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The Late Paintings of Worthington Whittredge: American Barbizon and the New Internationalism

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Abstract

The year of the American Centennial and American Centennial Exhibition, 1876, not only marked the first century of the United States existence, but also a new chapter in American history. Coming at the heels of the Civil War and Reconstruction, this heavily symbolic year also bore witness to substantial changes in American life and how the nation envisioned itself through its art. In the interstice between the end of the Hudson River School, which defined America's visual identity throughout the 1850s and 1860s, and the American Barbizon movement, the New York based American artist Worthington Whittredge struggled to redefine his artistic style and identity. This paper examines his stylistic changes between the years 1876 and 1886, which mark the majority of his interaction with the American Barbizon School and his efforts to re-envision the American landscape. Through an analysis of his works from this period, those of several of his contemporaries, and concurrent articles from art journals, I seek to contextualize his progressive change within the trends of the New York art world. Whittredge's unique approach to American Barbizon painting, the palimpsest of the Hudson River School style and its program of depicting American identity through nature still evident in his work, is examined by focusing on the technical changes in his paintings. Furthermore, his atypical approach is studied in connection with his departure from decrying the contemporary advancement of urbanization and industrialization, instead providing a more nuanced and complex understanding of their relation to rural American life. Finally, his ability to see America as an American Barbizon artist is evaluated.

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Introduction

The last quarter of the 19th century in the U.S., broadly speaking, saw a substantial shift in the artistic hegemony of New York, new styles emerging from other U.S. cities and from abroad, and figure painting and still life reemerging as important genres. Rather than a sudden shift from one school of thought to another, the change in American artistic production came through a series of progressive shifts in taste and attitude. To be sure, the more modern, European inspired paintings of artists such as John Singer Sargent, Thomas Eakins, and George Inness captured the attention of critics and collectors and reinforced the downfall of traditional nationalistic landscape painting as the dominant style and the Hudson River School as its progenitor. However, in the large methodological and interpretative gap between these two groups, who provide the beginning and end caps for this period, the intersection of emerging trends becomes extremely significant. For many of the artists who lived and worked through this period, especially the second generation of the Hudson River School, their tenure of production coincided with some of these transitions, forcing many of them to change their work and attempt to see the same subject differently. In his evolution towards an American Barbizon inspired style, which occurs most prominently between 1876 and 1886, Worthington Whittredge provides a unique artistic voice, intervening between these two movements. These paintings produced later in his career show how the shifting focus of his work, as well as the constant transitions in his technique, reveal the artist's struggle to redefine himself in the face of artistic trends he did not fully understand.

In order to understand his interpretation of the American Barbizon School, though, the nature of the movement, which had grown to prominence by the 1880s, needs to be explained. The term "American Barbizon School," is somewhat of a misnomer. Just as the French Barbizon could not have been considered a true "school" as the artists had not arranged themselves as such, the American Barbizon School existed in much the same fashion. It was the prominent landscape style by the 1880s, but there was no true center of production or "school" of artists after it gained popularity outside of Boston. The style of the French Barbizon artists was first introduced into the United States by William Morris Hunt, who took the style back to Boston after studying in Europe from the late 1840s through the early 1850s.[1] The style was regionally popular in Boston until after the Civil War when tastes in landscape painting shifted dramatically. American society's visual and artistic relationship with nature changed to one that depended on the viewer's emotional reaction to it. The Barbizon School's ideal of poetic beauty lent itself to an aesthetic based around a subjective reaction to a painting, something which was often achieved by imbuing the work with a sense of mood. For American artists inspired by this movement, it offered a new way to paint and the creative freedom to work in a more expressive, and often more atmospheric style. Though the movement was underrepresented at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia, its popularity grew fairly quickly afterwards with Hunt, as well as Alexander Wyant, Homer D. Martin, and George Inness as the leaders of the movement.

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[1] Peter Bermingham, *American Art in the Barbizon Mood* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975), 18-21.

Though Barbizon style painting in America was directly related to French Barbizon art, the two movements do not display all of the same characteristics and retained separate, though related, identities. While both American and French Barbizon art share a similar anti-industrial milieu, their social, political, and artistic concerns are quite different. Anthony Janson, in his book *Worthington Whittredge*, comments on this when he notes that "There was, to be sure, an implicit antiindustrial [sic] attitude in the work of these artists, but it was allied to the escapism fostered most prominently in this country by the Aesthetic movement and the Pre-Raphaelites."[2] The anti-industrial position in the U.S. was much more socially motivated, as Janson alludes to, offering a way to separate oneself from the realities of industrial life rather than the more direct protestations of the French Barbizon School. One of the key differences in this regard were the political connotations that images of peasants held in French art. More than just a reaction against the growing industrialism that was taking place in France, paintings of peasants were direct protestations against the jeopardizing of rural life, as mass displacements of peasants had already taken place.[3] Furthermore, much of Barbizon painting through 1848, as well as the Realism of artists such as Gustave Courbet and Jules Breton, were completed in order to protest against the July Monarchy, whose policies continually repressed peasants. The political overtones of the art were quite different as well. American Barbizon painting effectively filled a growing void in

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[2] Anthony F. Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, ed. David M. Sokol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 177.
[3] Robert J. Bezucha, "The Urban Vision the Countryside in Late Nineteenth-Century French Painting: An Essay on Art and Political Culture," in *The Rural Vision: France and America in the Late Nineteenth Century*, edited by Hollister Sturges (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1987), 17. See also Hollister Sturges, "Jules Breton: Creator of a Noble Peasant Image," in *The Rural Vision: France and America in the Late Nineteenth Century*, edited by Hollister Sturges (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1987), 23-41.

American landscape painting, developing and becoming popular just as American society was looking for a new way to represent nature. Barbizon painting in France, though, was an artistic rebellion, representing nature in a radically different way than the work of academic landscape painters, such as Nicolas Poussin.[4] While the aesthetics of the French and American Barbizon Schools were similar, the social and political connotations of their work were quite different, supporting separate nomenclature.

In light of the anti-industrial sentiment of the American Barbizon School, the great success of the movement seems to contradict the increasing urbanity of American society in the late 19th century. Peter Bermingham, in his book *American Art in the Barbizon Mood*, mirrors this assertion when he mentions that "despite the implicit censure of the new technological age in much of Barbizon art, it still emerged by the late 1880s as the most consistently sought after item at galleries and auction blocks."[5] While seemingly odd, the answer to this inconsistency can be found in the different relationship American society had with nature and its depiction rather than with genre scene paintings. Noting the popularity the French Barbizon painters had in the United States, Bermingham remarks that "serious collectors, speculator, and dilettantes, healthy survivors in the rate for success and prestige, all found emotional and financial compensation in the silvery glades of Corot . . . and a secular reaffirmation of the Puritan ethic in the stolid peasants of Millet."[6] The strong financial compensation that Bermingham mentions merely provides a cyclical answer to the question of the

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[4] Joshua C. Taylor, introduction to *American Art in the Barbizon Mood*, Peter Bermingham (Washington, D.C., Smithsonian Institution Press, 1975), 9-10.
[5] Bermingham, 17.
[6] Ibid.

popularity of the movement. Since the Barbizon painters were successful, their paintings sold well and were worth a lot of money, making them a sound investment. The emotional support Bermingham states, though, is an important explanation and suggests that nature and landscape painting had not lost their mystique after the Civil War.

While American society's relationship to nature had changed after the Civil War, and continued to change throughout the end of the 19th century, interest in nature never fully abated. The shift from a connection with nature to an impression of and reaction to it, as Janson expertly suggests, meant that the "mystery of nature retained its spiritual significance but required an alternate mode of expression."[7] Barbizon painting, of course, subsequently filled this void, but the more prescient point that Janson makes asserts that there was still a "spiritual significance" to nature, even if that relationship was complicated by the growth of industrialism. Though the style of landscape painting changed after the Civil War, paintings of nature were still expected to abide by a set of aesthetic guidelines. While these guidelines were still loose enough to allow for individual interpretation by the artists, which Janice Simon defines as "poetic beauty and expression" in her essay "Reenvisioning 'This Well-Wooded Land,'" they also provided relatively narrow strictures for representation and the expression of more modern themes.[8] Simon expresses this while discussing some of the later paintings of Alexander Wyant, specifically *An Old Clearing* from 1881, which formed a subtle protest against policies of deforestation and the industrialization that was injuring the surrounding

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[7] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 177.
[8] Janice Simon, "Reenvisioning 'This Well-Wooded Land,'" in *Seeing High & Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture*, ed. Patricia Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 156.

landscape. While trying to communicate the negative effects of modern life and show that the changes in policy were needed in order to preserve nature, Wyant was still bound by the same rules of "poetic beauty and expression," or else his work would not have been successful and would have remained unseen. Though it is only one specific example, Wyant's struggle to straddle the fine line of what were considered acceptable modes of representation points to the larger contradiction between the aesthetics of contemporary landscape painting and the realities of life in the late 19th century, some of which were harsh and visually repugnant.

Whittredge, in a fashion not entirely dissimilar to Wyant, also struggled with the apparent dichotomy between the changing aesthetic of contemporary landscape painting, life in the late 19th century, and his success as a Hudson River School artist. If he were to remain relevant, developing a new style more closely aligned with contemporary artistic trends became necessary. Over the course of a ten year period, from his first transition in 1876 away from the Hudson River School style, as seen in *Evening in the Woods*, to his return to forest interiors with *Brook in the Woods* in 1886, Whittredge underwent a broad reconsideration of himself, his work, and his position in both the American art community and American society in general.[9] This period displays a significant difference from his earlier works as a Hudson River School painter, leaving scenes of forest interiors for the rural coastline and homesteads of Rhode Island. The new subjects for these works, however, were not made in isolation or on the simple assumption that a

[9] Most of Whittredge's work from the Hudson River School era, especially some of his most famous works, such as *The Old Hunting Grounds* (1864), are forest interiors. In this way, 1876 and 1886 are two bookends to this period of development, starting and ending with forest interior scenes.

change in the subject matter would be enough to maintain relevance, though Whittredge remained a studio artist throughout his career.[10]

Over the course of a ten year period directly following the Centennial Exhibition of 1876, in which Whittredge was instrumental in organizing the American Art Exhibition, he underwent three major stylistic developments. I have endeavored to reassess his work from this transitional part of his career; though significant, it is not well studied. Responding to American landscape painting's shift towards the freer, more subjective art of the French Barbizon School, Whittredge progressively adopted a new sense of naturalism. Whittredge's paintings during this ten year period are heavily laden with his thoughts on the development of modern society. By the late 19th century, the United States was no longer a staunchly isolationist country. Continued growth and modernizing of industry led to a boom in international trade, which opened U.S. borders and developed stronger trade relations with Europe. This industrial growth and international expansion were mirrored by a long process of urbanization that had been occurring since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. These same city dwellers that had come to view the American wilderness as the holder of moral purity and truth disavowed that sentiment after the Civil War, obfuscating the American people's relationship with nature and the tradition of landscape painting. His representations of rural life on the coast of New England bear signs of social commentary that display a

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[10] By the late 1870's, when Whittredge was painting coastal scenes in New England, he purposefully made his works look like they were painted *en plein-air*, though he would not have painted them on site. Instead, he made copious sketches and later painted the scenes in his studio. Some of his sketchbooks from this period, for example, contain sketches of scenes similar to those in some of the works studied here. See: Worthington Whittredge papers, circa 1840s-1965, bulk 1849-1908. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

hesitant acceptance of modern life, a progressive stance and representational choice for a landscape artist from this period and a characteristic which makes his work fairly unique. Whittredge's art, especially during this period, makes an exceptional case study because he was extremely sensitive to the cultural attitude of America, as noted scholar Anthony F. Janson posits, acting as a barometer of the broad, historical changes that took place in the United States during and after the Civil War."[11] While many art critics and patrons were relatively quick to support the European avant-garde painting coming into the United States, it was met with a more guarded reaction by much of the American public. Furthermore, this was accompanied by a noticeable backlash against changes in contemporary life, most notably against the negative aspects of urban life. Whittredge's paintings from the mid 1870s to mid 1880s display a similar trepidation, divided between the past, as a former leader of the Hudson River School movement, and modernity. His works show a continued effort not only to understand American Barbizon painting and changes in modern culture, but also reveal his attempts to change the way he envisioned and perceived nature in order to paint it in a new style.

In order to build an understanding of his work from this ten year period, I have divided the paper into six main sections. My examination of his work relies not only on a contextualization of Whittredge's painting in regards to the American Barbizon School, which had become the dominant American landscape painting movement, but also through a close reading of the paintings themselves. Throughout this period the changes

[11] Anthony F. Janson, "Worthington Whittredge: The Development of a Hudson River Painter, 1860-1868," *American Art Journal* 11, no. 2 (April, 1979): 84, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1594150. As one of the closing lines of his essay, this statement not only makes a broad claim about his work in general, but it also refers back to his paintings completed between 1860-1868 and Whittredge's acknowledgement that people could no longer afford to lose themselves to nature.

Whittredge made to his paintings were very concrete and pictorial, adapting his view point and changing his representational style from very smooth to painterly in order to find new ways to represent mood or feeling in his work. As such, a formal deconstruction of his work from this period provides the best means to analyze it. The first section of this paper prefaces Whittredge's changes after 1876, establishing him as an artist comfortable with adapting to change and altering his style. While it focuses on his works from 1864-1874, which is before the dates of this study, it is imperative to understand Whittredge as an artist and his artistic style before discussing his transition away from the Hudson River School style in 1876. Before providing a more direct analysis of Whittredge's work, I contextualize the artistic climate for landscape painting in America during the 1870s and 1880s through an examination of primary sources that discuss different trends. This examination highlights the fracturing of the dialogue on landscape painting, transitioning away from the Hudson River School and towards a more subjective style, as well as a number of other growing trends. Thereafter, the bulk of the paper is devoted to an analysis of Whittredge's work from 1876 to 1886. The section following the historical study analyzes Whittredge in 1876, a pivotal year for him both as an artist and for American art in general. This is followed by an analysis of his work after his artistic crisis in 1877 and his focus on naturalism, his transition to an American Barbizon style in 1881, and his return to forest interior scenes in 1885.

State of the Question

Despite being an artist whose career spans several art movements, the majority of the literature concerning Whittredge focuses on his time as a Hudson River School painter. While this period only covers thirteen years of his life, from his return to the U.S. in 1859 until the end of the movement in 1872, much of his extant work in the U.S. comes from this era. Furthermore, as his identity after the end of the Hudson River School is difficult to interpret, it has largely remained unexamined in critical scholarship. A new interpretation of American landscape painting, though, necessarily grows out of a reading of some of the seminal scholars on the subject, namely Barbara Novak and Angela Miller.[12] Both write about the height of American landscape painting, covering the middle of the 19th century from 1825-1875, ending their analyses with the decline of landscape painting as the dominant mode in the U.S. Barbara Novak's *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting 1825-1875* is one of the founding texts of our contemporary understanding of landscape painting in America, evaluating the vast number of images produced during this fifty year period and providing a thorough schematic for the development of these images over time. Her analysis begins in the 1820s and 1830s with the inclusion of God in the American landscape, not simply in the untouched forests of the ever expanding United States, but as paradise and the primordial

[12] Angela Miller, in the introduction to *Empire of the Eye*, keenly notes her own apprehension at using the term "American" to refer to the landscape painting that emerged in the Northeast in mid-19th century as much of it was regionally confined to that area. In regards to this analysis, which is post 1876, that regionalism begins to break down, especially as European trends become more influential. As will be discussed, the influence of European art created an anxiety in defining art as specifically "American" in some artists, particularly the Hudson River School artists. Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1.

wilderness.[13] Novak unpacks the close relationship of artists and the American people to the American wilderness throughout the book, noting the influence of Transcendentalism, Romanticism, and the rise of the Hudson River School. The relevance of her text is most easily seen in her closing remarks as she notes the importance that was given to landscape painting in mid-19th century America, setting up the quasi-religious devotion to nature, the very thing that would be disavowed in the 1870s. Relating, once again, to the inclusion of God in nature, Novak notes that the "truths of light and atmosphere that absorbed American artists quickly served a concept of nature as God, turning landscape painting into proto-icons."[14] With the destruction wrought by the Civil War, however, much of which took place over the hallowed ground of the American countryside, it was exactly this notion of landscape painting as a "proto-icon" that audiences rejected.

Angela Miller's *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875* is a comprehensive revision of Novak's authoritative text on the same subject. Miller's text is inclusive, however, of more than a decade's worth of additional research in the field of 19th century American landscape painting, a topic that has received much scholarly discussion, especially after Novak published her book in 1980. Miller's discussion of American landscape painting follows a similar program too, though she focuses more heavily on the symbolic and expressive nature of these paintings, examining how they were used to create a sense of national character. Miller's closing remarks relate the struggles of American landscape painters in using nature to

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[13] See Barbara Novak, *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting 1825-1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3-17.
[14] Novak, 273. More than just a representation of a holy figure or scripture, icons themselves transfigure the image into a divine representation. The gilt background of an icon reflects the light that shines on it, transforming the light into the holy light of God.

define the nation's character, specifically focusing on those who used atmospheric luminism. "Yet in the end this aesthetic attempt to revalorize nature, to posit a purely unconscious mechanism of reform," Miller explains, establishing the general reason for the fall of landscape painting in the late 19th century, "foundered on the hard rock of national conflict, one more failed effort to give nature an authoritative voice in the formation of cultural identity."[15] Though Miller and Novak end their analyses before 1876, their texts are crucial to understanding the origin of American landscape painting, the art of the Hudson River School, and the arguments of contemporary scholars in this field. Both texts suggest the changes in America that led to the decline in popularity of landscape painting, much of which grew out of the Civil War and the fundamental changes in American life it engendered.

Similar to the works on American landscape painting by Novak and Miller, the majority of the scholarship devoted to Whittredge focuses on his years as one of the major Hudson River School artists. While Whittredge is often identified as a member of the group, his work assessed in comprehensive texts that discuss the movement at large, there are a number of articles that focus specifically on his work, two of which are particularly relevant. Anthony F. Janson's article "Worthington Whittredge: The Development of a Hudson River Painter, 1860-1868" analyzes how Whittredge adapted his style to fit within the Hudson River School aesthetic and how he altered it to deal with the cultural changes that occurred after the Civil War. Janson also shows how Whittredge conveyed some of the typical Hudson River School visual idioms, such as nature being

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[15] Angela Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875,* 288.

the holder of moral truths which can be conveyed through art, and how that concept changed by the end of the 1860s, then representing nature as a retreat that "man can no longer abandon himself to."[16] Janson effectively shows how Whittredge was keenly aware of the changing attitude towards landscape painting as it evolved through the 1860s, something that he would continue to be aware of throughout the 1870s and 1880s.

The second important text concerning this period is Roberta Smith Favis' article "Worthington Whittredge's Domestic Interiors." In the article Favis discusses a series of domestic interior scenes that Whittredge painted in the early 1860's, unique in his oeuvre since he never returned to this subject matter, and relates them to Whittredge's struggle to redefine himself as an American painter after he returned from Europe in 1859.[17] She argues that, by using these interior scenes to study the effects of directional lighting, Whittredge was able to translate these effects into his later landscape paintings. Favis also relates these paintings to images of domesticity at large, drawing a parallel between the placid, welcoming interiors and the desire for peace and a return to normalcy during the Civil War. While these paintings represent an earlier stage in Whittredge's career, Favis' analysis of his attempt to redefine his painting style in 1859 mirrors his struggle to redefine his style in the late 1870s, drawing an important parallel. Furthermore, Favis's formal reading of Whittredge's work, relating the lighting in the domestic scenes to this Hudson River School work, establishes an important precedent for analyzing Whittredge's oeuvre.

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[16] Janson, "Worthington Whittredge: The Development of a Hudson River Painter, 1860-1868," 84.
[17] See Roberta Smith Favis, "Worthington Whittredge's Domestic Interiors," *American Art* 9, no. 1 (Spring, 1995): 14-35, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109193.

