

Colonization, Wilderness, and Spaces Between

Nineteenth-Century Landscape Painting in Australia and the United States

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Distributed by the University of Chicago Press

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Perception, History, and Geology:

The Heritage of William Molyneux’s Question in Colonial Landscape Painting

Figure 1
Richard Wilson (1713/14–82), *Apollo
and the Seasons*, (C18th), oil on canvas,
100.1 × 125.7 cm, Fitzwilliam Museum,
University of Cambridge

In his July 17, 1814, review “Wilson’s Landscape, at the British Institution,” English Romantic art critic and essayist William Hazlitt (1778–1830) applauded *Apollo and the Seasons* (18th c.; fig. 1), an Italianate landscape painting by Richard Wilson (c. 1713–1782) in the manner of Claude Lorrain (1604–1682):

The fine grey tone, and varying outline of the hills; the graceful form of the retiring lake, broken still more by the hazy shadows of the objects that repose on its bosom; the light trees that expand their branches in the air; and the dark stone figure and mouldering temple, that contrast strongly with the broad clear light of the rising day,—give a charm, a truth, a force and harmony to this composition, which produce the greater pleasure the longer it is dwelt on.¹

Emulating the poetry of James Thomson’s (1700–1748) *The Seasons* (1730),² Hazlitt’s syntax reenacts excursions of the eye over diagonals that link variegated bands of landscape scenery to the bright horizon, where it rebounds on tonal contrast back to the foreground. The description ends with a striking analogy: “The distribution of light and shade resembles the effect of light on a globe.”³ To what does this analogy refer in a painting in which there is no globe?

One possibility is that Hazlitt is referring to a terrestrial globe, a common feature of cultivated Georgian interiors. As such, he reverses the contraction he mooted in “On Going a Journey” (1822), where a terrestrial globe shows abstract knowledge dwarfed by lived experience: “What is the true signification of that immense mass of territory and population, known by the name of China to us? An inch of paste-board on a wooden globe, of no more account than a China orange!”⁴ The globe analogy



endows Wilson's Arcadian scene with an amplitude that anticipates Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803–1882) claim that “a work of art” is “an epitome of the world.”⁵

An alternative explanation is that this vivid figure of speech is intended to illuminate the internal mechanism of perception, which Hazlitt explored in his *Lectures on English Philosophy*, delivered two years earlier. There, the globe was introduced in reference to John Locke's (1632–1704) discussion of a question posed by his friend Irish philosopher William Molyneux (1656–1698) in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694).⁶ Locke likens retinal impressions to painting, asking whether a blind man whose sight has been newly restored would be able to distinguish between a sphere and a cube without resorting to touch, the only faculty through which he could have prior knowledge of their solid shapes. Philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) nominated this conundrum the “common center” of “all the special problems of eighteenth-century epistemology and psychology.”⁷

Molyneux's question became a battleground contested by key European philosophers, who debated whether empiricism or idealism best explained the mind's access to ideas about the world. Relations between these philosophical positions are notoriously tangled, but, briefly put: empiricism, the philosophy of science, states that all knowledge derives from sense impression, while idealism asserts that nothing exists but mental ideas. Locke was an empiricist who resisted idealism, whereas Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753) forcefully argued that empiricism collapses into idealism, which, in the philosophy of David Hume (1711–1776) risks a further collapse into solipsism. Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) idealism attempted to avoid Humean conclusions by appealing to the

constructivist, nonempirical power of the mind. This chapter explores the influence of the debate over innate ideas versus sensory experience on British, American, and Australian authors and artists as an aspect of the impact of the colonial project on the environment.

Hazlitt, Locke, and Empirical Perception

Locke, Berkeley, and many others agreed with Molyneux that the newly sighted blind man would be unable to tell a sphere apart from a cube without the aid of touch, for otherwise there must be an innate, amodal correspondence between the separate ideas of sight and touch that transcends sensory experience, a proposition to which empiricist philosophers implacably opposed to innate ideas could not assent. Locke argued that if the newly sighted blind man could not bring his habitual memory of touch to the visual image on his retina, he would see the sphere only as “a flat circle variously shadowed with several degrees of light and brightness...as is evident in painting.”⁸

From this context, a tight fit emerges between Hazlitt's ekphrasis and the globe analogy. Adopting Locke's analogy between painting and perception, Hazlitt employs literary synesthesia to reenact a habitual association of flat retinal images with nonvisual memories. Elsewhere he calls this “gusto,” “where the impression made on one sense excites by affinity those of another.”⁹ Here, there is gusto in the recession of the lake, the expansion of the boughs, and the moldering of the temple in “all the cool freshness of a misty spring morning.”¹⁰ To the objection that landscape space far exceeds in scope the arm's extension to a sphere and cube, Hazlitt answered that “by the aid of the pencil we may be said to touch and handle the objects of sight.”¹¹



