seems like something that might have been common in American art before 1836, but it was not.

Forms and phenomena are both evident in Church's magnificent *Twilight in the Wilderness*, one of the most significant works of nineteenth-century American art. Church's *Twilight* is an address of the looming Civil War. Church likely worked on the painting in the weeks after the Democratic Party's 1860 presidential nominating convention at Charleston collapsed, after which the Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln, sectional tensions escalated precipitously, and disunion became a more imminent possibility. In 1850, Church had begun making dramatic paintings of sunsets.

These paintings, which include *Twilight*, "Short Arbiter 'Twixt Day and Night," (1850, Newark Museum of Art), *Beacon off Mount Desert Island* (1851, private collection), and *The Wreck* (1852, The Parthenon, Nashville) reference book nine of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which Satan returns to Eden and encourages Eve to disobey God and eat from the Tree of Knowledge.⁴⁹ Eve does and introduces Adam to pleasure. Milton writes about this pivotal moment in humanity as the transition between day and night, and between good and evil.⁵⁰ Here the transition is at its most fraught moment: twilight is reflected in a mountain lake, an adaptation of Emerson's reflection metaphor to address America's troubles. All light has already gone out of the forests and mountains around the lake, a metaphor for the darkness that will soon fall over the Union. A blasted tree in the left-foreground hints at the mass death to come.

43 Frederic Edwin Church, *Twilight in the Wilderness*, 1860. Cleveland Museum of Art.

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2. In a higher manner, the poet communicates the same pleasure. By a few strokes he delineates, as on air, the sun, the mountain, the camp, the city, the hero, the maiden, not different from what we know them, but only lifted from the ground and afloat before the eye. He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew. Possessed himself by a heroic passion, he uses matter as symbols of it. The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts. The one esteems nature as rooted and fast; the other, as fluid, and impresses his being thereon. To him, the refractory world is ductile and flexible; he invests dust and stones with humanity, and makes them the words of the Reason. The imagination may be defined to be, the use which the Reason makes of the material world. Shakspeare possesses the power of subordinating nature for the purposes of expression, beyond all poets. His imperial muse tosses the creation like a bauble from hand to hand, to embody any capricious shade of thought that is uppermost in his mind. The remotest spaces of nature are visited, and the farthest sundered things are brought together, by a subtile spiritual connexion. We are made aware that magnitude of material things is merely relative, and all objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet. Thus, in his sonnets, the lays of birds, the scents and dyes of flowers, he finds to be the *shadow* of his beloved; time, which keeps her from him, is his *chest*; the suspicion she has awakened, is her *ornament*;

The ornament of beauty is Suspect,
A crow which flies in heaven's sweetest air.

His passion is not the fruit of chance; it swells, as he speaks, to a city, or a state.

No, it was builded far from accident;
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the brow of thralling discontent;
It fears not policy, that heretic,
That works on leases of short numbered hours,
But all alone stands hugely politic.

In the strength of his constancy, the Pyramids seem to him recent and transitory. And the freshness of youth and love dazzles him with its resemblance to morning.

Take those lips away
Which so sweetly were forsworn;



In this extended passage, Emerson underscores that nature offers itself to man to be remade as part of human creation. Emerson goes to lengths to point out he is not talking about planting crops or eating venison, but that America's natural world ought to be used metaphorically to address America. "All objects shrink and expand to serve the passion of the poet," Emerson says, later concluding his thought by effectively underlining it by pointing the poet "to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world."

In the decade before and during the Civil War, American landscape artists built nature into metaphor for Unionism and the country's experience of war with striking intensity.⁵¹ Gifford, painting in 1861 likely just before he enlisted in a New York militia regiment, foregrounds the precipice on which the Union stood. The twilight on the horizon acknowledges the sunset of the first phase of the American republican experiment and the uncertainty of what's ahead; the scarred forest in the foreground hints at the war to come.

44 Sanford Robinson Gifford, *Twilight in the Catskills*, 1861. Yale University Art Gallery.

And those eyes,—the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn.

The wild beauty of this hyperbole, I may say, in passing, it would not be easy to match in literature.

This transfiguration which all material objects undergo through the passion of the poet,—this power which he exerts, at any moment, to magnify the small, to micrify the great,—might be illustrated by a thousand examples from his Plays. I have before me the *Tempest*, and will cite only these few lines.

ARIEL. The strong based promontory
Have I made shake, and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar.

Prospero calls for music to sooth the frantic Alonzo, and his companions;

A solemn air, and the best comforter
To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains
Now useless, boiled within thy skull.

Again;

The charm dissolves apace
And, as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason.

Their understanding
Begins to swell: and the approaching tide
Will shortly fill the reasonable shores
That now lie foul and muddy.

The perception of real affinities between events, (that is to say, of *ideal* affinities, for those only are real,) enables the poet thus to make free with the most imposing forms and phenomena of the world, and to assert the predominance of the soul.

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3. Whilst thus the poet delights us by animating nature like a creator, with his own thoughts, he differs from the philosopher only herein, that the one proposes Beauty as his main end; the other Truth. But, the philosopher, not less than the poet, postpones the apparent order and relations of things to the empire of thought. "The problem of philosophy," according to Plato, "is, for all that exists conditionally, to find a ground unconditioned and absolute." It proceeds on the faith that a law determines all phenomena, which being known, the phenomena can be predicted. That law, when in the mind, is an idea. Its beauty is infinite. The true philosopher and the true poet are one, and a beauty, which is truth, and a truth, which is beauty, is the aim of both. Is not the charm of one of Plato's or Aristotle's definitions, strictly like that of the Antigone of Sophocles? It is, in both cases, that a spiritual life has been imparted to nature; that the solid seeming block of matter has been pervaded and dissolved by a thought; that this feeble human being has penetrated the vast masses of nature with an



45 Frederic Edwin Church, *Mount Katahdin from Lake Katahdin*, 1870. Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.



46 Frederic Edwin Church, *Mount Katahdin from Lake Katahdin*, c. 1860–70. Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.

Emerson builds one of his trademark triads—the poet, the philosopher, and nature—to argue that beauty and truth reflect each other, and that both—or perhaps the reflection itself?—impart a spiritual element to nature. As art historian Theodore Stebbins noted, “Church would have agreed with Ralph Waldo Emerson that ‘every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact.’”¹⁵²

Church, a devout Protestant, routinely used reflection constructs in his paintings, especially when he started addressing America’s republican experiment in his work starting in about 1849. He often explored different ways of painting reflection in his oil sketches.



47 Jervis McEntee, *Autumn in the Catskills*, 1873. Cleveland Museum of Art.

McEntee's *Autumn in the Catskills* is one of several American forest-interior paintings that fulfills Emerson's call to find spirituality within nature. Here McEntee's space is enclosed, the visual path deeper

into the forest provided by the stream creates a church-like space, and the tree trunks conspire to push our eyes up toward the tops of the trees, to the blue patch of sky heavenward.