Of the books and articles that discuss Whittredge's paintings in the ten year period between 1876 and 1886, the majority of them only discuss a few paintings in order to analyze a very specific aspect of these works, limiting their scope and only adding pieces to the overall dialogue concerning this period. Discussing three of Whittredge's paintings from 1868-1876 Nicole Spassky, in *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume II*, provides a visual link between the height of Whittredge's fame in the late 1860s and the beginning of the next stage of his career. The latest of the three paintings discussed in this overview of the Metropolitan Museum's American art collection, *Evening in the Woods*, is identified as showing the lingering influence of Asher Brown Durand as well as a new interest in the Barbizon School. However, Spassky merely cites the impression of two contemporary critics and, apart from an earlier remark on Whittredge's "more personal vision of nature and a style distinguished by an increasingly free use of paint and a sensibility to paint texture," does not extend her examination of the work.[18] While Spassky offers relatively little interpretation of the work, she does connect it with earlier Hudson River School art. Meredith Arms, who also interprets a narrow range of paintings in her article, "Thomas Worthington Whittredge: Home by the Sea," focuses on a series of landscapes that Whittredge painted in Rhode Island in the late 1870s and early 1880s.[19] Significantly, Arms picks up on Whittredge's focus on the vernacular architecture of the area, his personal tie to the area, and the thematic interest in an earlier rural lifestyle. Furthermore, the focus on vernacular

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[18] Natalie Spassky, "Worthington Whittredge," in *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Vol. II, A Catalogue of Works by Artists Born between 1816 and 1845* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 134-141.
[19] See Meredith Arms, "Thomas Worthington Whittredge: Home by the Sea," in *Rutgers Art Review* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1988-89): 61-68.

architecture that Arms addresses shows one of the ways that American landscape painters focused on cultural identity.

Detailing the visual effects of Whittredge's changing style in his *Seascape* of 1883, Katherine E. Manthorne, in the catalogue for *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Nineteenth-century American Painting*, writes a thorough analysis of this significant later coast scene. While not directly tying Whittredge's work to the Barbizon aesthetic, Manthorne relates the horizontal banding across the canvas and pastel tones to James Abbott McNeil Whistler. Above all, Manthorne notices an "open-mindedness" in his work and autobiography that "prompted him to explore progressive art and to maintain his own artistic fervour," implying Whittredge's general attitude in the mid 1880s.[20] Similarly, H. Barbara Weinberg in "Recent Acquisitions, A Collection: 2003-2004" in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, identifies Whittredge's *The Brook in the Woods* as "evocative [of the] canvases of George Inness," drawing an important visual corollary to the American Barbizon painter and stating another highly important point about Whittredge's late work.[21]

Anthony Janson, whose book *Worthington Whittredge* represents the only comprehensive analysis of Whittredge's entire oeuvre, devotes a chapter to his work from approximately 1876 – 1883, titled "Barbizon Painting." Just prior to this, however, Janson ends the previous chapter with a discussion of Whittredge's and the Hudson River School's declining fortunes. By the early 1870s the popularity of the Hudson River

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[20] Katherine E. Manthorne, "Catalogue," in *The Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Nineteenth-century American Painting*, ed. Barbara Novak and Elizabeth Garrity Ellis. (New York: The Vendome Press, 1986), 164.

[21] H. Barbara Weinberg, "Recent Acquisitions, A Collection: 2003-2004," in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 62, no. 3 (Fall 2004), 34.

School was rapidly declining, so that by the time that Whittredge stepped down from his position as the president of the National Academy in 1875, its fame and popularity were almost completely replaced by more modern forms of painting. Janson begins his description of the next segment of Whittredge's career by saying that he emerged two years after the Centennial Exhibition "a convert to Barbizon painting."[22] During this two year period, and most notably in 1877, Janson examines the turmoil Whittredge went through as he was redefining his artistic vision for the second time in his career. Returning to Newport, Rhode Island, which held personal significance for Whittredge, as well as a clean visual palette absent of ties to either Hudson River School or Barbizon aesthetics, Whittredge was able to "achieve a new synthesis, despite his initial difficulties that autumn."[23]

Identifying Charles-Francois Daubigny as a direct catalyst for his work, Janson identifies a new naturalism and use of light in Whittredge's work, resulting in the hybridization of the Hudson River School and Barbizon styles. But by the time Whittredge painted scenes of houses in the Newport area, the same subject matter that Arms identifies in her article, Janson further redefines Whittredge's style as being firmly Barbizon. Since Janson defines American Barbizon painting as being devoid of the social and political connotation it held in France, it becomes problematic to interpret Whittredge's work as completely Barbizon.[24] While American Barbizon art certainly did not have the same political and social connotations as Barbizon art did in France,

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[22] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 158.
[23] Ibid., 163.
[24] Ibid., 177.

Whittredge's scenes have social and political undercurrents that prevent his work from fitting into rigid definitions. Furthermore, Janson's statement that Whittredge was a "convert to Barbizon painting," while not totally wrong, oversimplifies Whittredge's relationship to the movement. By calling him a convert, Janson implies that Whittredge no longer fully identified as a Hudson River School painter; Whittredge's *Autobiography* would imply otherwise.[25] More significantly, however, redefining him in this way separates him from the national and cultural implications of the Hudson River School, whose artists sought to define American culture through its natural landscape. While Janson's interpretation of this segment of Whittredge's oeuvre raises excellent points regarding the technical changes in his paintings, his analysis does not completely account for all aspects of Whittredge's work. When Whittredge returned to painting forest interior scenes in 1885, for example, using some of the same formal techniques he did in the 1860s, Janson misidentifies Whittredge as unwillingly capitulating to the dominant Barbizon mode.[26] The reason for this change, however, had less to do with his acquiescence to Barbizon painting and more to do with his trouble re-interpreting the same landscape.

While there are a number of primary sources that discuss both landscape painting in the late 19th century and Whittredge specifically, the most significant of these is *The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge*, published posthumously in 1942, in which Whittredge writes about his long career and postulates about the future of American art.

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[25] John I. Baur, ed., *The Autobiography of Worthington Whittredge 1820-1910* (New York: Brooklyn Museum Journal, 1942).
[26] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 190-191.

While Whittredge talks at length about his early years in the U.S., his experience in Europe between 1849 and 1859, and his success as a Hudson River School painter, he spends extremely little time discussing his work after 1876 when his visual language changed. While Whittredge does refer to several American Barbizon artists, tying himself to the movement, the lack of a broad discussion might indicate unresolved feelings on that phase of his life and art. Whittredge also discusses his desire to see a new movement of uniquely American art, saying that it must come from "the close intermingling of the peoples of the earth in our peculiar form of government."[27] His statement indicates not only his acceptance of international influences in American art, at least by the time he wrote the *Autobiography* in the early 1900s, but also that his own interest in distinctly American art had not waned. While Whittredge's *Autobiography* needs to be closely examined for historical accuracy, since it was written more than twenty years after the time period of this analysis, it is instrumental in understanding the artist's motives. Furthermore, art periodicals and journals from the late 19th century served as an invaluable resource in constructing a more complete understanding of this period and filling in some of the missing narrative in the *Autobiography*.

The most complete analysis of this segment of Whittredge's artistic career comes from Janson. Though his interpretation of the series of changes Whittredge underwent during this period is influential to understanding this period, the author does not fully account for the social and political motivations of the work, as well as his devotion to contemporary modes of painting. Since much of the rest of the scholarship on Whittredge

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[27] Baur, 54.

is broken into smaller pieces by individual scholars, I have synthesized some of these interpretations and historical sources on painting into a new analysis. Furthermore, since Whittredge is still a relatively understudied mid-late 19th century landscape painter, my own understanding and analysis of this topic has drawn upon a variety of other artists and movements in American and European art.

Anticipating Change: Declining Prospects of the Hudson River School, 1864-1874

The Centennial Exhibition of 1876, held in Philadelphia, was a watershed moment for art in the United States. Though trends and tastes in art had been steadily changing since the end of the Civil War, it was the Centennial Exhibition that most clearly marked a significant shift in the direction of American art. Put simply, as Kimberly Orcutt asserts in her article "H. H. Moore's *Almeh* and the Politics of the Centennial Exhibition," "the time of the New York landscape school had passed, and the expatriates' time had come."[28] The true nature of this shift was, of course, much more complicated than Orcutt's loaded, but otherwise innocuous, statement assumes it to be. The seismic shift that it portrays, though, is useful for understanding the trouble that older artists had in modernizing their image and approach. In order to understand Whittredge's response to the decline of the Hudson River School, a group of landscape painters he was a part of, and the ascendance of European trends in contemporary art, my analysis of Whittredge's work begins before this shift in 1876. In order to better show the changes in American art and culture after the Civil War and establish Whittredge as an artist whose

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[28] Kimberly Orcutt, "H. H. Moore's *Almeh* and the Politics of the Centennial Exhibition," *American Art* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 66, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/518294.

style changed multiple times over the course of his career, my study will briefly examine several of his works and thoughts leading up to the Centennial Exhibition in order to construct a more complete understanding of how he changed during this time.

Born near Cincinnati, Ohio in 1820, Whittredge started his long career as a house and sign painter, though he had begun painting landscapes and genre scenes by the late 1830s.[29] For a large part of his career Whittredge was not only a peripatetic artist, traveling to several locations around Europe and North America, but also stylistically transient. This latter trait is particularly important, as Whittredge underwent several stylistic changes throughout his career as he adapted to changing social and artistic environments. From 1849 to 1859 Whittredge studied landscape painting in Europe, following a trend of American painters completing their study abroad, as there were limited opportunities in the U.S. at the time. Eventually settling down in Düsseldorf to study under Andreas Achenbach, as well as traveling to both Paris and Rome during this ten year period, Whittredge quickly assimilated the German landscape style, which was heavily influenced by German Romanticism.[30] Upon returning to the United States in 1859, Whittredge once again quickly changed his style to match the dominant Hudson River School aesthetic. The most significant change, in terms of the beginning of the decline of the Hudson River School and the movement's obsolescence after 1876, was a

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[29] Whittredge was actually born "Thomas Worthington Whitridge," but adopted the name "Worthington Whittredge" upon his return to America in 1860. Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 12-13.

[30] Whittredge originally sailed for London and then Paris in 1849, attempting to find an artist to study under there. Incidentally, Whittredge traveled to Barbizon but was not impressed with the work he saw, most likely, as Janson notes, because his "ignorance of European tradition was an insurmountable obstacle to understanding French art." This issue was not personal to Whittredge, and reflects a more general misunderstanding of European art at the time. Düsseldorf seemed like the next obvious option as it had become one of the major art centers of Europe at the time, the academy there gaining considerable fame. Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 35.

shift in the tone of landscape painting after the Civil War, which mirrored a shift in America's relationship to nature.

Returning to the U.S. in 1859, Whittredge began his career as a Hudson River School artist in the second generation of the school, painting with such artists as Frederick Edwin Church, John F. Kensett, and Sanford Robinson Gifford. The height of his style during this period, still influenced by the Romantic naturalism he adopted while in Düsseldorf, is exhibited well in *The Old Hunting Grounds* from 1864.[31] Despite dating from the end of the Civil War, the work is an excellent example of the Romantic, picturesque mode that he worked in prior to and throughout most of the 1860s. The painting is a relatively simple interior forest scene, depicting a small pond in the foreground with an old, decaying bark canoe sitting in the water. Stretching up from the left side of the painting, a tree arches over the pond in the center and stretches to the right side of the work. The middle ground is populated by the blasted stump of a tree, a common image in many Hudson River School paintings, and a grove of young birch trees, their light bark and leaves illuminated by sunlight. Two small deer graze in the serene forest near the center of the painting, one of which leans down to drink from the pool. This tranquil view of nature is actually a complex realization of several of William Cullen Bryant's poems.[32] The allegorical setting that Whittredge renders in the painting,

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[31] Whittredge's *The Old Hunting Grounds* is currently in the collection of the Reynolda House Museum of American Art in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 36 ½ x 27 ⅛ inches (92.1 x 68.9 cm).

[32] Janson originally proposed this in his 1979 article "Worthington Whittredge: The Development of a Hudson River Painter, 1860-1868," though it has now become a largely accepted interpretation among scholars.

connecting the forest to God and showing it as a holy space, comes from Bryant's "A Forest Hymn":

> The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned
> To hew the shaft, and lat the architrave,
> And spread the roof above them,–ere he framed
> The lofty vault, to gather and roll back
> The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,[33]

Following the description that Bryant lays out in this piece, Whittredge transforms the trees and branches into the outline of a cathedral, the curved tree growing on the left forming the barrel vault over the center of the painting. The light cast upon the birch trees, then, is also symbolically a divine light filling God's natural cathedral. Stretching back to the rise of Transcendentalism during the 1830's, God had become an important part of the American landscape.[34] Though interpretations of this theme would change throughout the 19th century, the divine allegory of nature was still important to the second generation of the Hudson River School.

This picturesque, divinely inspired view of nature, however, is balanced by an elegiac sense of decay in the work. The canoe in the foreground of the work is not only intended to be an old Native American canoe, left behind to rot, but is also a metaphor for the absence of Native Americans in the Eastern region of the country. Referencing a nostalgic discussion of Native Americans in Bryant's "A Walk at Sunset," the inclusion of the boat participates in a contemporary sentiment that feared the permanent loss of

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[33] William Cullen Bryant, "A Forest Hymn," *Poems, by William Cullen Bryant. Collected and Arranged by the Author. In Two Volumes: Volume I* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1854), 171-178.
[34] For a description of the inclusion of God in the American landscape, see Novak's "Introduction: The Nationalist Garden and the Holy Book," in *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting 1825-1865.*

Native American culture after their removal to the West.[35] Whittredge's *The Old Hunting Grounds*, presents a harsher interpretation of modern American culture within the allegorical beauty of the scene. It is not the pool of water that has caused the boat to decay, but the actions of man that have forced the Native Americans to abandon the boat.

In terms of Whittredge's oeuvre, *The Old Hunting Grounds* is an early example of a painting that no longer relied on the conventions he used in Europe. Instead, Whittredge adopted some of the pictorial conventions that were utilized by other members of the Hudson River School. More specifically, Whittredge began to use one of Asher Brown Durand's pictorial devices that was made famous in his painting *Into the Woods*, framing the outside of the canvas with trees that often bend over the center, drawing the viewer into the painting [Figure 1]. Whittredge continued using this convention in some of his works throughout the 1860s and part of the 1870s. Moreover, it is Whittredge's connection to the philosophy of the Hudson River School that is solidified with this painting. For the artists of the Hudson River School, and for much of American society in general at the time, nature was viewed as the holder of moral truths that could be conveyed by the artist.[36] The allegorical image of the forest as a cathedral and the inclusion of God in it is a reference to this natural philosophy. Janson analyzes the justification for this philosophy when he notes that "Fundamental to this outlook is a national mythology which posits that nature determines America's character and justified

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[35] Janson, "Worthington Whittredge: The Development of a Hudson River Painter, 1860-68," 77.; "Description: *The Old Hunting Grounds*," *Reynolda House Museum of American Art*, www.reynoldahouse.org/collections/object/the-old-hunting-grounds.; William Cullen Bryant, "A Walk at Sunset," *Poems, by William Cullen Bryant. Collected and Arranged by the Author. In Two Volumes: Volume I* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1854), 65-70.
[36] Janson, 77.

her emerging civilization."[37] The association of America's wilderness to the national character of the country, however, became severely problematic after the Civil War when nature could no longer be seen as the holder of moral truth.

The American Civil War, which lasted until 1865, had profound effects on the national American psyche, altering American society's relationship with nature, among other things. In the post Civil War years many of the Hudson River School artists, who had been major proponents of the idea of the national landscape and that nature was the holder of moral truth, struggled to redefine their relationship to nature in their works, Whittredge included. Most of the sources of their struggle stemmed from this vastly new relationship, which American society had difficulty defining during the end of the 19th century. The major cause of this shift was the Civil War itself which, in metaphorical terms, "shook down the blossoms and blasted the promise of spring. The colors of American civilization abruptly changed."[38] Eloquently stated by Lewis Mumford in *The Brown Decades*, the aftermath of the Civil War gave rise to a reversal of thought, abandoning both the concepts of a national landscape and the moral truth of nature. After blood had been spilt over the battlefields of the North and the South, nature could no longer be considered pure and the acknowledgement of regionalism became necessary. Mumford leaves out, however, that the "promise of spring" was already a fallacious supposition by the time the Civil War broke out. The processes of industrialization and urbanization had already begun, subduing nature and severely restricting the amount of

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[37] Janson, 77.

[38] Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America 1865-1895* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 2. Mumford's study of art during the Gilded Age was first published in 1930, so it offers a unique view of that era through a historical lens.

land that was truly untouched, contrary to much of the imagery produced by the Hudson River School. Angela Miller notes this in her article “Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape,” asserting that “the national landscape foundered formally on the very rock that was sundering the nation politically—the tension between . . . loyalty to place and loyalty to an abstract national ideal.”[39] Just as the unity of the nation became less and less certain leading up the Civil War, Miller ties this concept to the notion of the national landscape, which was resting on a similar house of cards. By the end of the Civil War, then, American society’s relationship with nature needed to be reassessed. The ideal of the national landscape was erased by the divisive war and could no longer cover up the illusion of the pristine American wilderness. The almost myopic positivity of the Hudson River School had to be abandoned for a newer model.[40]

Reacting to America’s changing relationship with nature after the war, Whittredge’s *The Trout Pool* (1870), presents a more modernized, naturalistic view of landscape painting. The subject matter of Whittredge’s 1870 painting *The Trout Pool* [Figure 2] is quite similar to *The Old Hunting Grounds*, a pool of water in the center of the painting located within a dense, uninhabited forest. The scene before the viewer in *The Trout Pool*, though, is much different. A small river in the foreground gives way to a short waterfall and a large pool in the middle ground. Most of the background is obscured by the tree line, though the river can be seen extending back in a small portion of the painting. This painting reflects the greater sense of naturalism that Whittredge used in his

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[39] Angela Miller, “Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape,” *American Literary History* 4, no. 2 (Summer, 1992): 219, http://www.jstor.org/stable/489986. For more information on representation of the Civil War in American art, see: Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Civil War and American Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

[40] Miller, “Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape,” 219-220.

works after the Civil War.[41] In order to start modernizing his paintings after the Civil War, keeping up with current trends in painting, Whittredge began to utilize specific aspects of the French Barbizon style in his works. In this painting Whittredge's use of transitory effects of nature, a style promulgated by the Barbizon School, can be seen in his use of light.[42] In *The Trout Pool*, light streams down from an undefined source in the top right of the painting. Cascading down through the branches, it dots the trees and the forest floor in the foreground and covers most of the small cliff and waterfall in the middle ground of the painting. This directly contrasts Whittredge's use of light in *The Old Hunting Grounds*. Instead of rendering the light naturalistically, the non-directional lighting illuminates the birches dramatically, back-lighting the painting and giving it a feeling of serenity. Unlike *The Trout Pool*, the lighting in *The Old Hunting Grounds* is fabricated to help define the mood of the work. While Whittredge does update his style by using new lighting effects, he also relies on Durand's convention, using trees in the foreground to frame the painting. Similar to *The Old Hunting Ground*, Whittredge then illuminates part of the area behind this frame, the cliff and waterfall in this painting, drawing the viewer's eye into the recessive space of the painting.

In *The Trout Pool*, along with his other paintings from the late 1860s, Whittredge was attempting to redefine man's relationship to nature. Whittredge no longer rendered the interior of the forest as a cathedral of trees for the worship of God. Freed from these complex allegories, this picturesque forest interior is simply that; viewers can take

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[41] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 100.
[42] Doreen Bolger Burke and Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, "The Hudson River School in Eclipse," in *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1988), 78.

pleasure in the idyllic beauty but they do not identify with it. As Janson asserts, Whittredge captured the altered relationship with nature in his paintings from the late 1860s, that "man can no longer abandon himself to nature; rather, it is nature that will inevitably be lost to man."[43] While *The Trout Pool* and *The Old Hunting Grounds* are not very visually dissimilar, as the vast difference in symbolism might suggest, the subtle shift can be seen in the two paintings. As previously mentioned, *The Old Hunting Grounds* conveys the sense that the forest endures long beyond the lifespan of the people that inhabit it. This sentiment, while not as obviously revoked in *The Trout Pool* as in other paintings from the time, creates a scene of serene beauty without the assumption that nature will outlast man. Rather, as Janson poetically states, "Whittredge seems to say [*The Trout Pool*] is paradise regained, not on God's terms but man's."[44] After the destruction wrought by the Civil War, Whittredge shows a new relationship with nature, presenting it as a retreat accessed on man's terms instead of an inherently hallowed space. While Whittredge only subtly changed his representational style after the Civil War, adopting a greater sense of naturalism, *The Trout Pool* presents a comprehensive reevaluation of his work and its meaning, displaying his adaptability.