That is to say, the physical motility of painting recapitulates the sensory coordination of touch and vision a child learns on his or her earliest walking expeditions.¹²

It follows that in suggesting that landscape is “grasped” through painting, Hazlitt shared with the philosophers of the previous century the erroneous assumption of Renaissance perspective science that the flat window of the picture plane is isomorphic with the observer's retinal image. This, as James J. Gibson has argued, relies on

“the classical assumption that two-dimensional vision is immediate, primitive or sensory, while three-dimensional vision is secondary, derived or perceptual. One must first see a plane form before one can see a solid form.”¹³ If a painting cannot trigger tactile memories of the scene it depicts, it lacks the gusto required to spatialize its illusion. Thus, Wilson's paintings of comparatively novel subjects such as Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Wales lacked conviction: “a mountain shrinks to a molehill, and the lake that expands its broad

Figure 2
Richard Wilson (1713/14–82), *Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle*, c. 1765–66, oil on canvas, 101 × 127 cm, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Liverpool

bosom to the sky, seems hardly big enough to launch a fleet of cockle-shells” (see *Snowdon from Llyn Nantle*, c. 1765; fig. 2).¹⁴ These unfamiliar destinations on an alternative grand tour of Britain occasioned by the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15) lacked the time-honored associations of the Roman Campagna found in paintings by Claude and Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665). Even if one had visited them, they held no more conviction than a map of China on a pasteboard globe. Hence the dynamic interconnection between these alternative explanations of Hazlitt’s globe analogy, which creates a temporal as well as spatial illusion of the antique world relived as immediate experience.

Hazlitt and Ruskin: Idealist Perception

Hazlitt was aware that Molyneux’s question was developed as the central point of Bishop Berkeley’s *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* (1709), a work that gained almost universal acceptance. But in endorsing Locke’s answer, Berkeley was misunderstood, for *An Essay*

towards a New Theory of Vision was the prolegomenon to his *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), in which he refutes the existence of a material universe. By pursuing empirical ideas of visual and tactile association to the point of collapse in the earlier work, Berkeley prepared an immaterialist account of consciousness supplied by God instead of the physical world: he trenchantly maintained that the habitually associated ideas of sight and touch have nothing in common either with each other or with an external world.¹⁵

The commonsensical Hazlitt was no more convinced by Berkeley’s position that “all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any subsistence without a mind” than by Hume’s skeptical hypothesis of a mind “shut up in the narrow cell of its own individuality.”¹⁶ Yet where an Aelbert Cuyp (1620–1691) painting at Dulwich College Gallery was concerned (*Herdsmen with Cows*, c. 1645; fig. 3), Hazlitt could at least entertain the idea of Berkeley’s theory as a stimulus to the imagination: “A fine gallery of pictures is a sort of illustration of Berkeley’s Theory



of Matter and Spirit. It is like a palace of thought.... Substances turn to shadows by the painter’s arch-chemical touch; shadows harden into substances.... Look at the Cuyp next door.... The tender green of the valleys beyond the gleaming lake, the purple light of the hills, have an effect like the down on an unripe nectarine. You may lay your finger on the canvass; but miles of dewy vapour and sunshine are between you and the object you survey.”¹⁷

In observing the Cuyp work, Hazlitt finds, the evidence of touch is at odds with that of vision, so that pictorial artifice and spatial distance

contradict each other, as Berkeley had argued. Thus Hazlitt’s analogy with the nectarine serves a contrasting purpose to that of the globe he uses to describe Wilson’s *Apollo*. There, the analogy established an illusion of reality. Here, it evokes the reality of an illusion. Yet if the Cuyp painting illustrates a fictional visual theory, it is informed by the objective tenor of the equivocal wonderland that a patient reported to surgeon William Cheselden (1688–1752) after a cataract operation enabled him to see for the first time. As Berkeley quoted: “Pictures would feel like the things they represented, and [he] was amaz’d when he found those parts, which by their light and shadow appear’d now round and uneven, felt only flat like the rest; and asked which was the lying sense, feeling, or seeing?”¹⁸ The patient learned to see only gradually.