The changes in modern society that occurred as a result of the Civil War, however, were more comprehensive than just the altering attitude towards nature that Whittredge was specifically responding to in *The Trout Pool*. The overall culture of the nation began changing after the Civil War, especially in regards to its art, as much of everyday life changed as well. The post-Civil War period saw a second explosion of

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[43] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 107-108.
[44] Ibid., 110.

business and industrial growth after the initial Industrial Revolution. While the U.S. had already become an industrial country by this point, it was by no means the leading industrial producer in the world. By the beginning of the 20th century, however, the industrial production of the United States surpassed that of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany combined.[45] The end of the 19th century also saw the expansion of business and the creation of large corporations. A significant factor in the growth of these corporations was the growing practice of selling shares of the company to minority share holders. While the heads of business were still able to retain control, selling shares enabled them to raise enormous amounts of capital very quickly, which they could then use to expand their business even further, especially by controlling the means and ends of production either horizontally or vertically.[46] The enormous expansion of these businesses, though, did not necessarily benefit the working class.

The rapid expansion of business and industry in America wrought a significant cultural impact as well. More telling than the comprehensive expansion of America's industrial production was the seismic shift in the labor force that came as a result of this. Walter Licht, in the book *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century*, notes this when he mentions that "the industrial workforce expanded from 1.5 to 5.9 million workers, who now represented 25 percent of the country's entire labor force."[47] Over the course of this period, the shift in economic production and the transition to a

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[45] Walter Licht, "An Industrialized Heartland," in *Industrializing America: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Stanley I. Kutler (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 102.
[46] Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 7. Since this was a relatively new practice at the time and modern business regulations were not in place yet, this system was abused by many business magnates, such as Daniel Drew, who took to manipulating stock prices for personal or business gains.
[47] Licht, 102.

predominantly urban industrial labor force rather than a rural workforce changed the everyday life of many American citizens. As Mumford hints in the title of his book, *The Brown Decades*, the positive effect of industrial growth, such as the increasing availability of a wide range of everyday products, was tempered by the quality of life this brought for the urban worker. "If the machine seemed the prime cause of the abundance of new products changing the character of daily life," Alan Trachtenberg asserts in *The Incorporation of America*, "it also seemed responsible for newly visible poverty, slums, and an unexpected wretchedness of industrial conditions."[48] The change in contemporary life, as Trachtenberg points out, was very dichotomous; the celebration of technology in events such as the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 and the 1893 Chicago World's Fair was tempered by the rise of the Progressive movement and its acknowledgement of the need for better working conditions. The growth in industry and commerce in the U.S. also led to an increase in international trade and, as a result, a greater influence of European culture in the U.S. With improvements in shipping technology, such as faster and more reliable vessels, the distance across the Atlantic effectively began to shrink, helping parts of both cultures connect.

It was the combination of all of these factors, including the changing attitude towards nature, that led to the beginning of the decline of the Hudson River School around 1871-72, only a short time after Whittredge painted *The Trout Pool*. It should be noted that part of this decline happened naturally; Asher Brown Durand retired from active painting in 1869, John Kensett died suddenly in 1872, and the inspiration for

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[48] Trachtenberg, 38.

several members of the second generation of the Hudson River School, such as Albert Bierstadt and Jasper Cropsey, began to wane, their subjects becoming repetitive.[49] The declining prospects of the Hudson River School at the time, however, cannot entirely be attributed to the natural decline of some of its members. The end of the movement itself, which began to seem passé in the face of modern culture, happened relatively quickly. While the beginning of this decline is somewhat hard to identify, as it is owed mostly to slowing sales in the early 1870s, it became increasingly apparent within a few years that the art of the Hudson River School was falling out of favor with critics, patrons, and more contemporary artists.

With the changing, more industrial and urban culture after the Civil War came an influx of international goods and art, most notably the French academic style and the art of the Barbizon School, which quickly became popular. As these styles became more prominent in America, the differences between international and American art became more apparent. The representational language of the American landscape painters, still proclaiming the concept of truth to nature, began to be misinterpreted as merely copying the landscape.[50] By 1873 the declining fortunes of the Hudson River School became clear. An article, appearing in the January 1873 edition of *The Aldine*, sarcastically states the superiority of French landscape painting, saying that:

> Without instituting comparisons, which we all know are odious, it is safe to say that the landscape painters of France have brought their art to perfection which the landscape painters of America have not yet reached.

[49] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 153. Burke and Voorsanger, 73.
[50] Burke and Voorsanger, 73.

> They pursue a different method in their work, and the result is a certain solidity of color, beside which the color of our painters is weak and thin.[51]

The author of the article goes on to note that the superior training of the French landscape painters is obvious in their work. That many of the Hudson River School artists finished their training in Europe is of little consequence here, since the article merely means to show that the style of the French landscapists is superior to the American. Furthermore, by not supporting their opinion with a comparison between several works, the author of the article assumed that the reader would generally agree with the statement. While the Hudson River School still remained somewhat dominant for a few more years, its waning popularity in comparison to European art was becoming visible.

Whittredge would have been well aware of the declining fortunes of the Hudson River School as well, though he was not as grievously affected by it as other artists. As President of the National Academy of Art in 1874 and 1875, Whittredge would have known about current trends in the art world. As it stood, the National Academy was almost falling apart when Whittredge assumed his position as President. While the foremost concern was the heavy debt the school was under, still paying for the new building that was finished in 1866, accusations of mediocrity had begun to be waged against the school as well. During his two years as President, Whittredge managed to liquidate most of the school's debt, but the School's image continued to suffer throughout most of the rest of the 19th century.[52] *The Art Journal*, which wrote a series of articles about American artists between 1876 and 1880, featured Whittredge in 1876, saying that

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[51] "Woodland Scenery," *The Aldine* 6, no. 1 (Jan. 1873): 24, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20636459.
[52] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 151-152. The Society of American Artists was founded in 1877, which will be discussed later in this paper, specifically in opposition to the National Academy.

the "name of WHITTREDGE is widely known and cherished as one of the ablest belonging to the American school of landscape Art."[53] The praise the author gives Whittredge is surprisingly high, considering the year it was published and his relation to the Hudson River School. Despite this, it hints that Whittredge was in a different position than some of the other Hudson River School painters in the 1870s. The picturesque scenes that Whittredge painted were not as conceptually far removed from the simpler subjects contemporary critics began calling for, emphasizing the subjectivity of Barbizon painting.

During the same period, and concerning some of the same artists, the grand, sublime art of the American West was declining in popularity. The period from about 1860 – 1875 saw a complex set of ideas about the western part of the country emerge, transplanting the notion of American national identity to the West. While the popularity of this art was relatively short lived, beginning to decline only a few years after the end Hudson River School movement, its demise points to a significant shift in the conceptualization of America and its landscape. While there had been a steady stream of western exploration and settlement since the Lewis and Clark expedition from 1804 – 1806, which had continually pushed the literal and symbolic frontier of the country farther and farther west, it was not until after the Civil War that this land was organized and populated with greater purpose. Emily Neff, in the prologue to her book *The Modern West: American Landscapes 1890-1950*, explains this concept by discussing the "Great Surveys, the four government sponsored geological and geographical surveys from 1867

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[53] "American Painters: Worthington Whittredge, N.A.," *The Art Journal* 2 (1876): 148, http://www.jstor.org/stable/ 20568879.

to 1879" which were meant "not to discover the West for its audiences in the eastern United States, but literally to measure it."[54] By quantifying this space that had lain at the border of the country, it quickly accrued a vast amount of symbolic meaning. Crucially, it should be noted that the first of these surveys started two years after the end of the Civil War, seeking to understand the value of the western lands and to physically map them out. This uncharted land of the West was viewed differently than the landscape of the east and south, which had lost some of its quasi-religious significance after the end of the Civil War. The concept of the national landscape shifted fairly easily to the less complicated West, though it was still seen through the proxy of the eastern, New York based artists. On another level, however, the fallacy of the single nation landscape or national identity that had brought about the end the Hudson River School similarly brought about the end of sublime Western painting. Miller discusses this concept extremely well, breaking down the nation's desire to believe in a divinely gifted landscape. She asserts that "the hyperinflated rhetoric of Church, Bierstadt, and Moran between 1860 and 1875 betrays a need to furnish in paint the sense of conviction that was lacking in substance—belief, that is, in the prewar ideal of nationhood grounded in a binding covenant between the Almighty and his chosen."[55] The ideal of a national landscape and identity came crashing down by 1875, one of the long term effects of the Civil War. This uncomplicated view of America largely disappeared by the centennial.

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[54] Emily Ballew Neff, "Prologue: Landmarking the West," in *The Modern West: American Landscapes 1890-1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2006), 14.
[55] Miller, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape," 220.

While this change in identity is difficult to quantify, especially since Western landscape painting did not become nationally popular again until the last decade of the 19th century, it can be seen in the regionalism that became more prominent during this period. Using Thomas Moran's 1875 painting *Mountain of the Holy Cross* as a study to discuss painting in the American West from 1860-1875, Neff suggests that "Implicit in Moran's conception was that the journey [to national redemption] was a western one."[56] More than just symbolic, however, Neff implies that Moran meant this very literally, advocating the settling of the western region of the country. As the concept of the national landscape declined after the centennial, it was replaced with a greater sense of regionalism in the country, especially between the east and the west. No longer interpreted by eastern artists, western art was free to develop as the population of the region quickly grew during the end of the 19th century, especially after the California Gold Rush in 1849 and the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. At the same time, art in the eastern United States became much more secular and subjective, a product of European influences, and a process which shall be discussed later in this paper. Furthermore, while it is outside of the scope of this paper to discuss the work Whittredge made after his trips to the West in 1866, 1870, and 1871, it should be noted that they consist of a fairly large part of his oeuvre. While there are a substantial number of these works, Whittredge never returned to the subject of the Western landscape after

[56] Neff, 20.

1871, staying in the eastern US for the most part and painting the local landscape of that region.[57]

Whittredge's immediate pictorial response to the Hudson River School losing favor and the beginning of the rise of international styles can be seen in his 1874 painting *The Camp Meeting* [Figure 3]. Similar to *The Trout Pool*, the subtle but significant differences between this work and previous ones point to Whittredge taking his art in a new direction. Not all of the elements of the composition are new, however. Though the subject of the painting is quite different, the scene is presented in the middle of a dense forest near a body of water. Whittredge illuminates the forest behind the gathering, backlighting the painting and drawing the viewer into the space. Whittredge also shows the majority of the trunks of the trees, similar to *The Old Hunting Grounds* and *The Trout Pool*, adding vertical elements to the predominantly horizontal canvas.[58] This emphasis on verticality was included very purposefully, however, since it contrasts the horizontal plane of the painting and helps the interior space feel voluminous rather than cut off at the top and bottom. The body of water in the foreground of the painting functions similarly. While it restricts the viewer from fully entering into the space, it allows Whittredge to place the gathering in the middle ground of the work and not have the view of the figures obstructed by too many trees.

While Whittredge relied on previously established conventions in the work, *The Camp Meeting* shows him starting to leave the visual language of the Hudson River

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[57] A notable exception to this rule is the trip Whittredge made to Mexico City in the 1890s, though he did not paint any landscape while there.
[58] Spassky, 138.

School and transition to a more Barbizon inspired style. Just as Whittredge adapted the transitory effects of weather and light for *The Trout Pool* while retaining a crisp pictorial style, his visual language begins to change here as he acknowledged the rougher textured paintings of the Barbizon school by loosening his brushwork.[59] Whittredge added noticeably less detail in this painting, taking less time to render the branches and leaves of the trees. While many of the leaves are suggested by individual brushstrokes in *The Trout Pool*, Whittredge abandons this precision in *The Camp Meeting* in favor of painting dense patches of green foliage, using brushstrokes in varying directions to show the leaves on the trees. In this manner, the whole painting is much more atmospheric. Instead of a crisp view of an interior forest glen or towards a waterfall and pool of water, the view of the camp meeting emphasizes the texture and character of the trees themselves much less. Their columnar trunks are smooth, largely devoid of gnarled and mossy bark. Whittredge also relied on the backlighting and the scene in the middle ground to help convey mood in the work. The scene in the center is a camp meeting, a religious event held by various Protestant sects that focused on preaching and conversion. Prominent during the Second Great Awakening, which lasted into the 1840s, camp meetings attracted large numbers of people and could be loud, rambunctious, and joyful events.[60] By the 1870s though, camp meetings were seen as part of a bygone era, so Whittredge's depiction of such an event was intentionally nostalgic. The serene beauty of the scene and the cultural history it recalls is a positive reminiscence of the past, remembering it as a

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[59] Burke and Voorsanger, 78.

[60] For a discussion of religious revivalism in landscape painting, see: Michael Gaudio, "At the Mouth of the Cave: Listening to Thomas Cole's *Kaaterskill Falls*," *Art History* 33, no. 3 (June 2010), 448-465. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-8365.2010.00737.x.

simpler time when people were more connected to nature. As such, the joy of the figures in the painting, who Whittredge shows as turned in various directions conversing with one another, is muted by this sense of longing for the past. Furthermore, *The Camp Meeting* provides a complex allusion to the inclusion of God in the landscape. This painting provides a clearer interpretation of Janson, as previously stated, asserting that "paradise [is] regained, not on God's terms but man's."[61] Nature itself is no longer the holder of God in this painting; instead, God has been brought to the forest by man. Whittredge's interpretation of a camp meeting provides a complex view of the painter during the beginning of the decline of the Hudson River School, two years before his style changes more significantly in 1876. While he continued to change his technique with this painting, adapting to prevalent trends, as well as adding a calm, joyful mood to the work instead of only rendering a forest scene, his use of a camp meeting as the subject suggests a sense of nostalgia and wariness towards the changes of modern life. Despite his efforts to modernize his painting, focusing on his style and brushstrokes, *The Camp Meeting* was only met with moderate success after it was completed. In a review of the 1875 National Academy Exhibition, an art critic for *The Art Journal* gave this painting, as well as the "'Trout Brook,'" a short, but highly favorable review, saying that "these pictures show Mr. Whittredge at his best, as are justly entitled to praise."[62] While the reviewer's favorable comments suggest that Whittredge and his work had not fallen

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[61] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 110.
[62] "The National Academy of Design." *The Art Journal* 1, (1875): 158. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20556577. The "Trout Brook" that the author refers to is probably *Trout Brook in the Catskills* from 1875, part of the collection of the now defunct Corcoran Gallery of Art.

as far out of favor as some of the other Hudson River School artists by this point, his growing uncertainty is noticeable in this work.

The Fracturing Dialogue on Landscape Painting

As the Hudson River School continued to decline and Whittredge consciously left that visual idiom, new trends in landscape painting were developing alongside a fracturing discussion of the topic by the art press.[63] So as Whittredge's own crisis mounted, contemporary discussion and analysis of landscape painting was by no means set on one particular style or pictorial mode. Furthermore, the 1870s and 1880s saw a sharp rise in the popularity of figure painting, a process which also dislodged landscape painting's place at the top of the American artistic ladder. A great deal of this evolving dialogue, too, was mirrored in the changes that took place in the Tenth Street Studio Building by the early 1880s, no longer the bastion of the New York landscapists.

During the 1870s and 80s, as art in the United States turned away from the acutely rendered naturalism of the Hudson River School and towards more foreign styles, differing opinions on landscape painting emerged. During this time, there was a general movement towards art inspired by the French Barbizon School and the simpler subjects it called for. John Moran, in an 1880 article discussing the studios of several New York based artists, graciously states that "Mr. R. Swain Gifford has won a first place among our landscape-painters by his masterly interpretation of Nature in her soberer and simpler

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[63] I will argue later in this paper that while Whittredge left the visual style of the Hudson River School, he still identified with part of its programmatic mission, to paint what was uniquely and fundamentally "American."

moods."[64] By this point in his career, R. Swain Gifford had joined the Society of American Artists and moved to an American Barbizon style, hence Moran noting the "soberer and simpler moods" of his works. The praise for Barbizon inspired artists was not unique to this article, though, and was reflected more generally in the style that was advocated at the time. In 1880, the "American Artists" series run by *The Art Journal* published articles on a number of artists, including H. Bolton Jones, George Inness, William Sartain, William Starbuck Macy, Edward Moran, Wordsworth Thompson, and Homer D. Martin. While these artists run the gamut of styles, almost all of the landscape painters among them had converted to working in a Barbizon style, namely H. Bolton Jones, George Inness, and Homer D. Martin. The article examining the life and works of H. Bolton Jones explores the difference between what the author believes is a bad artist and a good artist, saying that:

> One had been said to be that the former [bad artist] seems to copy a great deal and the latter [good artist] does copy a great deal – that is to say, the latter reproduces the subtleties and essentials which are more really there than are the ephemeral or obvious phenomena which his less skillful and gifted brother is concerned.[65]

While the author is vague about the difference between these two versions of copying, he means to say that good landscape painting captures more than what can be seen in the landscape by the eye. Instead, just as Moran praises R. Swain Gifford for doing this, the good artist represents the mood of nature in the scene, an element that was becoming increasingly important in American Barbizon painting.

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[64] John Moran, "New York Studios. III," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 1-4, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569454.
[65] "American Painters: H. Bolton Jones," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 54, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569475.

While these articles from *The Art Journal* seem to suggest that the Barbizon style became the most popular mode of landscape painting after the decline of the Hudson River School, other contemporary voices with differing opinions complicate this notion. One article on landscape painting, written by Sir Robert Collier and republished by *The Art Journal* in 1880, speaks defiantly in favor of imitation in art. Noting that there is a contingent of critics against imitating nature, he writes that "they insist, however, that he ought not to demean himself, because all imitation is beneath the dignity of high Art, which is concerned with expressing the ideas of the artist, infinitely finer, as they are, than anything in Nature."[66] Significantly, Collier's statement raises the point that imitation in art, especially in landscape painting, was a highly debated notion at the time. The artist, it was contended, had a responsibility to render more than just nature as it appeared to the human eye, while others disagreed with this notion and argued for a more nuanced approach. This contest was derived mostly from the Hudson River School and their dedication to rendering nature as it was, a style which was viewed as banal by the 1870s. Similarly, an article on the artist H. Bolton Jones goes against the rising popularity of European painting. The author prefaces his comment by observing that the landscape of the Barbizon School has "long found in New York the best market."[67] After marking the growing competition between American and European artists, though, the author rhetorically asks whether "the reason why Mr. Martin's extremely creditable efforts have not been received with equal avidity is that, being native productions, they are not so

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[66] "Imitation in Art," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 259, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569566.
[67] "American Painters: H. Bolton Jones," 54.

fashionable as foreign ones."[68] By omitting the question mark at the end of the sentence, the author answers his own question: yes. There is certainly validity to this assessment, but it does not show the entire picture. While foreign art had gained a large market in the U.S., and accrued prestige due to its foreign production, it was also the style of the European artists that was becoming highly sought after. Not all critics, however, preferred the foreign style.

The debate over European art and imitation in art, while showing differing opinions in the art community, also points to a discourse on Realism that was emerging around 1880. The movement, which advocated the precise naturalistic rendering of a scene, inclusive of any positive or negative aesthetic qualities, however, was compared by some critics to mere imitation of nature. D. C. Thomson, writing for *The Art Journal*, explains to the reader that "Realism is painting nature exactly as it is, without the smallest change."[69] Absent from this interpretation, though, is an understanding of the historical and art historical trends that led to the creation of the movement, as well as the social and political overtones it carried. Thomson later praises Millet, "a Realist, and that of very high order-in his way quite unsurpassed," but laments the unattractive features of his paintings, saying that his "pictures are classed among the best productions of the century, but he has defects which detract from his dignity."[70] The parts of his painting that are not beautiful, according to Thomson's assertion, only detract from the quality of the work and Millet's merit as an artist. Thomson's opinion is not isolated, either. Lucy Hooper

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[68] "American Painters: Homer D. Martin," 321.
[69] D. C. Thomson, "Realism in Painting," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 283, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20556577.
[70] Thomson, 283.

elaborates further, writing the "Art-Notes from Paris" for an earlier month's issue, asking "When will Realism understand that there is as much reality in noble and lovely objects as in mean and hideous ones . . . in a refined and beautiful woman as in an ugly, coarse peasant?"[71] The problem for these critics, as well as others during the late 19th century, was a general ignorance of both previous trends in European art and French history during the 19th century, much of which was quite volatile. The image of the "ugly, coarse peasant," then, was as much a social commentary on peasant life as it was a traditional figure painting. Without this background, which many Americans lacked due to the U.S.'s isolationist policies through the middle of the 19th century, the inexplicably "distasteful" aspects of Realist paintings were virtually incomprehensible. Furthermore, as Whittredge increasingly incorporated the French Barbizon style into his art, his relation to and understanding of the underlying social commentary becomes of paramount importance to understanding his work.

Critical discussions of imitation in landscape painting were not limited to works emerging from the Eastern US and Western Europe. After the Civil War and throughout the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century more imitative and sublime depictions of nature emerged from American West, representations of which adopted the auspices of an American national identity. While this term appeared to have left the American lexicon, it was merely redefined and shown in the newer, uncharted, and more rugged Western region of the country rather than the East. As the large format

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[71] Lucy H. Hooper "Art-Notes from Paris. The Water-Colour Exhibition. The De Nittis Exhibition. Manet and the Impressionists. M. Baugniet. The Blanchard Sale. Mr. Schauss in Paris.," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 189-190, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569536.

landscape paintings of Church and Bierstadt were quickly losing their popularity in the late 1860s and 1870s, the same feeling that these paintings evoked were being used to describe the landscape of the western states. One article from *The Aldine*, "Colorado Scenery," written in 1873 as Whittredge and the second generation Hudson River School artists were making their works more intimate, describes the Rockies as "a region so varied in its characteristics as to afford a sublime field for the landscape-painter."[72] The author continues by adding that its "luxuriant parks, its elevated table-lands, its wild canons and snowy peaks, almost defy the pencil of the artist," returning to the themes of naturalism and imitation that were being criticized by other critics.[73] A later article in *The Aldine* concerning "California Scenery" reiterates this train of thought. Describing what an image of the West would look like, the author asserts that a "mere glance . . . will convince anyone of its truth to nature as set forth in all the descriptions which have ever been written of this part of the continent."[74] In describing such an image, the author brings back the notion of "truth to nature," a core component of the Hudson River School. Unlike the stained view of the Northeastern landscape late 19th century Americans had, however, the West was still seen as relatively unspoiled, and whose natural landscape was sufficiently visually interesting. The regional separation in landscape painting also becomes very apparent here, since discussions of Eastern landscape are absent of the same descriptions.

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[72] "Colorado Scenery," *The Aldine* 6, no. 9 (Sept., 1873): 174, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20636603.
[73] Ibid.
[74] S. E. Nivens, "California Scenery," *The Aldine* 9, no. 5 (1878): 153, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20637553.

As the popular discussion of landscape painting splintered, disagreeing on different aspects of the genre, a significant portion of the critical dialogue regarding contemporary art was moving away from landscape painting in general. This growing literature on different styles of painting, especially figure painting, accompanies a larger movement away from landscape and toward figure painting in the last quarter of the 19th century. An 1878 article from *The Aldine*, noticing the change in the production of art over the past few years, comments that "American artists have, within a comparatively recent period, began [sic] paying more and more attention to figure painting, and every exhibition shows an increase of this class of picture."[75] While a statement from one contemporary art magazine cannot accurately show the transition from landscape to figure painting as the dominant trend in American art during the late 19th century, the creation and purpose of the Society of American Artists supports this change in direction. Founded in 1877, the Society consisted of artists and some critics who were interested in challenging the hegemony of the National Academy and its biases against artists who studied abroad.[76] While the Society was generally created to make a platform to collectively stand against the dominance of the National Academy, their goals, as paraphrased by an article concurrent to their second exhibition, were slightly more

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[75] A. Saule, "Landscapes and Figures," *The Aldine* 9, no. 1 (1878): 34, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20637476. Despite Saule's tone, which makes it sound otherwise, figure painting already had a long history in the U.S. Its growing prominence in the 1870s was a reemergence after the genre's popularity decreased in favor of landscape and genre scene painting during the mid-19th century.

[76] Orcutt, 71. See also: Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building: Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists* (Southampton, NY: The Parrish Art Museum, 1997). Blaugrund discusses the National Academy's decline and the start of the Society of American Artists in the second chapter of her book.

nuanced.[77] The Society of American Artists, it claims, seeks "to prove that art is broad and comprehensive, free to run in many directions . . . that good work can come from young American artists trained in the schools of Europe, as well as from the old American artists of New York who have never studied abroad."[78] The efforts of the Society, then, were not intentionally divisive; rather, they were trying to promote the acceptance of more progressive styles. So as the dialogue on landscape painting fragmented into several different discussions, figure painting continued to gain popularity and more progressive painters were pushing for parity, severely changing the nature of the New York art community.

While the dominant trends in art in New York were changing during the 1870s and 80s, the milieu that Whittredge was working in began changing, too. Whittredge had a studio in the Tenth Street Studio Building for most of his career in the U.S., renting a space there upon his return to America in 1859 until 1900.[79] Throughout the 1860s and into the 1870s, the Studio Building had been the bastion of the Hudson River School, as many of the artists associated with the movement rented space there for some length of time. Whittredge was working in this environment, which actively encouraged dialogue and camaraderie between artists even in design of the building. Many of the studios themselves were around the periphery of the building and connected directly to one another with an exhibition hall in the center, taking up the first and second floors. This

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[77] Blaugrund, 82. Blaugrund also notes that, when the Society of American Artist was founded in 1877, the National Academy chose a particularly conservative president. Furthermore, the Society allowed its members to have dual membership with the National Academy.
[78] J. B. F. W., "Society of American Artists," *The Aldine* 9, no. 9 (1879): 275, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20637627.
[79] Blaugrund, 134.

unity between the artists and the other residents of the building, such as writers and architects, as Annette Blaugrund notes in her book *The Tenth Street Studio Building*, "did not seem to foster many new trends, [but] instead it tended to encourage and reinforce prevailing styles."[80] Despite the lack of artistic progress during the early years of the Studio Building, it became one of the epicenters of artistic production and the virtual headquarters of the Hudson River School.

By the late 1870s and into the early 1880s, as Whittredge was questioning his own art and seeking a way to update his style, the environment and tenants of the Studio Building began to reflect the growing favor of contemporary European styles in America. At some point during the late 1870s or very early 1880s, Whittredge moved his studio from the second floor to the third floor. While seemingly a very innocuous change, Whittredge's fellow artists working on the third floor, who included John Casilear and John George Brown, composed a group still devoted to the Hudson River School style.[81] The divide between the third floor and the first and second floor, while physically quite small, started to become quite large stylistically during this period. Many of the Hudson River School artists with whom Whittredge shared the building had moved by this point, and were replaced by younger artists working in a more contemporary style.[82] The most notable of these was certainly William Merritt Chase, who first moved into the building in 1878. The following year Chase moved into the two story exhibition space in the

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[80] Blaugrund, 35.
[81] Ibid., 38-39. Blaugrund mentions a group of five artists, John Casilear, Aaron D. Shattuck, Richard W. Hubbard, Lockwood de Haas and J. G. Brown, some of whom are now obscure.
[82] Ibid. While some his fellow artists were still in the building, such as McEntee and Church (though Church rented his studio out), many others, such as Bierstadt, Heade, Gignoux, and Homer D. Martin had moved by 1881, and Gifford died the year before in 1880.

center of the building, replacing Bierstadt and using the space as his personal studio.[83] More than just a space to paint, though, Chase filled the space with the numerous items he acquired during his international travels, reflecting the newer cosmopolitan atmosphere of the city. As he moved into the space Bierstadt had once used, the Hudson River School's dominance over the output of the building can be seen as symbolically ending. Despite retreating to the more conservative atmosphere of the third floor, Whittredge was almost certainly indirectly influenced by the works he saw in progress in different studios and displayed in various exhibitions. Whittredge's increasingly liminal place in regards to the changing trends in art during the late 19th century continued to weigh on the artist. With the decline of the Hudson River School, though, the popular dialogue on landscape painting moved in different directions, not completely favoring one style over another. While the artist's own crisis continued to mount, the atmosphere he was trying to re-enter was becoming less clear.

American Centennial: A Moment of Change, 1876

The American Centennial Exhibition of 1876 officially opened to the public on May 10, the throngs of people at the opening indicative of the almost ten million people who would see it over the course of the following few months.[84] In what would be the largest international exhibition held until that point, the Centennial Exhibition took on the important role of reassessing and reaffirming American society. The volatile political and

[83] Teresa Carbone, "William Merritt Chase," in *American Painters in the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Volume 1* (New York: Brooklyn Museum, 2006), 366.
[84] Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 10.

economic conditions under which the Exhibition was held, defined in part by the corrupt presidency of Ulysses S. Grant and the Panic of 1873, were acutely significant and ultimately helped shaped its nationalistic program. Instead of "merely offering an escape from the . . . uncertainties of the Reconstruction years," as Robert Rydell asserts in *All the World's A Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916*, "the fair was a calculated response to these conditions."[85] Shining a new, more positive light on contemporary American life, the Exhibition was designed to "restore confidence in the vitality of America's systems of government as well as in the social and economic structure of the country."[86] As part of this secular faith building exercise, there was an emphasis put on both America's past and its future. Progress, defined in economic and industrial terms, was glorified in the Exhibition alongside a larger reassertion of American ideals. This gave rise to a set of cultural, artistic, and social expectations based on a hybrid of old and new ideals. In terms of architecture, for example, the "next phase of American design was to be a creative blend of old and new," represented in such movements as the Colonial Revival and Shingle style.[87] A national sense of nostalgia blended with excitement for the future of the nation, creating these seemingly stylistically dichotomous movements.

The 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia proved to be one of the defining moments for American art in the 19th century. Though the immediate effects of the exhibition were subtle, it helped cement the demise of the Hudson River School and

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[85] Rydell, 11.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Jeffrey Howe, "A 'Monster Edifice': Ambivalence, Appropriation, and the Forging of Cultural Identity at the Centennial Exhibition," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126, no. 4 (Oct. 2002): 650. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20093577.

opened the door for new art movements. While the exhibition was supposed to bring together the different facets of the art community of the Eastern U.S., it actually revealed the deep divide between the two main camps. Orcutt succinctly notes the division that arose during the organization of the exhibition, examining the exclusion of H. H. Moore's *Almeh* from the Exhibition, a French academic style painting of an Arabian courtesan. The exclusion of the *Almeh*, she argues, "brought to a boil the tensions that had been simmering for years in the East Coast art community and lead to a confrontation between two groups of artists: New York landscape painters who supported native training, and figure painters of Philadelphia and Boston who advocated European study."[88] As Orcutt suggests, the sharp division that arose between these two camps by the time the Exhibition was held, started mostly as petty disagreements of style. The main rivalry in the Exhibition Committee was between Whittredge, who was still the head of the National Academy when planning for the Exhibition began in earnest late in 1875, and John Sartain, a Philadelphia native who was appointed the head of the Art Bureau and was, effectively, ultimately responsible for the design of the Exhibition.[89] During the planning process, Whittredge was responsible for obtaining works from New York based artists for display in the exhibition. It was the selection and installation that took place after this, more than anything else, that caused the most furor and visualized the divide between the Nativists and the Europeanists. Sartain managed to allow Whittredge very little real say in the final design of the Exhibition, though, numerically, there were more paintings from New York based artists that anywhere else. As a result, Sartain managed

[88] Orcutt, 51.
[89] Ibid., 58-59.

to give the emerging European-trained artists a very strong representation, filling the majority of the Main Hall with their work, which had been reserved to show the most esteemed artists.[90] As a result, as Orcutt argues, "Sartain seems to have cleverly linked the New York landscapists to the past, and European-influenced figure painters to the present."[91] Instead of showing the nativist landscape painters as the most respected artists in the country, Sartain made room for the work of more modern artists. The art of the Hudson River School had already surpassed its pinnacle.

More than anything else, the American Art Exhibit at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition was a watershed moment in the history of American art. While the Exhibition helped to solidify the decline of the Hudson River School, it did not mark the final days of the movement. Even during the Exhibition itself, the better placement that the American Europeanists received was not praised, or even fully acknowledged, by all. One writer for *The Art Journal*, in their review of the Centennial Exhibition, hailed the Exhibition highly in general, saying that the "collection on the whole is, however, the best exhibition of American works that has ever to our knowledge been got together." Significantly, they continue by naming several artists whose works are featured in the Exhibition, such as "Page, E. Wood Perry, W. T. Richards, Winslow Homer, the two Giffords [Sanford Robinson and Robert Swain], and many other, for the last ten or fifteen years."[92] While the names seem to be picked at random, they represent a wide range of artists working in a variety of mediums and styles that transcend the nativist/Europeanist

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[90] Orcutt, 64-65.
[91] Ibid., 66.
[92] S. N. C., "Paintings at the Centennial Exhibition," *The Art Journal* 2, (1876): 284, http://www.jstor.org/stable/205 68958.

line that Sartain and Whittredge drew. For this reviewer, at least, the Centennial Exhibition was much more a presentation of past and present American art than a defining moment for a new trend in American art. The effects can be seen in the long term, however.

Immediately after the Centennial Exhibition, Whittredge produced a small number of paintings that show him more actively trying to incorporate new styles and techniques into his art. While his change at this point was not as comprehensive as it would be later in the decade, especially after his artistic crisis peaked in 1877, it shows that Whittredge understood the importance of the Centennial Exhibition and the growing obsolescence of the Hudson River School style. His mounting personal crisis during this period, the debts of the National Academy, and his own struggle with accepting modern European artistic trends can be seen in part of a letter he sent to James Pinchot in 1871: "For all I care about Europe is its art and artists and what they are doing. I am forced to admire it while I don't like it. I admire their knowledge *but* despise *their* souls if one can speak so."[93] Whittredge's harsh language is exceptional in this case as he rarely used such invective. As such, it shows the mental strain that the artist was under at the time. Furthermore, the seemingly contradictory nature of this quote, at once admitting interest in European art and speaking out against Europeans themselves, is partially explained by the rising popularity of European art in America and its broad support by art critics, as previously seen. Not all artists and critics fully supported this change though, as noted in

[93] Janson, *Worthington* Whittredge, 155-156. Italics original. Orcutt, when noting that Whittredge "foresaw the intense resentment that would erupt between the two camps," quotes this same letter. Orcutt, however, only quotes him saying, "I don't like it. I admire their knowledge *but* despise *their* souls if one can speak so," seemingly intentionally only using part of the whole quote to show Whittredge as contemptuous of European art rather than struggling to accept it. Orcutt, 56-57.

the article “American Painters: Homer D. Martin” from the normally progressive *Art Journal*, lamenting the fact that it seemed as if European artists sold better than American artists simply because they were foreign.[94] Despite speaking out against European art in the early 1870s, even if only to one of his personal friends, it was towards Europe that Whittredge started to look after the Centennial Exhibition. Two paintings that Whittredge completed in 1876 during his mounting crisis, *Scene on Upper Delaware, State of New York, Autumn* and *Evening in the Woods*, show his blending of traditional scenes with a more modern technique. While Whittredge’s work from this period is quite personal, created during a period of self reflection, he does not discuss this period specifically in his autobiography. Due to a lack of autobiographical evidence, then, my analyses of these two works are visually driven, comparing their physical construction to those woodland paintings done a few years prior during a period of greater stability.

While *Scene on Upper Delaware, State of New York, Autumn* illustrates Whittredge starting to follow a new stylistic model, the scene is developed from a traditional pictorial mode.[95] The painting does not look very different from some of his earlier works, as Janson also notes. Just as Whittredge continued to use the forest interior scene through the 1870s, despite the visual and symbolic changes in his work, the formal composition of the painting is based upon several outdoor scenes he painted after traveling to the West in 1866, such as *Crossing the Ford (The Plains at the base of the*

[94]See “American Painters: Homer D. Martin,” *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 321-323, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569 595.
[95] Whittredge’s *Scene on Upper Delaware, State of New York, Autumn* is currently in the collection of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. Oil on canvas, 17 x 23 inches.

Rocky Mountains).[96] Whittredge also included water in the foreground of the painting, a feature common to all of the works previously discussed. Beyond drawing from some of his previous compositions, this outdoor pictorial model was fairly common, dating back to the Dutch Baroque period, whose landscapists also advocated closeness to nature.[97] By using an historical visual tradition Whittredge not only utilized a mode that he was already familiar with, but grounded the formal composition in the style of the old masters, allowing him to make new developments while relying on an established style. This is emphasized by the work's visual stability and balance. The painting renders moderately deep recessive space back to the hill, but balances the large hill on the left side of the background with the dense group of trees in the middle ground on the right.[98]

Whittredge's *Scene on Upper Delaware, State of New York, Autumn*, in using this stable pictorial convention, both links his work symbolically to the Hudson River School and begins to more significantly update his visual style. Unlike many of his Hudson River School paintings, *Scene on Upper Delaware* features a small figure standing near the center of the canvas, directly to the left of the trees. While the figure is not meant to be the subject of the composition, since he is only a small part of the painting, Whittredge intentionally placed the figure next to the trees. Similar to the implication of the decaying

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[96] Janson cites this work as being part of the collection of the Century Association, New York. For a color image of the work see Janson's *Worthington Whittredge*. Oil on canvas, 40 x 68 inches.

[97] Seymour Slive, "Landscape," in *Dutch Paintings 1600-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 177.

[98] Many of Whittredge's paintings completed after this point were done in a horizontal landscape format, including all of his works depicting the ocean in the background. Whittredge had previously completed landscape format paintings of nature, most prominently during his time in Europe and in his representations of the American
West in the mid-late 1860's, so his switch here is not unprecedented. Whereas his western paintings were meant to emphasize the horizon line, implying the vastness of the space, Whittredge later works do not operate in the same way. Instead, this seems to reflect his general movement away from emphasizing verticality, showing nature on a human scale rather than soaring and grand.

canoe in *The Old Hunting Grounds*, asserting that nature will outlast mankind, the enormous size of the trees compared to the figure subtly implies the power of nature. Despite containing a similar metaphor to one he used during his prominence as a Hudson River School painter, the overall style of the work exhibits the beginning of his change to a Barbizon inspired style. While several of his previous paintings show that Whittredge was slowly incorporating this style, *Scene on Upper Delaware* marks a significant step forward in this process. Whereas he adopted only the transitory effects of light in *The Trout Pool*, this work shows a different interpretation of the naturalism the Barbizon School called for. Whittredge's physical handing of the paint and his use of color is much more noticeable than in his previous works. While the river in the foreground is smooth, reflecting the trees above it, Whittredge relies on flecks of color in the hill to imply different grasses and flowers. His palette, too, is more earthy than it had been in the past, emphasizing the atmospheric rendering of the scene. Significantly, however, this new interpretation of Barbizon naturalism is almost an anomaly during this period of Whittredge's oeuvre and does not reenter his work until the 1880s.

Similar to *Scene on Upper Delaware*, Whittredge's *Evening in the Woods* [Figure 4] was completed using a number of different styles, showing his continuing struggle to define his work. Relatively little has been written about this work; even Janson, whose book covers a large portion of Whittredge's oeuvre, only mentions the painting briefly in regards to his mounting artistic crisis. The reason for this, perhaps, lies in the complex and somewhat unsuccessful blending of styles in this painting. Janson comments on this, subjectively stating that the work "is inferior to any of the artist's earlier forest

interiors."[99] While Janson himself does very little to defend this statement, its validity can be unpacked in a study of the work. With this painting Whittredge brought the scene back into the interior of the forest, relying on the same representational mode that he used in the 1860s and early 1870s. In doing so, he once again utilized Asher B. Durand's framing device, using the two trees in the right and left foreground to frame the center of the picture.