Hazlitt’s description brought a thundering denunciation from John Ruskin (1819–1900). Obsessed with truth to nature in *Modern Painters I* (1843), Ruskin focused on the mismatch between Cuyp’s landscape and Hazlitt’s analogy: “Now I dare say that the sky of this first-rate Cuyp is very like an unripe nectarine: all that I have to say is, that it is exceedingly unlike a sky.”¹⁹ It is therefore fascinating to discover that in *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), Ruskin concurs with Hazlitt’s view that perception of solid form comes from the custom of associating it with tactile experience, but draws the opposite conclusion, proposing one should try to recover “the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of colour merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify,—as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight.”²⁰ By purifying the retinal image of “solidity of projection”—deemed “the vilest mechanism that art can be insulted by giving a name to”²¹—Ruskin was implicitly giving a positive answer to Molyneux’s question, for by calling

Figure 3
Aelbert Cuyp, *Herdsmen with Cows*, c. 1645,
oil on canvas, 101.4 × 145.8 cm,
DPG128, Dulwich Picture Gallery, London

Figure 4
J.M.W. Turner, *Mercury and Argus*, 1836,
partly repainted 1840, oil on canvas,
151.8 × 111.8 cm, Purchased 1951,
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa

for the preservation of “the innocence of the eye” he followed Plato rather than Locke in positing a mystical apprehension of pictorial distance that avoided what Ruskin regarded as Claude’s idolatrous tactile illusionism.²²

By contrast, Ruskin found that Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775–1851), by “retirement of solid surface,” dismantled the stage scenery of classical pictorial structure, so that, in *Mercury and Argus* (before 1836; fig. 4), “if ever an edge is expressed...it is only felt for an instant, and then lost again; so that the eye cannot stop at it and prepare for a long jump to another like it, but is guided over it, and round it into the hollow beyond; and thus the whole receding mass of ground, going back for more than a quarter of a mile, is made completely *one*.”²³ Here was a Platonic means of abolishing the human agency of tactile mediation by defining sight as “an absolutely spiritual phenomenon,” uniting the soul with creation.²⁴ Yet, paradoxically, Ruskin also remained a Lockean, convinced that “there is no perception” unless we take notice within of “whatever impressions are made on the outward parts” of the body.²⁵

Human and Geological History in Colonial Painting

It was precisely Ruskin’s supersensuous swoopings of an eye freed from touch that painter Thomas Cole (1801–1848) could not abide when he caught up with Turner’s latest works in 1829: “They are splendid combinations of colour when it is considered separately from the subject, but they are destitute of all appearance of solidity.”²⁶ Moreover, in writing to Cole in Europe about a view from a mansion Cole had painted in America (*View of Monte Video, the Seat of Daniel Wadsworth*,

Esq., 1828, Metropolitan Museum of Art), Daniel Wadsworth (1771–1848) invoked a collapse of spatiality akin to Hazlitt’s shrunken mountain and pasteboard globe: “To us...Monte Video remains as beautiful as ever...but after the splendid Mountains [and] Palaces you have lived amongst it will appear but a miniature—and a rude one.”²⁷ American history afforded insufficient cultural memory to spatialize the view.

Molyneux’s question was a formative element in colonial landscape aesthetics, while the unfamiliarity of American and Australian landscapes made their representation particularly pertinent for philosophical debates about visual and tactile perception. Negative answers to Molyneux’s question became problematic when the debate crossed the Atlantic,²⁸ for how was the colonial painter to acquire the necessary tactile associations when, in Cole’s phrase: “All nature here is new to Art”?²⁹ According to Locke, retinal images were unintelligible without prior tactile experience of their objects, hence the difficulty for artists making, or writers appraising, paintings of “untouched nature” lacking the familiarity of culturally intelligible places. If the inferior art of landscape painting was to elevate taste as it ought to, it must aspire to the higher genre of history painting by employing scenery transformed by heroic action. Thus in his “Essay on American Scenery” (1836), Cole addressed the “grand defect in American scenery—the want of associations, such as arise amid the scenes of the old world.”³⁰

But if Locke’s theory of perception was partially responsible for this problem, his other writings provided the rationale for two great historical themes that were amply available to American landscape painting: “the great struggle for freedom,” as Cole called the War of Independence (1775–83), and the clearing of wilderness. In *Two*



Treatises on Government (1689), Locke asserts the free and equal status of all individuals against the authority and privilege of divine-right monarchy, a position that accords with his subjectivist perceptual theory. On empirical grounds, America was “a state of nature,” a testing ground for the dovetailing of Locke’s political and perceptual theories. In the chapter in the *Second Treatise* on the labor theory of property Locke justifies property through the exertion of physical labor on natural resources, particularly through agriculture and enclosure, a process exemplified in the “homestead principle” of independent ownership.