In *Evening in the Woods*, however, Whittredge attempted a new approach to updating his style and incorporating some of the visual themes of the Barbizon School, though the painting ultimately does not succeed in establishing a new style for the artist. Whittredge's color palette and more physical technique in this work, though not as progressive and successful as *Scene on Upper Delaware*, show the continuing inspiration Barbizon painting had upon his work. Similar to his previous work, his use of paint is again much freer than his style as a strictly Hudson River School artist. Whittredge did not render the individual leaves on the trees, for example, and instead painted patches of them in different shades of green. The river and rocks upon the forest floor, too, are marked with flecks of impasto, which he did not include in his earlier works. Whittredge's color palette, while not as brown and subdued as in *Scene on Upper Delaware*, is much less chromatic and vivid than some of his earlier forest interiors.[100] While works such as *The Trout Pool* consist largely of different shades of brown, Whittredge balanced the composition with the fairly bright greens of the leaves on the

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[99] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 161.
[100] It should be noted that the Metropolitan Museum's image of the painting, which seems to be a fairly old photograph, has more green overtones than the original painting contains.

trees and the moss in the foreground. Here, however, both the browns and the greens are fairly dark. Similar to some of his older paintings, such as *The Old Hunting Grounds*, the scene itself is backlit. While this adds visual drama to the painting, making the objects in the foreground seem darker, Whittredge does not accomplish this as successfully as he did in *The Old Hunting Grounds*. By placing the light source in the rear of the painting and framing the foreground with trees, Whittredge leads the eye to the middle and background of the work. Though he draws the viewer's eye to the very back of the recessive space in this work, Whittredge restricted the view in *The Trout Pool* by highlighting the waterfall and rock face and leaving the river in the background in darkness. In *Evening in the Woods*, however, he leads the viewer to the back of the painting and leaves them virtually nowhere, with neither a horizon line nor a secondary focal point to help draw the eye around the rest of the painting. While the backlighting in the painting might be implying a similar metaphor to *The Trout Pool*, showing nature as a bucolic retreat, that impression is not suggested well in this work. Whittredge supplements this metaphor in *The Trout Pool* by adding the open area of the pool for the eye to rest, which is contrasted in this work. While Janson's assertion that the painting is "inferior" to any of Whittredge's earlier forest interiors seems disingenuous, the partial validity of this statement shows Whittredge's mounting artistic crisis. While he was attempting to move away from the Hudson River School style and find new visual inspiration, *Evening in the Woods* shows Whittredge struggling with this change.

While Whittredge was not very artistically productive in 1876, since he spent much of the year helping prepare for the Centennial Exhibition, the few paintings he did

produce that year show the artist's mounting uncertainty in his work and the direction he should take it. This uncertainty can be seen in the two paintings he finished after the Centennial Exhibition, *Scene on Upper Delaware, State of New York, Autumn* and *Evening in the Woods*, both of which combine previously established artistic conventions and newer developments by the artist. Furthermore, while Whittredge acknowledged the continuing decline of the Hudson River School, his own personal apprehension toward and distaste for the contemporary art coming to the U.S. from Europe only further enhanced the artist's struggle to find a new direction. While his crisis would not culminate until the following year, after which he resolutely took his work in a new direction, his uncertainty during 1876 provides an important precedent for this change.

Visualizing the Landscape – Personal Crisis and a New Naturalism, 1877-1880

Through 1876 and into 1877, Whittredge's personal crisis regarding his art continually grew. Originally stemming from the relatively quick decline of the Hudson River School after the 1870s and exacerbated by the stress over the Centennial Exhibition and the success younger European trained artists had in it, Whittredge's distress peaked by early 1877. Citing an entry from April of 1877 in Jervis McEnte's personal journal, Janson notes that Whittredge had not been very successful over the winter.[101] Facing waning artistic inspiration, his lack of direction reached its apogee. The situation for Whittredge must have changed later in the year, however, since he was in Newport, RI through late summer and into the fall. Newport was not a random choice of coastal town,

[101] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 161. Artists, especially landscapists, often went out into the countryside during the summer to escape the heat of the city, study nature firsthand, and make sketches to work from.

though, as it held a great deal of personal importance, and nor was it the first time the artist had traveled to the city. Whittredge comments on his connection to Newport in his *Autobiography*, saying that "I had heard much of it and the neighborhood surrounding it when I was a child, and many things I saw seemed perfectly familiar to me, although never seen before . . . In short it was the land of my forefathers."[102] While almost saccharine, the sentiment was probably not exaggerated. Whittredge's father had moved from Newport to a farm outside Cincinnati a few years before Whittredge was born, so he had heard tales of the place without seeing it for many years. Newport was much more than a location for artistic inspiration, then, though he would find that there too. Instead, Newport offered him a location that felt like home, free of the stresses of city life and the problems of the National Academy. Janson states this particularly well when he notes that Newport and the Rhode Island coast "held deep personal associations unburdened by Hudson River School rhetoric or Barbizon ethos."[103] Unlike the Catskills, which had been the muse of the Hudson River School, the coast of Rhode Island was almost a blank slate he could use to develop a new style.[104] Furthermore, coastal New England was a point of cultural origin, one of the first settled locations in the New World in the 17th century, providing him a place to both study landscape painting and reconnect to American cultural society.

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[102] Baur, 63.

[103] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 163. Whittredge had previously spent time in painting in Newport, during the early 1870s, though his work from that period develops his use of atmospheric luminism and more traditional pastoral themes, similar to genre scene paintings from the same period.

[104] John Kensett painted a number of works in Newport, so a visual representation of the landscape was not completely without precedent. It is somewhat difficult to assess how much of an effect Kensett's work had upon Whittredge. He certainly would have been aware of Kensett's work, though Kensett was still largely using atmospheric luminism to paint his scenes whereas Whittredge was actively moving away from this style.

Newport and the Rhode Island coast did not have an immediate effect upon the artist's mood, though. A letter from Whittredge to McEntee, dated September 3rd, 1877, details his current state and asks McEntee to travel out there before heading to Frederick Edwin Church's estate. Though this letter is somewhat difficult to interpret, since it is only one part of an ongoing conversation, it provides a telling glimpse into Whittredge's mental state at the time.[105] Early in the letter, Whittredge tells McEntee that he has been having major mood swings, explaining that "[one] day I feel as well as I ever did accept [sic] a little weak when I attempt to do anything, and then I eat something or do something which upsets me, and I am all down again."[106] Interestingly, he notes that his mental health has been affecting his physical health, his tone suggesting this had been the case for some time. While Whittredge infers that he had been in, at least, a minor state of depression for quite some time, his tone becomes more emphatic and positive when he tells McEntee that "one can find <u>something</u>, there is <u>something</u> here; beautiful foreground . . . as beautiful as one could find anywhere."[107] The beauty of the landscape and the character of the land inspired the artist to stay in Newport until he produced something he was happy with. Though this letter does not mark the end of Whittredge's crisis, since he spent the next few months in Rhode Island making sketches and drawings, it does show a firm resolve to persevere and produce new work. Ultimately, by the time Whittredge finished his first new work in 1878, he was working in a new visual language.

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[105] Whittredge begins the letter with "Your very kind letter is near at hand," alluding to a previous correspondence. Unfortunately, the Archives of American Art does not have any of the other letters. Jervis McEntee papers, 1796, 1848-1905. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.
[106] Jervis McEntee Papers.
[107] Ibid. Underlining original.

Programmatically, however, an important qualification must be made in Whittredge's transition from working in the Hudson River School style to that of the Barbizon School. While the style and content of his work change during this ten year period, he does not completely leave the nationalistic program of the Hudson River School. In one of the most significant passages in his autobiography, Whittredge suggested that schools of art are formed from an aggregate of works produced by like-minded, but not formally organized artists. From this, Whittredge contends that a new school of art will be formed in the same manner:

> This would seem to have been easier in the old days than it is now when all the nations are hobnobbing together and shaking their hands as if they were all of one breed. If art in America is ever to receive any distinctive character so that we can speak of an American School of Art, it must come from this new condition, the close intermingling of the peoples of the earth in our peculiar form of government. In this I have some hope for the future of American Art.[108]

While this quote does not accurately reflect Whittredge's thoughts in the late 1870s and the early 1880s, since the original text of his autobiography was written around 1900, certain long term themes can be extrapolated from it. Though the passage initially gives the impression that Whittredge is still antagonistic towards Europe and European art, he later admits that the future of American lies in this "intermingling," though his attitude in 1877 would not have been this open. More significantly, though, Whittredge shows that he is still pursuing a distinctive character in American art, a theme that derives from his connection to the Hudson River School, which pursued a similar concept of a "national

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[108] Baur, 54. The end of the first sentence of this passage is somewhat difficult to interpret, though it is most likely referring to the series of alliances European countries were developing with one another from the late 19th century though WWI.

art." Here, however, Whittredge's claims to this ideology are absent of some of the complications that landscape painting necessarily brings to it.[109] Though his statement does not fully acknowledge the problem of representing regional differences across the United States, his calls for a national school of American art is stylistically rather than purely culturally driven. Over the course of the next nine years, after Whittredge came out of his personal crisis and began to have greater respect for European art, he continually changed his visual style while maintaining a commitment to depicting America and American life.[110] It is throughout this period, starting with the Civil War and the decline of the Hudson River School, that this ideology changes from depicting a national culture to a broader understanding of what constitutes American art.[111]

Exactly one month after Whittredge sent his letter to McEntee, informing him of his resolution to stay in Newport until he produced appreciable work, he completed a drawing of *Bishop Berkeley's House, Newport, Rhode Island*.[112] While the drawing is different from many of his other works up until this point, as it includes virtually no description of surrounding landscape, it provides an important look into Whittredge's production during his crisis. In *Bishop Berkeley's House*, Whittredge rendered a fairly

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[109] Miller, "Everywhere and Nowhere: The Making of the National Landscape", 211. How, for example, can an image of New England, along with its cultural values, represent the entire United States?

[110] For a more in depth discussion of the traditional imagery of New England and its representation in art, see: William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein, *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

[111] This change is shown well by the contest between the National Academy and the Society of American Artists, who contended American art should include artists who trained in Europe and painted in more progressive styles. Redefining American culture and life, in light of the growing internationalism, was an ongoing struggle for the U.S. throughout the late 19th century.

[112] "Bishop Berkeley's House, Newport, Rhode Island," *The Museum of Fine Arts Boston*.. http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/bishop-berkeleys-house-newport-rhode-island-259060. The MFA dates the work to October 3rd, 1877. An image of the work can be viewed on the MFA's website. Graphite pencil on paper, 15 1/16 x 22 3/16 inches (38.3 x 56.4 cm)

famous local historic landmark, producing a distinctly American scene. As a signed and dated drawing, the work holds more importance than a sketch of the same scene would, as it represents more of a complete thought on a particular subject than a sketch does. The Bishop Berkeley's House, though a working farm at the time, was already an historic landmark in the 1870s when Whittredge studied it. The property and house were originally owned by Bishop Berkeley in the early 18th century, though ownership had since transferred to Abraham Brown, who owned the property until the early 1880s.[113] Whittredge's reproduction of the house, taken from the back instead of the front, is noticeably missing the second chimney in the rear of the house that probably connected to the kitchen, most likely removed for aesthetic reasons. Though the drawing does show two women working at the back of the house, one working at a table and the other walking inside, the house itself received most of the artist's attention. With this focus on architectural reproduction, the drawing expresses Whittredge's personal interest in American vernacular and colonial architecture, a facet of his interest in Americana in general. Whittredge's interest in architecture was not isolated among his peers, or American society in general, as the Colonial Revival gained momentum after the Centennial Exhibition.[114] While it is possible Whittredge had seen reproductions of a similar view of Bishop Berkeley's House in the 1874 *New York Sketchbook of Architecture* his interpretation of this scene is unique and shows a keen interest in American culture.[115]

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[113] "History of the Whitehall Property," *Whitehall House Museum*, http://www.whitehallmuseumhouse.org/history-of-the-whitehall-property.
[114] Arms, 68. Howe, 650.
[115] Arms, 66.

Though Whittredge's interest in architecture is not complemented by a portion of his painting oeuvre devoted to the subject, there is a steady history of architectural drawings in his sketchbooks. Though his sketches are not always accompanied by paintings on the same or a similar subject, Whittredge's sketchbooks offer an intimate look at the thought process of the artist.[116] However, even in his sketchbooks, architecture is not that common, as the majority of his sketches are landscape scenes or individual representations of figures or animals. Besides some images of the local New England architecture done around this time, the only other instances of architectural drawings date from the late 1850s, when Whittredge was in Italy and Rome, and the 1890s, when he traveled to Mexico.[117] While these three instances come from very different times in his life, they all constitute attempts by the artist to understand the local culture and the people. The architecture he represented almost constituted an anthropological study, helping to visualize the location and how people lived in it.

This period of Whittredge's career, his personal crisis and the beginning stages of his redefinition of his art in 1877, draws an important parallel to his rediscovery of himself and his art when he returned to America in 1859. While the works of these two periods are stylistically quite different, they are united by a realization that he must change his style to match current trends. Whittredge's process, too, was similar, going out into nature to sketch and paint. In 1859 and 1860, he went to the Catskills, whose forest would continue to inspire him throughout his career, coming upon a landscape

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[116] Sadayoshi Omoto, "The Sketchbooks of Worthington Whittredge," *Art Journal* 24, no. 24 (Summer, 1965): 331, http://www.jstor.org/stable/774809.
[117] Worthington Whittredge Papers.

altogether different than what he had seen in Europe. Whittredge notes the surprisingly vast difference between Europe and America in his autobiography, exclaiming, “But how different was the scene before me from anything I had been looking at for many years! The forest was a mass of decaying logs and tangled brush wood . . . nothing but the primitive woods with their solemn silence reigning everywhere.”[118] This “solemn silence” of the forest became Whittredge’s primary motif throughout his career as a Hudson River School artist. While he did not emerge from Rhode Island with anything quite as concrete, Whittredge’s trip there holds a similar place of importance in his career, helping him to define his new style as he resolved in his letter to McEntee to “stay in the region and fight it out and this time do the best I can.”[119]

The connection between these two time periods, which saw the artist reinterpret his visual style, can be further elaborated when *Bishop Berkeley’s House* is compared to Whittredge’s *View of West Point on the Hudson*.[120] Completed in 1861, the painting provides a good example of Whittredge trying to adapt the late German Romantic landscape style he learned in Düsseldorf to a more American visual style, though the resulting image is not entirely successful. The painting depicts a view from the east bank of the Hudson River overlooking the water with West Point in the background. A few boats are shown sailing up the placid river, giving the image a bucolic air that is juxtaposed with the scraggly forest in the foreground. The foreground scene though, is where the painting begins to lose its sense of visual authenticity, which Favis points out

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[118] Baur, 42.
[119] Jervis McEntee Papers.
[120] Whittredge’s 1861 work *View of West Point on the Hudson* is currently in the collection of the Museum of Fine Art Boston. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 13 ⅛ x 11 ⅛ inches (33.34 x 28.26 cm).

in her discussion of the painting. While Whittredge depicts the area as a thickly wooded hillside, his journey there "would have been along well-cleared and well-trodden paths quite suitable for ladies in long skirts accompanied by gentlemen toting picnic baskets," as the location had long been an established tourist vista by the time Whittredge painted it.[121] His view up the Hudson, then, adds these broken and twisted trees, elements he felt were indicative of the native American forests, as expressed in his autobiography. Though this image is not similar to *Bishop Berkeley's House* in either subject matter or style, they are both works where Whittredge was attempting to work in a new style and to render something that is largely intangible. While the American landscape paintings whose style he was trying to imitate in *View of West Point on the Hudson* were physical objects he could view, coming up with his own interpretation was a more complicated process. Similarly, Whittredge's careful depiction of the architecture in *Bishop Berkeley's House* was part of both a reworking of his style and a process of depicting facets of American life and culture.

Whittredge's paintings completed the following year, in 1878, mark his entrance into a new style, now more devoted to the naturalism of the Barbizon School rather than merely trying to incorporate it into his Hudson River School aesthetic. Whittredge's embracing of the Barbizon School aesthetic was at once a complicated decision and a completely natural one. The move towards Barbizon would have seemed an obvious choice at the time, if for no other reason than the rising popularity of French landscape painting during this period. The future of the genre, it seemed, lay in the contemporary art

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[121] Favis, 17.

of Europe. The art of the French Barbizon School was not a fluke, however, simply gaining fame due to the popularity of international art. The Barbizon style, as Peter Bermingham explains, "was a first glimpse of poetic license, a privilege that led to both highly personalized studies of American nature and to crass imitations of the most tedious sort."[122] Barbizon painting seemed to offer the *je ne sais quoi* that contemporary artists and critics were looking for in landscape painting, the "subtleties and essentials which are more really there than the ephemeral or obvious phenomena" that *The Art Journal* called for, as previously cited.[123] Varying in subject matter and style, these new works began to take a broader approach to landscape painting, one that was often both progressive in style and conservative in theme.

Whittredge's adaptation to a Barbizon style was a fairly long process. The initial period of this process can be dated to 1878 – 1881 as Whittredge painted in a modified Barbizon style based on the early naturalism of the movement. Specifically, it is Whittredge's new naturalism and use of light that define his work during this period, adapting the visual aesthetic to his own tastes while leaving out some of the stronger social implications for the time being. Examining the style of the early portion of the Barbizon movement from the 1830s, Steven Adams in *The Barbizon School & The Origin of Impressionism*, notes that "the spectator is presented with a more mimetic account of the visible world transcribed onto paper or canvas with less attention to the rhetorical tricks with light and composition typically found in academic or romantic

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[122] Bermingham, 17.
[123] "American Painters: H. Bolton Jones," *The Art Journal* 6 (1880): 54, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569475.

landscape painting."[124] Whittredge's landscapes from the late 1870s exhibit this mimetic account of nature, using light to create color rather than painting a dramatically lit landscape, a style which is exhibited well in the 1880 work *A Breezy Day--Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island*.[125] Janson develops this relationship further when he identifies Charles-François Daubigny as one of Whittredge's direct visual inspirations during this period, citing the similarities between their use of light and the composition of the scene.[126] This affinity can be seen in the remarkable similarities between Whittredge's *A Breezy Day—Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island* and Daubigny's *Harvest* from 1851.[127] While Daubigny' color palette is more muted than Whittredge's, both fill the landscape with light rather than inserting points of light into a darker canvas, as well as establishing a relatively low horizon line below the center of the canvas. Whittredge used a similar style in all his works from this period.

One of the best examples of Whittredge's work from this period, *Second Beach, Newport* from 1878/1880, which presents a beach scene on the Rhode Island coast, is an excellent example of the Barbizon naturalism Whittredge utilized during this period

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[124] Steven Adams, "Chapter Three: Landscape Painting during the July Monarchy," in *The Barbizon School & The Origins of Impressionism* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1994), 97. While the Barbizon School did not become popular in the United States until after the Civil War, Whittredge would surely have been familiar with their earlier work. While President of the National Academy he helped organize the Centennial Loan Exhibition in 1876, which drew from the collections of galleries and private collectors. The show presented a large number of international artists, including Breton, R. Bonheur, Daubigny, Corot, and Millet. *Catalogue of the New York Centennial Loan Exhibition of Paintings, Selected from the Private Art Galleries*, (New York: National Academy of Design, 1876). http://www.hdl.handle.net/2027/yale.39002053667029.

[125] Whittredge's *A Breezy Day—Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island* is currently in the collection of the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in Forth Worth, Texas. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas.

[126] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 163-164.

[127] Charles-François Daubigny's *Harvest* is currently in the collection of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris, France. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 135 x 196 cm.

[Figure 5].[128] While the scene became a fairly common one for Whittredge at the time, as he painted several works with a similar subject during this period, it is different from most of the paintings he made prior to 1877, though there is an important precedent. While the painting does show several small figures in the foreground of the work, sitting on the beach and bathing in the ocean, it is predominantly a landscape painting, showing the coastline of Rhode Island. The work depicts a narrow, curving beach that backs up to tall grass, turning from the bottom left of the painting up toward the middle right side. The middle ground of the work contains a hill on the left side which leads to a large rock, sitting slightly left of center, cutting off the horizon line on the left side. The far background of the scene is only shown on the right side of the work, a narrow band just below the center of the painting, a few white and brown dots of paint implying the town. The work also represents the first major change in the facture of his works. A pale blue sky dominates the upper half of the painting, thick white clouds, painted intermittently, creating visual interest. Though a band of light seems to fall on the dry sand of the beach, the painting is very evenly lit, using the bright atmosphere to create a wide open space. An earlier painting of the same location, completed more than a decade earlier in 1865, provides a sharp contrast to this work. Rendered in a Hudson River School style using atmospheric luminism, this earlier version of *Second Beach, Newport* provides a good point of comparison that can be used highlight the difference between the two styles.

[128] There is a small discrepancy between the dates Janson gives for this work, 1880-1881, and the dates the National Gallery of Art provides, 1878/1880. I use the dates Janson provides, as he notes several sketches of similar scenes in Whittredge's sketchbook are dated 1881.

Whittredge's 1865 depiction of *Second Beach, Newport* [Figure 6] uses strong lighting effects to present a highly metaphorical view of the same scene. Markedly different than either *The Old Hunting Grounds* or *The Trout Pool*, Whittredge utilized his own adaptation of atmospheric luminism to render the scene, a specific sub-style of Hudson River School painting often used by such artists as Sanford Gifford and John Kensett. Miller provides an excellent definition of this method of painting, characterizing it as a spatial mode that cuts off the foreground. "Instead of temporalizing space though planar division, atmospheric luminism spatialized time. In doing so it freed landscape art from its loyalties to a narrative or literary meaning."[129] The power and transformative quality of atmospheric luminism was necessarily visual, changing the viewer's relationship with time by removing the planes of the picture. While Whittredge strays from this definition, choosing to depict a beach, a figure, and a dog in the foreground, his view of *Second Beach* develops a theme around the concept of time. Whittredge shows the sun rising over the beach, illuminating the hazy sky, which is reflected in the water.[130] Since the work was painted in 1865, the sunrise is specifically referring to the end of the Civil War, symbolically shining a new light not just on a new day but on America after the Civil War, implying that the nation will continue and a new sun shall continue to rise, just as the waves on the beach continue to roll in. Fifteen years later, however,

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[129] Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875*, 244.

[130] The Philadelphia Museum of Art's description of the work describes the work as a sunrise. While they do not provide an explanation, the geography of Newport supports this supposition. Second Beach stretches, roughly, from west to east, curving down towards the ocean south of Rhode Island, so the position of the sun around the curve would be in the east. "Label," *The Philadelphia Museum of Art*, Accessed January 15, 2015. www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/34120.html.

Whittredge's nationalistic metaphor is replaced by a beautifully depicted, light-filled, naturalistic depiction of the same location.

Despite depicting the same beach outside Newport overlooking the same unique rock face, shown near the center of both works, the 1878/80 version of *Second Beach, Newport* is a remarkably different painting.[131] The figures in the foreground are occupied by different leisurely activities, not carrying a large item across the beach, and the visual style of the work shows the significant stylistic changes Whittredge underwent over the course of the fifteen years between the paintings. Though both paintings are rendered naturalistically, Whittredge taking great care in representing the scene in both works, the 1865 version and 1878/80 version present very different types of realism. As a studio artist, Whittredge tended to make sketches of a scene or a location and rework those sketches later into a completed painting, usually resulting in an image that is a partially constructed view of the scene. As a result, as Eddy de Jongh describes in his essay "Realism and Seeming Realism," "a single landscape might combine all kinds of topographical motifs which in reality do not belong together."[132] In essence, as de Jongh puts it later, "They are nonexistent landscapes that nevertheless could have existed."[133] Though de Jongh's statements are directed towards Dutch 17th century landscape painting, this remained a fundamental concept for the genre. Whittredge certainly used

[131] This unique rock formation, which sits near Second Beach, was depicted by other artists as well. John La Farge did a number of drawing and paintings of it, such as *Bishop Berkeley's Rock, Newport*, from 1868. The slash in between the two dates indicates the piece was worked on during both of those years, though not necessarily steadily.
[132] Eddy de Jongh, "Realism and Seeming Realism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. Wayne Franitas (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 28.
[133] Ibid.

this process in many of his works, such as removing the second chimney in *Bishop Berkeley's House* for aesthetic reasons, and he probably made changes to both of these paintings. The view of Second Beach from 1865, however, is a more obviously constructed view, dramatically rendering the reds and yellows of the sunrise. By contrast, the view from 1878/80 is painted in a much more intentionally naturalistic style, using less "rhetorical tricks of light," as Adams puts it.[134] Whittredge paints the beach scene as you might expect to find it on a mostly sunny day, using a lot of ambient light to show color rather than relying on the contrast of light and dark. Whittredge continued to use this lighter, *plein-air* style throughout his time in Rhode Island. There is also a large amount of detail in the painting, such as the tall grass and the fence by the hill, adding a lot of specificity to the place. At the same time, however, Whittredge continued to adapt his more painterly style in this work. The grasses and shrubs in the hillside are not painted individually, but rather, are implied by short green brushstrokes. The clouds in the sky, too, are given a puffy texture by painting with a variety of brushstrokes and the waves are dotted by impasto. While there is a new commitment to Barbizon naturalism in this painting, shown in a much more natural light, Whittredge continued to develop his new visual style.

Whittredge's relation to Barbizon painting does not extend beyond the formal qualities of the work, however. The beach scene outside Newport is a unique mixture of a landscape painting combined with the trappings of a more modern image depicting middle to upper class people, neither purely landscape nor a Realist image of rural life.

[134] Adams, 97.

As such, this painting occupies a liminal place in regards to contemporary trends in art, Whittredge adopting parts of a few styles. On one side, there is a high degree of pictorial honesty in the work. When he comments in his autobiography on Newport feeling like his ancestral home, Whittredge notes that "This part of the New England littoral, the paradise of summer dwellers, had great charm for me, though of a different character from the fascinations it always seemed to possess for the fashionable people."[135] True to his description of the area, it is exactly those "fashionable people" whom Whittredge chose to represent in the foreground spending the day at the beach, their nice clothing indicative of their middle to upper class status. It is a painting of Newport, then, almost exactly as Whittredge saw it, complete with the tourists who flock there in the summer. And while the figures still play an important part in the painting, the focus of the painting is still on the landscape, the wide, curving beach, rolling waves, and grassy hill taking up the majority of the work. In this, though, Whittredge does not follow all of the conventions of the Barbizon School, whose style he is adapting to. While he does adopt a new naturalism in his work, as previously discussed, the painting does not quite attain the atmospheric poeticism that French and American Barbizon painters were developing. Furthermore, rural scenes typically showed either only a landscape or a landscape with peasants, making this painting somewhat unusual.

While the work cannot be considered a genre painting, despite the presence of the figures at the beach, their inclusion in the painting is still significant, presenting a semi-rural vision of modern life. After the Civil War, and more significantly after the

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[135] Baur, 63.

Centennial Exhibition, genre scene painting in the United States branched off into two opposing directions. The mainstay artists of the genre, such as Eastman Johnson, continued to represent farm life and rural America in their paintings, though their popularity declined quickly by the 1880s. While their paintings, in a purely visual capacity, were picturesque images of American life, they communicated traditional values such as entrepreneurialism.[136] Furthermore, they functioned as protestations against the industrialism that spiked after the end of the Civil War, many artists even going so far as to completely ignore urban realities.[137] Other up and coming artists, such as Thomas Eakins, whose painting *The Gross Clinic* was rejected from the Centennial Exhibition, led another faction of genre painters towards images of modern life, focusing, as Patricia Hills notes, on "art and music, leisure-time and vacation activities, and urban sports."[138] Whittredge's rendering of the Newport beach includes facets of each style, both a rural image and one specifically depicting people involved in a modern leisure activity. As a painting of the beach, these ideas are conflated into a picturesque image, addressing modern life through the lens of people retreating from it. While this bucolic scene does not attain the same sense of mood that is present in other American Barbizon paintings, which Whittredge does achieve in the 1880s, his subtle statement on modern

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[136] Patricia Hills, "Images of Rural America in the Work of Eastman Johnson, Winslow Homer, and their Contemporaries: A Survey and Critique," in *The Rural Vision: France and America in the Late Nineteenth Century*, ed. Hollister Sturges (Omaha: Joslyn Art Museum, 1987), 78. Beyond the changing values in the late 19th-century, which Hills rightly argues shift to consumerism and internationalism, the interpretation of labor as a commodity was a significant part in changing attitudes towards rural life.
[137] Patricia Hills, *The Painters' Life: Rural and Urban Life, 1810-1910* (New York: Preager Publishers, 1974), 80. Paintings such as these, though, quickly lost popularity after about 1880 as they became seen as overly passé.
[138] Hills, "Images of Rural America in the Work of Eastman Johnson, Winslow Homer, and Their Contemporaries: A Survey and Critique," 80.

life also sets it apart from American Barbizon painting and establishes a trend in Whittredge's painting after this point.

Another depiction of the Rhode Island coast dating from ca. 1880, *A Breezy Day--Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island*, illustrates the subtle impression of modern life that Whittredge inserted into his paintings during this period.[139] The visual style of the work is very similar to the 1878/80 version of *Second Beach, Newport*, adapting the naturalism of the early Barbizon School to the coastal scene while still utilizing his new, more painterly style. The painting presents a depiction of Sakonnet Point, a strip of land on the southern shore of Rhode Island, a small weathered building, and the deep blue ocean stretching into the background. A dirt path and a low stone wall run down a grassy expanse from the foreground of the painting to the shack, which is sheltered by a large rock that sits behind it. Beaches stretch out from the foreshortened strip of land, small figures standing in the middle ground near the water's edge. Similar to the previous work, the painting has the same *plein-air*, light filled quality. The entirety of the painting is very well lit, the sparse clouds in the sky not casting any dramatic shadows on the scene. Whittredge uses the abundance of ambient light to paint color in the work, adding a great deal of detail to the different shades of green and brown in the grass in the foreground. This grassy expanse also exhibits Whittredge's painterly style very well. Except for the smooth grass in the middle ground, the majority of the grass was painted using short upward brushstrokes, giving it a great deal of texture and showing the effect of wind in places. The wildflowers growing in the grass are suggested by small dots of different

[139] There is a slight discrepancy with the date of this painting as well. The Amon Carter museum dates it generally as ca. 1880, but Janson lists it as ca. 1878.

color paints. The sky, which fills the upper half of the painting, is a smoothly painted pale blue that fades atmospherically almost to white. In contrast to this smooth texture the clouds are painted with light varied brushstrokes, giving them a puffy appearance. Though only a very small part of the composition, the figures engage in the same leisure activity as the people in the previous work, placing the coastal scene in a modern context.

The contemporary context that the beachgoers assume in the painting is reinforced by the presence of a steam ship along the horizon, smoke billowing out of the smoke stack. A number of other two-masted vessels appear on the horizon, their white sails almost blending into the sky, but the black color of the steam ship is noticeable against the horizon. Images of ships were common in genre scene paintings, evoking connections with trade and commerce, both domestic and international.[140] Lacey Baradel, in her article "Geographic Mobility and Domesticity in Eastman Johnson's *The Tramp*," discusses the inclusion of a small toy boat in Johnson's 1876 painting of a tramp seeking refuge or assistance from a rural family. Though the toy boat is only a very small part of the painting, tucked under the small boy's arm as his mother ushers him inside, such images were powerful reminders of the increased geographic mobility people had in the last quarter of the 19th century. This image of the boat, as well as the tramp, many of whom often used railroads to travel about the country, leads Baradel to the astute conclusion that "the painting marks an ambitious attempt to represent the disappearing line between the self-contained traditional family home and the transformational forces of

[140] Lacey Baradel, "Geographic Mobility and Domesticity in Eastman Johnson's *The Tramp*," *American Art* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 43, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/677964.

modern mobility."[141] Though Baradel is ultimately describing a much different subject than Whittredge's painting, the seeming conflict between the symbols of modern life that the vessel evokes and the picturesque landscape it appears in can be read similarly. While Johnson uses the tramp to suggest the negative sides of modern life and geographic mobility, Whittredge's interpretation seems to be more egalitarian. While the steam ship breaks some of the continuity of the seam between the ocean and the sky along the horizon, its small size is still relatively unobtrusive. While the modern world seems to shrink, the realities of modern life passing the beach on the horizon, a place of retreat and relaxation, there is ultimately little conflict between the two forces. While painting a bucolic image of the Rhode Island coast, Whittredge makes a subtle claim that the realities of modern urban and rural life can be balanced, coastal New England already a popular middle and upper class destination for escaping the city. Implicit in this understanding is the fact that modern city life, inclusive of big business and industrialization, are ultimately responsible for the wealth that allowed for leisure time and disposable income.

Even after Whittredge's crisis in 1877, there was still a noticeable conflict and hesitation in his work. While he left the Hudson River School idiom and began to embrace the visual language of the Barbizon School, there was a division between the visual qualities of the work and the overall program of the pieces. While Whittredge was using the bright naturalism that some of the Barbizon artists were using, his overall approach to nature had not fully captured the spirit of the movement. While trying to

[141] Baradel, 44.

change his style, Whittredge's attempts to see the landscape as a Barbizon artist, so to speak, had not yet come to fruition. His vision of the rural coast of Rhode Island, populated by beachgoers escaping city life, was a fairly progressive vision of the landscape at the time as many of the American Barbizon painters did not show elements of modern life in their works at all. As a landscape painter, though, there was a subtle acknowledgement that America's relationship to nature had changed. This is not entirely surprising for the artist, as his representation of nature changed after the Civil War too, but it does show Whittredge trying to process this change. At least during this period of his work, nature retained its identity as a place of retreat. As he continued to develop his painting after this point, however, his vision of nature subtly shifted as well.

Working in the Barbizon Idiom, 1881-1885

During the next definable period of his career, from about 1881-1885, Whittredge began painting with a renewed commitment to Barbizon art and its style. While still focusing on the New England coast and images of contemporary life in the area, Whittredge's dedication to the Barbizon idiom became more comprehensive in this period. While still utilizing a similar sense of naturalism in his works, there is evidence of a more concerted effort to adapt to Barbizon's ideal of a poetic beauty. While Whittredge seems to be somewhat more comfortable working in this new idiom during this period, interpreting his work from the early 1880s is complicated by the fact that his approach to

the subject matter, life in rural, coastal New England, began splitting into two related directions.

The difficulty in interpreting Whittredge's work during this four to five year period after 1880 is twofold. While continuing to work in an American Barbizon aesthetic, Whittredge began to incorporate a few different styles into his art. Despite the similar message in all of these works, these differing styles complicate a clear interpretation of these paintings, raising questions as to why he used such visually disparate modes. Moreover, Whittredge did not necessarily follow all of the stylistic trends of the American Barbizon movement. Despite typically censuring modern themes in their works, many of his paintings from this period include oblique and subtle commentary on contemporary life. Furthermore, Whittredge's ability to fully "see" in the Barbizon mode becomes unclear, especially when he returns to painting forest interior scenes in 1885. When his subject matter remained in New England, however, traces of his different way of envisioning the American landscape can be seen in his work, separating him from the other artists of the American Barbizon School.

From 1881 to 1885, the majority of Whittredge's paintings present scenes of rural New England, many of them images of the coast. These works continue to develop similar themes as the paintings from the late 1870s and very early 1880s, though the style has shifted to follow the American Barbizon aesthetic more closely. Whittredge's *Old Homestead by the Sea* from 1883 is a particularly excellent example of his new commitment to the American Barbizon movement, the work displayed a subtle shift in

the tone and meaning.[142] The painting presents a view of the rural New England coast, an old farmstead in the foreground of the work.[143] The low hills that the farmstead sits upon slope down to a wide beach in the middle ground of the work. Small waves break on the sand, the vastness of the ocean in the background compressed onto a narrow plane. A number of very small sailing ships sit along the horizon, though there is no depiction of a modern steam ship, Whittredge not implying the omnipresence of industrialism and trade as overtly. A group of six figures stand in the foreground, engaged in different activities, five of them seemingly playing on and around a large rock while a grown man works in front of a shed on the left. The painting retains the same brightness and naturalism as Whittredge's paintings from the late 1870s and early 1880s, painting color with light, as well as a similar, more painterly style.

Janson briefly describes the painting in the beginning of the last chapter of his book. His analysis in this section, however, is flawed, incorrectly asserting the significance of nostalgic imagery and its relation to Whittredge's oeuvre. While the chapter is innocuously titled "Old Age," the first section of the chapter received the subheading "Waning Powers," positing that this painting marks the start of Whittredge artistic decline, a process which lasted until the end of the 1880s. Focusing on the subject matter of the work, Janson remarks that it "has the picturesque flavor of *A Home by the*

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[142] Whittredge's *Old Homestead by the Sea* is currently in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 21 ⅞ x 31 ⅞ inches (55.56 x 80.96 cm).

[143] Janson notes that while the painting is probably a scene outside Newport, an alternate version bears the name *A Scene of Gloucester, Massachusetts*. The architecture, in particular, indicates that this painting is more than likely a view outside Newport. The main farmhouse is done in a style the local area was known for, which is featured in the next painting I will discuss, *Landscape with Washerwoman*, as well as others from that series of paintings, such as *Old Newport House*.

Seaside," painted in 1872, "but now the nostalgia has become self-conscious."[144] While Janson does make a valid point, that the work repeats similar themes and subject matter that he previously addressed in his work, this painting's place in Whittredge's oeuvre is more complicated than Janson makes it seem. Whittredge first made a series of paintings of the Newport area in 1872, after returning from his second trip out to the Western United States. During that period, he made several paintings that bear a strong resemblance to this work from 1883, though their styles are not the same. Janson argues that, as Whittredge is returning to this imagery in the 1880s, the works are inherently self-referential and repetitious, the lack of new subject matter intimating the start of his decline. The merit of this argument begins to lose ground when it noted that *Old Homestead by the Sea* is not merely a later repainting of a similar scene. Instead, it has its own unique set of imagery and symbolism. Furthermore, Whittredge's earlier version, *A Home by the Sea* from 1872, participates in a similar sense of nostalgia as *The Camp Meeting* from 1874, both works creating a positive reminiscence of a time when people were more connected to nature. Also, in regards to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, Janson's comment that Whittredge's personal sense of nostalgia starts with this work seems somewhat arbitrary.[145] The Rhode Island coast paintings from the late 1870s and early 1880s were completed only a few years earlier, yet they are not labeled self-referential in

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[144] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 180. Whittredge's *Home by the Sea* is currently in the collection of the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Massachusetts. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 36 ⅛ x 54 ⅛ inches (91.76 x 137.48 cm).

[145] Janson is using nostalgia differently here than how I have discussed it throughout the text. Whereas Janson means that Whittredge was recalling his own past, I discuss it in terms of cultural heritage and history.

the same manner. Whittredge's expression as an American Barbizon artist in this work discredits Janson's suggestion that Whittredge's decline starting during this period.

Janson also cites the overall quality of the painting as one of the main reasons the work starts to show an overall decline in Whittredge's work. While he notes that Whittredge used color and light effectively in the work, Janson remarks that "In comparison to the paintings of a decade earlier, however, the execution has lost some of its deftness and precision."[146] The "deftness and precision" that Janson mentions, while applying to the piece as a whole, might also be a specific reference to the brushwork and composition. While not as loosely rendered as the works of some of the other landscape painters at the time, such as George Inness, Whittredge continued to utilize a fairly painterly style in this piece. The dirt and grass in the foreground of the painting, for example, are shown using swaths of different shades of green and brown rather than imitating their natural texture. A similar style can be seen in the grass on the hillside on the left. Instead of painting individual plants, Whittredge relied on the direction of the brushstroke to imitate them. The sky, too, is unusually expressive for the artist, the soft blue mixed with a hazy brown color while each of the brushstrokes, especially near the top of the painting, remain visible. The painterly style Whittredge used, as well as the atmospheric rendering of the rural scene, create a picturesque image expressing the poetic quality sought after in American Barbizon painting. Furthermore, the formal composition of the work is excellent, showing careful consideration by the artist. While the farmstead takes up the majority of the foreground, Whittredge purposefully elides most of the

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[146] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 180.

middle ground, which is relegated to the beach and rocks along the right side of the work, and shows the background in the expanse of the ocean. Innovative in style for Whittredge, it displays his commitment to American Barbizon painting rather than a decline in quality.

By carefully constructing the composition of the painting, Whittredge was able to juxtapose the scene of rural life in the foreground with the ocean and merchant ships in the background, implying the relationship between the two. The foreground is set up into two curving strata: the first one starting on the right side and curving down to the left, and the second starting on the left and curving down to the beach on the right, leading the eye across both sides of the painting and down to the middle ground. Whittredge carefully constructed the painting to lead the eye from the foreground to the background. The rural scene in the foreground of the work, which depicts an old farmstead with people engaged in different activities, purposefully shows very little modern farming technology. Despite this imagery, the piece does not have the same connotations as a genre scene painting from the same time, focusing on the landscape as a whole rather than the labor of the rural workers. An apt comparison would be Eastman Johnson's 1876 painting *Husking Bee, Island of Nantucket*, a late genre scene painting of the traditional way of life on Nantucket Island.[147] The painting depicts a group of men and women of all ages, sitting and standing in two lines almost perpendicular to the picture plane, a large pile of yellow corn husks between them. More than just a depiction of the labor, though, as Hills asserts,

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[147] Eastman Johnson's *Husking Bee, Island of Nantucket* is currently in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 27 ¼ x 54 3/16 inches (69.3 x 137 cm).

genre scene paintings such as this "are about values, not about farming. The farm represented the best of the older *ideal of community*, and the farmer represented the best of the newer values of *entrepreneurial individualism*."[148] Whittredge was certainly adapting these same themes in *Old Homestead by the Sea*, but whereas Johnson virtually eliminated the background in order to focus the attention on the scene in the foreground, Whittredge purposefully draws the comparison between the farmstead and the ocean in the background. The painting is about more than the American values associated with farming; rather, it comments on rural life and its validity in contemporary society in general.

Contrary to Janson's assertions, then, the painting presents a unique and complex view of the rural New England coast. During this period Whittredge completed a number of other paintings of coastal New England expressing a similar mood. One such painting, *The Old Road to the Sea* from 1883 [Figure 7], which depicts a panoramic view of a dirt road leading down to the ocean, can be used to help interpret some of the themes in *Old Homestead by the Sea*. The painting, done in the American Barbizon style that defined Whittredge's art in the early 1880s, presents a similar littoral scene of New England: thick grass and wildflowers leading down to the gray-blue ocean with waves breaking along the beach. An old dirt road, lined in the foreground by low stone walls, leads down to the water from the left foreground of the painting. A large cart drawn by two animals, either horses or oxen, can be seen near the center of the work, heading back up the road.

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[148] Hills, "Images of Rural America in the Works of Eastman Johnson, Winslow Homer, and Their Contemporaries: A Survey and Critique," 78. Italics original. Ironically, Johnson, in several letters he wrote to his friends in the 1870s and 80s, noted that Nantucket was changing rapidly, and no longer had the rural quality it once possessed.

A second cart stands much farther down the road, little more than a brown fleck of paint. While the imagery is obscure to twenty-first century viewers, the subject is recognizable to Whittredge's contemporaries as seaweed harvesting.[149] Whittredge also very successfully utilizes the poeticism of Barbizon painting in this work. Like *Old Homestead by the Sea*, Whittredge used a variety of brushstrokes and atmospheric lighting to make the painting expressive. The tall grasses in the foreground are rendered in a number of different greens, intermingled with a few rocks and patches of brown, the varying brushstrokes showing it falling and swaying in different directions. The presence of wildflowers is suggested in the foreground by white flecks of impasto dotted around the surface. The large trees on the left side of the painting, which tie the lower half of the painting to the upper half, have a similar sketchy quality, their dark leaves represented by loosely painted sections of dark green paint. Similar to the hazy sky in *Old Homestead by the Sea*, Whittredge renders an overcast sky, painting it a light tan color with a blue undertone. In order to imbue the whole painting with a similar atmospheric quality, Whittredge uses only a few earthy colors throughout the whole painting, the ocean reflecting the brown of the sky while the foreground and middle ground consist mostly of different shades of green, none of which have a bright hue. The muted colors of the painting dampen the overall tone and mood of the work, too. This almost melancholic quality represented in the piece is tied to the temporal significance of the seaweed harvest.

[149] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 188.

More than just a scene of everyday life or a vision of the local economy, Whittredge specifically chose the seaweed harvest because it contains a very specific set of connotations. In the coastal areas of New England, seaweed was harvested from the ocean for use as a fertilizer in gardens and for insulation under houses.[150] Beyond the local use of seaweed, however, the painting is indicative of a traditional way of life, much more than the sum of the action in the work. This way of life was not continuing on peacefully, as the painting might seem to suggest, but had been disappearing due to the effects of industrialization and modernization by the time Whittredge painted the picture in 1883. The gap between everyday life depicted in the painting and the realities of contemporary life would have been obvious to the viewer. Rather than a nostalgic image of a simpler way of life, Whittredge purposefully showed seaweed harvesting to tie the painting to the temporal significance of harvesting, a recurring episode in nature. Noting that seaweed had a similar function to peat in Great Britain, Janson asserts that Whittredge changed the typical farming image of a young, thriving America to one "equating the United States with long settled Europe."[151] By conflating these images, the harvesting scene and redefining America and a specific way of American life as old, the painting reflects how America has aged similarly to its older European counterparts; the national nostalgia and intersection between traditional and modern ways of life, as derived from the Centennial Exhibition, are at work here. Furthermore, implicit in this acknowledgement is the struggle between rural life and modern industry and urban life, problems that both the United States and Europe were experiencing. Whittredge's

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[150] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 188.
[151] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 188.

painting of the seaweed harvest not only shows the growth of the nation, but acknowledges the decline of rural life.

While *Old Homestead by the Sea* does not contain the same temporal imagery and symbolism as *The Old Road to the Sea*, they function in a similar manner. Just as the seaweed harvest was a depiction of a dying way of life, old farmsteads such as this were disappearing in the face of urbanization and vacationers looking to get away from the city. Rural farms such as this had an increasingly tangential place in both the economy and modern society. Unlike *The Old Road to the Sea*, Whittredge gave the imposition of modern life physical space on the canvas, showing ships along the horizon. Even without the steamship depicted in *A Breezy Day—Sakonnet Point, Rhode Island*, the boats on the ocean are a visual reference to shipping and the modern economy. Whittredge visually linked the two by eliminating most of the middle ground of the painting. While the bucolic image of American rural life in the foreground seems to exist peacefully with modern trade and industry shown in the background, the ships on the horizon represent the invasion of that space.[152] In showing the two images together, Whittredge tacitly acknowledged that the rural way of life was disappearing in the face of modernity.

Rather than marking the beginning of an artistic decline, *Old Homestead by the Sea* provides a complex look into the artist's creative power near the end of his artistic career, working in the American Barbizon idiom while starting to struggle with his own artistic vision. Janson starts the last chapter of his book by saying that the change in

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[152] A more sympathetic view would eliminate all traces of modern life. Johnson's *Husking Bee, Island of Nantucket* from 1876, for example, does not make any reference to modern life. Aside from a small strip of white along the horizon, which might indicate a building in the deep background, there are only trees along the horizon and a barn on the right side of the painting.

Whittredge's art "was so gradual as to be barely perceptible at first."[153] Janson's statement is very democratic, allowing for the skill with which Whittredge renders his works from the time, while still positing that they mark a downward shift in his art. While Janson does make a strong case that the New England coastal paintings from the early 1880s signify Whittredge's waning inspiration, this assessment is negated by the overall strength of the works despite the slightly repetitious content. By this point in his career Whittredge was beginning to fully embrace the Barbizon aesthetic, painting his works a little darker and more atmospheric in order to imbue them with a poetic quality. The particular strength of these paintings, though, is the subtle social commentary that Whittredge manages to work into the canvas. While visual commentary on modern society and life via painting was largely not done at the time, especially in American Barbizon painting, Whittredge managed to work within the aesthetic constraints and show the confrontation between rural American life and modern industry and urban life. There is also a sense of obsolescence that he works into the painting, acknowledging the decline of rural life but not showing it as unviable. Instead of giving a clear cut statement in either modern life or rural America, Whittredge's *Old Homestead by the Sea* gives a complex image of this confrontation, not simplifying the subject or resolving the matter pictorially. In its place, the old Hudson River School artist and painter of the American landscape showed the complexity and unresolved nature of change.

While painting these picturesque scenes of the New England coast, Whittredge was working on another series of images depicting houses in the Newport, Rhode Island

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[153] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 180.

area. These paintings, however, did not have the same littoral quality as the images overlooking the ocean, and were not as obviously related to the coastal region. Despite the different imagery, the paintings were done in the same American Barbizon style that Whittredge used when painting *Old Homestead by the Sea*. Of this series of painting, *Landscape with Washerwoman* from the early 1880s is the best example, showing one of Whittredge's strongest and most comprehensive uses of the American Barbizon style.[154] The work depicts a deep, wide lawn behind a rural house, leading down to a river and some tall grasses in the foreground. The lawn slopes up to the house behind it, which spans across most of the horizon line, cutting the viewer off from anything that would be in the far background. The work has a similarly painterly quality to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, though the high luminosity of the painting is more akin to the Barbizon naturalism that Whittredge used directly after his artistic crisis in 1877 than to the more atmospheric paintings of the coast. The tall grasses rendered in the right foreground of the painting use the direction of the brushstroke to imply the structure of the plants rather than painting them individually. Interspersed among the reeds and tall grasses Whittredge used short brushstrokes and small flecks of impasto to show flowers. Similarly, the leaves in the trees along the left side of the painting were rendered using groups of short brushstrokes, creating clusters of color rather than painting individual leaves. A woman walks down the lawn, quite small in comparison to the house behind her, carrying a basket full of laundry to wash in the river.

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[154] Janson cites Whittredge's *Landscape with Washerwoman* as being in the collection of the St. Petersburg Museum of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, Florida. A color image of the work can be found in Cheryl Cibulka Gordon's *Quiet Places: The American Landscapes of Worthington Whittredge* (Washington, D.C.: Adams Davidson Galleries, 1982). Oil on canvas, 20 ¼ x 16 inches.

The painting is one of Whittredge's strongest from this period, showing the care he took when creating the composition. As with the previous painting, Whittredge is no longer relying on Daubigny as a model for naturalism, embracing the bravura and tonality of the American Barbizon School. His painterly style in the work, as previously noted, is expertly conceived in this piece, showing the artist fully embracing the technical aspects of the style and using them to create poetic beauty. While the whole canvas is illuminated in a bright light, similar to the works from the 1870s, the *plein-air* quality of the work is more stylized in this painting with more of an emphasis placed upon the effects of light. The loose brushstrokes give the whole painting a fuzzier, more atmospheric quality, different from the finely painted works of the previous period. Whittredge's emphasis on light, which he facilitated through his use of color, is visible in how he painted the leaves of the trees. Those around the periphery, which contain open sky behind them rather than branches or other leaves, were painted a lighter green, mimicking the effect of light passing through the leaf. This is depicted particularly well in the short tree the sits in between the one and two story sections of the house, the upper left hand branches of which are much lighter than the rest of the tree. The overall composition of the work, too, exhibits the uncommon care with which Whittredge structured the work. The painting is structured into a series of horizontal layers, starting with the blue of the river at the bottom and working up to the white and blue sky at the top, a novel arrangement for Whittredge considering the lack of spatial depth in the painting. These layers are anchored to one another by the trees placed around the canvas, the thin tree near the center of the painting tying the green band of grass to both the house and sky, for

example.[155] Furthermore, as Janson notes, "the surface geometry echoes the shape of the house," the horizontal bands echoing both the rectangular shape of the house and the different floors.[156] Similar to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, the structure of the painting is related to the message, tying the house to the surrounding landscape, with the washerwoman striding in between these parts.

Categorizing this painting, similar to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, is somewhat difficult, as the does not follow the typical conventions of American Barbizon landscape painting and is different from all of Whittredge's other representations of the Newport area.[157] Rather than an expansive view of the region or of the ocean, the painting is predominantly a depiction of the house and the yard, a much more specific focus than the previous works. While the house is seemingly the most important aspect of the painting, as it is the most visually interesting object and is placed at eye level along the horizon line, its presence is contextualized by the river and the yard. Placed in different horizontal strata of roughly equal size, Whittredge uses this visual link to relate these objects to one another. Even though the painting is much different than Whittredge's other works, he continued to focus not only on the scene in the foreground, but also on relating the scene back to the rest of the landscape in general. Whittredge continued this theme with the depiction of the washerwoman, standing near the center of the work. Despite the figure's presence in the painting and her importance to the work, the painting cannot be construed as a peasant painting; her labor is not the focus of the artist. The washerwoman also does

[155] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 168.
[156] Ibid.
[157] While the painting does not make it immediately obvious, the location is supposed to be the Newport area. The architecture of the house, similar to the farmstead in *Old Homestead by the Sea*, was very popular in that region of New England at the time.

not have the same sense of individuality that was typically given to the subject of peasant paintings in French and American Barbizon, and well as Realist paintings.[158] Instead, the work appeals to the tradition for sentiment that was common in American Barbizon art, Whittredge painting sympathetic view of traditional rural life around Newport.[159]

While the painting could fairly easily be seen as a hybridization of a landscape and genre scene painting, the absence of signs of modern life showing the artist's sympathy for rural life, this interpretation would be conspicuous in Whittredge's oeuvre, especially in light of the social commentary in his other works from this period. Ultimately, the sentimentality of the image is merely an aspect of the work and does not define the work in its entirety. In this manner, the theme of the painting is fairly similar to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, as the sentimental image of the traditional farmstead was not the only symbol at work in the painting. Furthermore, a sudden switch to a purely sympathetic image would be almost a complete reversal from his works from the late 1870s and would point to a fundamental shift in attitude on the part of the artist.

The nature of rural life in Rhode Island was one of the artist's concerns, however. Though it is not immediately apparent in the work, there are subtle social implications of the obsolescence of this type of rural life. This is most clearly visible in the noticeable lack of technology depicted in the painting. Despite the relatively nice house that the washerwoman is walking from, she still needs to go down to the river to wash her clothes. By the 1880s, simple in-home mechanisms for washing clothes had been invented, as not everyone would have had easy access to clean waterways in which to

[158] Sturges, 28.
[159] Bermingham, 79.

wash clothing.[160] Rather than going down to the river to wash her clothes, and almost certainly getting dirty herself in the process, it would make more sense for the woman to be fetching water to use. It is specifically because technology for washing clothes existed at the time that makes the woman's actions conspicuous. The implication of the painting, then, is remarkably similar to *Old Homestead by the Sea*, showing a great deal of continuity between the works from this time period. Rural life, completely absent of modern technology, is a dying way of life. The technology, trade, and tourism that are absent from this painting were virtually omnipresent in daily life, as Newport was becoming a popular summer getaway from the city. Though Whittredge does not show this in the work, they still contend with the image of the rural washerwoman whose way of life is losing out to these external forces. While Janson correctly remarks that American Barbizon painting from the period does not have the broad social implications that French Barbizon art did, Whittredge's painting does provide a subtle social commentary on the decline on this particular way of life. While it was viable in the past, Whittredge suggests that it will eventually fade away due to the unceasing intrusion of modern life.

For the first time since the mid-late 1860s, when Whittredge was working as one of the prominent second generation Hudson River School painters, his art largely conformed to the style and program of the major landscape movement of the time, the American Barbizon School. In turn, like the other artists of the movement, Whittredge

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[160] Some houses that were build during the 19th century had cisterns built into them. Gutters would collect rain water and funnel it down into the cistern. While the water was typically not clean enough to drink from, it could be used to bathe in or for washing clothes.

was bound by the overarching American artistic conventions that "still demanded observance of poetic beauty and expression," as articulated by Simon.[161] As such, Whittredge used his own specific set of images and implications to add social commentary to the work. By carefully composing his painting and juxtaposing rural life with different aspects of modernization, such as trade, Whittredge was able to imply that rural life would continue to decline and disappear. Furthermore, throughout this period Whittredge continued to follow a modified Hudson River School program, specifically representing and documenting different facets of American life through the guise of landscape painting. Though the paintings are much different than the forest scenes he produced more than a decade earlier, there is a continued interest in America social and artistic culture. Though Whittredge continued to paint scenes from the New England coast for the better part of a decade, his interpretations remained fresh and interesting into the 1880s. As he moved back to painting forest interiors during the mid 1880s, however, his waning inspiration becomes visible.

A Problem with Seeing, 1885-1886

By the mid 1880s, Whittredge ceased painting images of the rural New England coast and, instead, returned to bucolic images of forest interiors. Now rendered in the American Barbizon style, Whittredge's paintings from around 1885 – 1886 vacillate between excellent re-envisionings of the forest scene and poorer interpretations of the American Barbizon style. The difficulty he faced during this period came from both a

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[161] Simon, 156.

waning inspiration, evidenced in the fact that he was returning to some of the same scenes he had painted earlier in his career, and his personal struggle at seeing the forest within this new idiom. While New England allowed Whittredge to escape the connotations of the Hudson River School, returning to the forests of New York and New Jersey had exactly the opposite effect on his work.

After living in New York City since the 1860s, Whittredge moved to Summit, New Jersey in 1880 with his wife and daughters. He still had studio space in the Tenth Street Studio Building until 1900, which he continued to visit regularly for more than a decade, as well as displaying his work in exhibitions.[162] His participation with the artists in New York slowly declined over the course of this twenty year period as the artist aged, though he remained active into the 1890s. During the mid-1880s Whittredge focused his work on forest interior scenes once again before turning to other subjects, such as rural and urban Mexico, as well as experimenting with different styles.[163] The works he completed from 1885-1886, however, show the artist trying to parse out the themes and vision of the forest in the American Barbizon style. An excellent example of Whittredge's American Barbizon forest interiors and the next turning point in his career is *The Brook in the Woods* [Figure 8], from ca. 1885-86. This painting is a fairly successful attempt by Whittredge to re-imagine the forest as an American Barbizon artist, so the overall decline in the quality of his work is not very noticeable. The painting shows a sparsely lit interior of a forest with a small river curving through the center of the painting. Flowing toward the viewer in the foreground, the river curves from the right

[162] Blaugrund, 134.
[163] Whittredge traveled to Mexico in the early 1890s.

hand side of the painting, disappearing behind a short hill and trees in the middle ground of the work. Whittredge's rougher, more painterly style is obvious in the brushwork in the piece, his facture undergoing another comprehensive change. This quality is most noticeable where light falls on the bark of some of the trees, their trunks highlighted and painted in a strong impasto. Furthermore, Whittredge continued to use light to color different objects, such as painting the grass along the left side of work a lighter green than the grass on the right, which is a darker green. The work as a whole, however, is not as fully lit as the New England landscapes, intermittently showing light coming through the trees rather than illuminating the entire interior.

The painting is a re-imagining of a late Hudson River School forest interior, *Trout Brook in the Catskills*, which he painted a decade earlier in 1875.[164] This later interpretation updated a similar forest scene. A river flows through the middle of both works, the latter of which changed the style to match the aesthetics of the American Barbizon School.[165] Besides this basic similarity, however, the paintings use very different visual language. The original painting, *Trout Brook in the Catskills*, is painted in a similar manner as *The Trout Pool*, which was completed five years earlier. While Whittredge was already starting to adapt the Barbizon style into his work by adding naturalism, the lighting in the painting is much more dramatic than in the later work. Much of the painting is dark, the trunks of the trees merely silhouettes, except for a band of light stretching across the river in the middle of the painting, illuminating the trees on

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[164] Whittredge's *Trout Brook in the Catskills* is currently in the collection of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Oil on canvas, 35 5/16 x 48 1/16 inches (89.7 x 122.1 cm).
[165] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 190.

either bank. The perspective Whittredge uses in the work is also very linear, the river extending from the foreground to the background down the center of the painting, creating a vanishing point between the bottom and middle thirds of the painting. The deep perspective of the painting is enhanced by the trees that arch over the center of the work, recalling Durand's framing device, which Whittredge used in the 1860s and 1870s. *The Brook in the Woods*, while showing Whittredge using similar lighting techniques to those he used in the 1870s, is constructed much differently than the earlier work. Instead of using linear perspective in the work, Whittredge cut off much of the background in *The Brook in the Woods* by adding a barrier of dense trees sitting in a pocket of shadow. While lighter trees and leaves appear behind them, it effectively cuts off the viewer's access to that space, an aspect which is further enhanced by the curvature of the river which extends out of sight. More than just a translation of the scene into a new visual style, *The Brook in the Woods* is an effective re-imagining of the painting in a new aesthetic.

While the source material for the work was from an earlier painting he completed, much of his indirect inspiration came from other American Barbizon artists. Most prominent among these is George Inness, who lived and worked in Montclair, New Jersey, not far from Whittredge's home in Summit. Beside their close proximity to one another, though, Whittredge adopted some of the hazy, almost muted style that he saw Inness using during the 1880s. This painting retains the very vigorous brushwork that Whittredge used in *Landscape with Washerwoman*, despite the coloristic differences of the two works, painting the highlighted sections of the trees in thick impasto. More

generally, though, Whittredge adapted the heavily atmospheric quality that Inness was using at the time, such as in the 1882 work *June* [Figure 9]. Much of the foreground of *June* consists of rolling green grass along the banks of a placid river. Inness painted the grass in a fairly even tone and with consistent brushstrokes, suggesting the occasional wildflower with a small dot or swath of color. Whittredge painted *The Brook in the Woods* in a similar manner, using a fairly even surface tone for the grass on the left with just a few flecks of color over it for the flowers. Furthermore, Whittredge tried to mimic the atmospheric quality of *June* by using very few crisp, clean lines throughout the work, letting the entirety of the painting remain slightly out of focus.[166] By rendering the landscape in this manner, he was also imitating the poeticism and mood that Inness managed to express in his paintings. This visual relationship was further enhanced by Whittredge showing the brook running through the painting and out of site, just as Inness paints the stream running from the center of the foreground, curving through the trees in the middle ground and flowing out of sight.[167]

What might be the most successful aspect of the painting, however, and which shows Whittredge's understanding of American Barbizon painting, is the push and pull between naturalism and the poeticism the Barbizon painters were looking for. One of the central characteristics looked for in landscape painting during the late 19th century was having a balance between what contemporaries referred to as "realism" and "idealism."

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[166] Compare this to the finely rendered trees in *The Trout Pool* to see the difference between the two. *The Brook in the Woods* is not as delicately painted, not showing the mottled and uneven surface of the bark, for example.

[167] Carbone, 684. Inness, painting his own impression of nature, was heavily influenced by the work of Emmanuel Swedenborg, a French philosopher. Despite their connection, Whittredge was not influenced by Swedenborg.

Of these, "realism" was the more mundane of the two, indicating an exact copying of nature in the painting. By itself, "realism" could be considered quite banal since it did not add anything to the work and could not possibly, some argued, imitate nature perfectly.[168] This was countered, typically, by adding a degree of "idealism" to the painting. This abstract concept, which sought to show that which is otherwise indefinable and not represented by physical form, was expressed by Thomson in his 1880 article "Realism in Painting." Taking on the voice of a so-called Idealist, Thomson says to the reader "let us show we think there is a soul which is not seen as well as a body which is seen."[169] While this description is still somewhat cryptic, he means to show that the "ideal" is an essential part of the painting that is more than the sum of the visual parts of the work and, as such, indefinable.[170] Whittredge, using this method of painting in *The Brook in the Woods*, heightened the naturalism of the painting in order to emphasize the "ideal" aspect of the work. In his representation of the forest interior, Whittredge's construction of the space is not as contrived as some of his earlier forest interiors, most notably *Evening in the Woods*. The view of the forest in *The Brook in the Woods* conforms to what the viewer would see when looking at that same location if he or she were standing there. The river and rocks in the foreground are close to the picture plane, yet far enough away to imply that the picture plane is raised off of the ground, as if the viewer were standing in that

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[168] Thomson, 283. Thomson expresses this in his discussion of realism and idealism. This argument was also waged against the Hudson River School in the 1870s, misinterpreting the closeness to nature and imitation.
[169] Thomson, 283.
[170] In an article he wrote for *The Art Journal* in 1879, Inness explains the ideal in a similar manner. Remarking on the conflict between the real and the ideal, he asserts that the "real difficulty is in bringing the intellect to submit to the fact of the indefinable – that which hides itself that we may see it." E., "Mr. Inness on Art-Matters," *The Art Journal* 5 (1879): 377, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20569446.

space. The view in *Evening in the Woods*, however, is more contrived. The portrait orientation of the painting elongates the space, obscuring the viewer's perspective and making it more difficult to enter the space. This orientation also extends the space upwards, making it seem as though the viewer is looking both forward towards the horizon and up towards the top of the trees. In order to counter this false perspective, Whittredge switched *The Brook in the Woods* to a landscape format, cutting off much of the upper halves of the trees.

While constructing the painting very naturalistically, Whittredge used the atmospheric quality inspired by Inness to give the painting mood and poeticism, adding the "ideal" to the "realism" of the work. The placidity of the image, a river running quietly through the forest, gives the impression of a serene, still beauty. In this sense, the painting succeeds as an American Barbizon work by creating an expression of nature rather than simply representing its formal qualities. Furthermore, Whittredge abandons the solemnity and quietude in *Trout Brook in the Woods* for a brighter and more inviting naturalism in *The Brook in the Woods*, showing a more honest interpretation of nature rather than suggesting vastness and mystery.[171] Moreover, the painting is an excellent illustration of Barbizon painting in general, as one of the fundamental tenets of the genre is representing the native landscape, an aspect which both Whittredge and the rest of the American Barbizon painters took to heart.[172] Because the formal and expressionistic qualities of this painting were largely successful, *The Brook in the Woods* shows

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[171] Jennifer Raab, "Worthington Whittredge: Trout Brook in the Catskills," *Corcoran Gallery of Art: American Paintings to 1945*, ed. Sarah Cash (Washington, D.C.: Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2011), 139.
[172] Adams, 97.

Whittredge not simply reworking *Trout Brook in the Catskills* into a more modern aesthetic, but envisioning the forest as an American Barbizon artist. There are, however, signs of Whittredge's inspiration waning. The subject of the painting, for example, returns to the same location as his work from the 1860s and 70s, guilty of the self-conscious nostalgia that Janson said of *Old Homestead by the Sea*. While his decline is not apparent in this work, other forest interiors from the mid-1880s temper the success Whittredge had with this painting.

Another painting from c. 1885, *The Brook – Catskills (The Bathers)* [Figure 10] does not share the same success as *The Brook in the Woods*. While attempting to continue painting forest interior scenes in the American Barbizon mode, Whittredge's vision and inspiration in this work largely flagged. While the work is not entirely unsuccessful, the reasons behind its moderate failure are somewhat complex, owing to a loss of artistic vision rather just a poor composition or use of color. The painting presents an image of a wide river running through a dense forest which opens up into a well-lit grassy field as the river curves away in the background. A man and a boy stand at the end of the river near the center of the painting. A small dog, which probably belongs to them, stands up river from them in the foreground of the work. Whittredge represents the river itself as being quite wide, taking up the entire bottom edge of the painting. The banks on either side of the river are thickly forested and covered mostly in shadow, creating two dark corridors that lead the eye down the center of the painting to the bathers in the background.[173] This tunnel-like effect is enhanced by Whittredge filling the trees and

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[173] "Bathing" was a contemporary term for swimming.

grass in the background with light, attracting the eye. The visual style, however, is not as confidently Barbizon as the previous work and starts to revert to a style closer to his work from the early 1870s. The painting, in general, is much more crisply painted than many of his previous works, despite the haziness of the piece, a quality which can be seen in how he paints the trees. The leaves, for example, are in much more individual clumps rather than patches and the individual branches of the trees, too, are much more visible in this work, closer to *The Trout Pool* than *The Brook in the Woods*.

Unlike the previous work, which was developed from an already extant work, *The Bathers* was an almost entirely original painting for Whittredge. There were, however, some paintings from the late 1860s and the early 1870s of forest interiors that included small figures in them. One such work, *Fishing* from c. 1868-1870, depicts a forest interior with a waterfall leading to a large pool of water in the middle ground of the painting, a man standing at the left bank fishing.[174] Despite this visual reference, Whittredge tried to update this scene and represent it in an American Barbizon style. The most apparent tie to Barbizon painting is the heavily atmospheric quality of the painting, recalling the haziness of Inness' paintings. At the same time, however, it is largely unsuccessful as an American Barbizon painting, as Whittredge relied on some of the conventions he used previously while painting in the Hudson River School idiom. The painting is framed on either side by two large trees whose branches stretch over the center of the painting. Whittredge uses Durand's framing device to draw the viewer into the work. Furthermore, this painting made use of linear perspective for the first time since

[174] Janson cites Whittredge's *Fishing* as being in the collection of the Reading Public Museum and Art Gallery in Reading, Pennsylvania. Oil on canvas, 21 x 17 inches.

Evening in the Woods without either obfuscating the background of the work or showing the whole horizon. In *The Brook in the Woods*, for example, Whittredge cut off the background of the painting by placing large, dark trees behind the river in the rear of the middle ground, restricting the viewer's space in the painting. Despite his efforts to use the American Barbizon aesthetic to render this scene, his reliance on older Hudson River School techniques hinders the quality of the painting.

More than just an attempt at painting an American Barbizon landscape, *The Bathers* was intended to be a scene of leisure, similar to *Second Beach, Newport*. In order to convey this, though, Whittredge went back to themes he had originally developed around 1870 which can also be seen in the c. 1868-70 painting *Fishing*. The work, overall, has a similar message to *The Trout Pool*, showing nature as a retreat rather than a holder of moral purity and truth and implying the concept that "man can no longer abandon himself to nature."[175] Furthermore, *Fishing* adapts a concept originally expressed by Kensett in his painting *Bash-Bish Falls, Massachusetts*, implying that man is intruding upon nature.[176] Whittredge represents this through the use of hierarchy of scale, the fisherman's tiny compared to the enormity of the forest surrounding him. The two are purposefully out of scale with one another. *The Bathers*, then, was a modern reinterpretation of a similar scene, depicting people existing peacefully with nature. Unlike the Barbizon naturalism paintings from the late 1870s which depicted scenes of modern leisure on the Rhode Island coast, Whittredge combined the American Barbizon

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[175] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 105-107.

[176] Ibid., 108.; John Kensett's 1855 work *Bash-Bish Falls, Massachusetts* is currently in the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston. A color image of the work can be viewed on their website. Oil on canvas, 29 ⅞ x 24 ⅛ inches (75.88 x 61.28 cm).

forest painting with a modern leisure scene. While leisure scenes were common by the 1880s, Thomas Eakins in the forefront of this genre, their combination in a Barbizon aesthetic was unusual. In order to create parity between nature and the bathers, Whittredge shows the figures in scale with the trees around them, no longer invading the interior space of the forest. Man and nature, Whittredge seems to be saying, can cohabit together peacefully.

Despite his social commentary on man's relationship with nature, which he depicts as equitable, *The Bathers* is ultimately an unsuccessful painting which Whittredge struggled to execute in the American Barbizon style. When describing the work at the end of his book, Janson is uncharacteristically ungracious, remarking that the atmospheric haze that "surrounds each form" is merely a "concession to Barbizon."[177] While it is true that the painting is not as well executed as others from the same period, this interpretation points to a fundamental misunderstanding of Whittredge's work from this period. Janson misinterprets the failures of this painting, which take place during a slow overall decline in the quality of his work. He sees Whittredge as abandoning the American Barbizon style and reverting to the Hudson River Schools idiom. On the contrary, it is the opposite that has taken place here. Despite his continued struggle to embrace the American Barbizon style, Whittredge continued to do so throughout this period. In this work, he attempted to execute not only a forest interior scene, but also a genre scene-inspired leisure painting, conflating the two types of paintings. While the social implications of the work are not difficult to interpret, it relies on themes similar to

[177] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 191.

those he worked with in the late 1860s and early 1870s, which led to him using the conventions of the Hudson River School style. Moreover, it points to Whittredge's fabricated identity as an American Barbizon artist and his inability to fully transition his work and "see" in a new mode, an aspect that becomes apparent when returning to forest scenes. Instead of being bitter about the end of the Hudson River School, as Janson suggest, his artistic identity had never fully left the genre.

While the two paintings in this section of the paper, *The Brook in the Woods* and *The Brook – Catskills (The Bathers)*, have similar subjects featuring woodland interiors, they represent the high point and the low point in the artist's works from this period. His success with *The Brook in the Woods* was due not only to his largely effective reinterpretation of an earlier work into the American Barbizon aesthetic, but also to his ability to see the landscape differently rather than try to recreate the style. As was suggested earlier in this paper, having never fully left the idiom of the Hudson River School, Whittredge still painted uniquely American themes and landscapes. This aspect of his work took on an outward expression when he returned to painting images of the forest. He went back to the Hudson River School style in his attempt to paint a modern leisure activity. While Whittredge was able to successfully adapt himself to the American Barbizon style in his paintings of the New England coast, his return to the woodlands of New York shows his struggle to see the landscape differently, despite the decade that had gone by since he painted his transitional works in 1876.

Conclusion

While Whittredge's autobiography is one of the most important resources for understanding the artist and the thought processes behind different trends in his work, he spends extremely little time discussing painting or life after the Centennial Exhibition in 1876. The work conspicuously jumps from his discussion of the Exhibition, which is done in the context of his role as the President of the National Academy and in alleviating its debt, to his final thoughts on his life, work, and contemporary trends in art in 1905.[178] Beyond suppositions, it is difficult to explain why there is no discussion of his work from the 1876 until the end of his life. It is likely that there are a number of factors that led to this decision, such as the fact that he did not enjoy the same success he once had after 1876, despite the comprehensive changes in his style. What it generally points to, however, is lingering uncertainties regarding his art from this period. This can certainly be seen in the large number of stylistic changes that Whittredge goes through during this ten year period, which then becomes even more pronounced after 1885 when Whittredge begins working in several styles. More than just a stylistic change, though, Whittredge's crisis and subsequent redefining of his art after the Centennial Exhibition were comprehensive changes in his approach to art and his vision of the American landscape. While his thematic interest in American art, tied to his experience as a Hudson River School artist, never truly left, his progressive change to the American Barbizon idiom was in earnest.

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[178] Baur, 44. Even though Whittredge was not the President of the National Academy in 1876, planning for the Centennial Exhibition began in 1875 during his second term. As such, he was largely responsible for the profits that the Exhibition garnered, which proved to be enough to repay the remaining $31,000 debt that loomed over the National Academy's head. His pride at being able to remedy this situation is obvious in the text.

His success in this matter, however, is more difficult to judge. Like many artists, especially the Hudson River School artists who found themselves quickly becoming obsolete in the 1870s, there was a difference between what Whittredge was trying to accomplish and what he managed to accomplish. This is evident in the difficulty in identifying when Whittredge's artistic decline began. Janson argues, for example, that Whittredge's decline begins in 1883 when he returns to New England for the third time in his career. While his painting was still largely successful, Janson asserts that it points to flagging inspiration on Whittredge's part. While I argue that Whittredge's decline does not begin to become evident until he returns to painting woodland scenes, Janson's statement that "the change was so gradual as to be barely perceptible" is, by and large, accurate, since Whittredge's work over the last few decades of his life ranges from excellent to unsuccessful.[179] While Whittredge's success at interpreting the forest as an American Barbizon artist is contestable, his paintings of the rural New England coast are some of his best works from the later portion of his life. It is here, away from the Hudson River School connotations of the Catskills, that Whittredge is best able to embrace the aesthetics of the American Barbizon School. While working in the area, Whittredge's programmatic bent was focused on the local architecture, rural life by the shore, and its ongoing disappearance in the face of trade, industrialization, and urbanization, all scenes that intimately connected to theme of American life to which he was devoted. While Janson refers to Whittredge as a "historical barometer" in the context of the 1860s and Whittredge's visual response to the Civil War, this statement is largely true for the

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[179] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 180.

remainder of his career as well, following the struggle of artists to change their styles and ways of seeing America in the face of social change in the late 19th century. This problem was further compounded for artists like Whittredge because the commonly accepted understanding of the modern American artist was changing in favor of a duality between spirituality and materialism.[180] While these were both themes Whittredge was directly and indirectly touching upon in his work, this comprehensive change in the identity of the American artist was another conceptual hurdle Whittredge struggled to overcome.

While Whittredge did enjoy a renaissance in his art after 1876, there is a tangible decline in his work by the time he returns to painting forest scenes in the mid 1880s. His paintings from this period range from successful interpretations of forest interiors in the American Barbizon mode to paintings that rely on older outdated artistic conventions. Misinterpreting Whittredge's faltering success after 1885 and his use of multiple styles, Janson asserts that "This stylistic waywardness in all likelihood reflects his demoralization over the eclipse of the Hudson River School, which is evident in the reluctant acquiescence to the predominant style of Inness and his followers."[181] The problem with this statement is that it conflates several ideas that should not be combined. While the decline of the Hudson River School in the early 1870s happened relatively quickly, Whittredge's position as one of the leading members of the movement and his continued success into the mid-1870s in spite of the severe decline of several of his colleagues put him in a relatively stable position. Furthermore, it is inaccurate to say that

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[180] Sarah Burns, "Finding the 'Real' American Artist," in *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 19.
[181] Janson, *Worthington Whittredge*, 190-191.

Whittredge was merely acquiescing to Inness when he had spent the better part of the last decade painting New England in an effort to understand the American Barbizon movement and be able to see their version of the America landscape. As one of the Hudson River School artists, and one of the leaders of the movement towards the end of its life, Whittredge's changing style became a matter of whether or not he was able to see America differently. From roughly 1877 to 1883, Whittredge was able to see America differently. He began to define the American landscape in his art through its people and the changes in traditional modes of life rather than through the landscape itself. It was not the decline of the hegemony of the Hudson River School that made artistic culture difficult for Whittredge to navigate, but the cacophony of competing voices and ideas that entered the dialogue on painting.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Asher B. Durand, *Into the Woods*, 1855, oil on canvas, 60 ¾ x 48 inches (154.3 x 121.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift in memory of Jonathan Sturges by his children, 1895.

Figure 2: Worthington Whittredge, *The Trout Pool*, 1870, oil on canvas, 36 x 27 ⅛ inches (91.4 x 68.9 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Colonel Charles A. Fowler, 1921.

Figure 3: Worthington Whittredge, *The Camp Meeting*, 1874, oil on canvas, 16 x 40 11/16 inches (40.6 x 103.3 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Amelia B. Lazarus Fund, 1913.

Figure 4: Worthington Whittredge, *Evening in the Woods*, 1876, oil on canvas, 42 1/5 x 36 1/8 inches (107.5 x 91.7 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Henry H. Cook, 1905.

Figure 6: Worthington Whittredge, *Second Beach, Newport*, 1878/80, oil on canvas, 30 ¼ x 50 ¼ inches (76.8 x 127.6 cm), Courtesy National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Figure 5: Worthington Whittredge, *Second Beach, Newport*, 1865, oil on canvas, 25 ⅞ x 38 x 3 inches (65.7 x 96.5 x 7.6 cm), Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Figure 7: Worthington Whittredge, *The Old Road to the Sea*, 1884, oil on canvas, 31 x 51 inches (78 x 129 cm) WikiGallery.

Figure 8: Worthington Whittredge, *The Brook in the Woods*, 1885-86, oil on canvas, 28 x 36 inches (71.1 x 91.4 cm), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Maurice J. Cotter, in memory of his mother, Muriel Josephine Cotter (1902-2003), 2003.

Figure 9: George Inness, *June*, 1882, oil on canvas, 30 ⅛ x 45 ¼ inches (76.5 x 114.9 cm), The Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Figure 10: Worthington Whittredge, *The Brook—Catskills (The Bathers)*, c. 1885, oil on canvas, 25 ¼ x 38 ½ inches (64.1 x 97.8 cm), The Montclair Art Museum.