Making property a criterion of citizenship served the interests of an empire based on freedom

while also justifying the dispossession of Native Americans supposedly ignorant and incapable of agriculture.³¹ Effort expended on the land meshed with the tactile dimension in Lockean perception in fostering “heroic” alterations to landscape. Thus, after the revolution, the dominant theme of American landscape painting became the dynamic interaction and violent collision of settlement and wilderness.³² In contemporary Australia, too, future land improvement became an adequate substitute for European history: “The traveller there seeks in vain for the remains of cities, temples, or towers,” wrote explorer Sir Thomas Mitchell (1792–1855), “but he is amply compensated by objects that tell not of decay but of healthful progress and

Figure 5
Thomas Cole, *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans,”* 1826, oil on panel, 66.4 × 109.4, Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection (1993.2)

hope;—of a wonderful past, and of a promising future.”³³

Angela L. Miller has argued that Cole’s American paintings are deeply indebted to “a form of sensationalism, traceable to John Locke, in which the mind and imagination were seen as imprinted with the sensory data of particular environments.”³⁴ In his lecture “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” later in the century, Frederick Jackson Turner (1861–1932) gave the Lockean sense of character a dialectical form in which successive phases of frontier consciousness produced “the democracy born of free land, strong in selfishness and individualism, intolerant of administrative experience and education, and pressing individual liberty beyond its proper bounds.”³⁵ This was a still recognizably Jacksonian-era version of Locke’s liberal ethos of “individualism, economic self-interest, and material values” produced by “manly” struggle with wilderness.³⁶ The Lockean fusion of theories of citizenship, property, and perception justified the evasion of ethical and ecological responsibility to the land. Earlier in the century, however, their interaction had suggested more ambiguous outcomes for the environment.

In Cole’s *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”* (1826; fig. 5), the tactile inferences of Molyneux’s question are writ large in optical probing that dramatizes the conflict between the artist’s theistic concern for the environment and the positive value of the Lockean homestead principle. A euphemistic allegory of Indigenous extinction unfolds across the foreground of the painting, in keeping with the denouement of the 1826 James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) novel from which the painting takes its title and historical resonances.³⁷ There is a baroque effect in the theatrical contrast of

tone along the zigzag trajectory that draws the eye forward into spatial depth through alternating bands of dark and light wilderness, then sideways toward a brightly lit settlement from which smoke rises, then upward into the sky around either side of the distant mountains. As with Wilson’s *Apollo*, the progress of the eye into space is temporally sequential, but now “the mind’s eye” sees “far into futurity” rather than backward to the antique past. The distant, starkly illuminated settlement that overflows neighboring valleys promises a bright future, for “where the wolf roams the plough shall glisten.”³⁸ But ominous storms descend to the left at the center of the tallest mountain to connect with a vector of smoke drifting from a burning section of the township on the right, suggesting either land clearance or urban conflagration.

These forking pathways for the eye around the mountains—bright to the right, dark to the left—set future intimations of manifest destiny against the prospect of divine retribution for despoliation of the land, a pessimistic alternative strengthened by the ecological damage from the tanning industry implied by the falling storm and rising fire in other Cole images at this time, particularly the closely related *Catskill Mountain House*, *The Four Elements* (1843–44, private collection).³⁹ What remains constant in both optimistic and pessimistic depictions of landscape change in these and many other Hudson River School paintings is the dynamic appropriation of picture space by tactile optical probing. By contrast, Kathleen Ash-Milby has argued that landscape representation was missing from Native American culture until forced removals from the land, since it “was never alien enough to need representation in the first place.”⁴⁰

A potent alternative to colonial history as a source of landscape narrative was the scientific

study of landforms whose prestige rested on the divine authorship of the creation, the exceptionalism of American scenery, and the rise of middle-class interest in tourism and geology. Bernard Smith observes likewise of the antipodean context that Captain James Cook’s (1728–1779) painter William Hodges (1744–1797) abandoned authority based on classical landscape in favor of “compositional elements...determined not by reference to states of mind but by reference to the interrelation of the facts and scientific laws determining the nature of a given environment.”⁴¹

Up to 1860, the history of American landscape painting coincided with a period of catastrophic clearing of the forests that had covered almost half the country, a process repeated later in Australia with similar cost to Indigenous people and ecological balance.⁴² For many at the time, clearing the forest was the naturally ordained first step in improving the land.⁴³ Thus, years later, Frederick Jackson Turner traced how “civilization in America has followed the arteries made by geology.”⁴⁴ In charting the transformation from Native American trails to complex cities, he echoed the steps of progress defined by Adam Smith (1723–1790) and other Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, illustrated in Australia in Conrad Martens’s (1801–1878) *View of Sydney Cove and Fort Macquarie* (1837, Newcastle Art Gallery),⁴⁵ which suggested that nature gradually forms civilization.

In a different respect, however, human history remained separate from natural processes and the science that investigated them. Only in the 1970s did the discovery of plate tectonics, catastrophic geophysical events, extraterrestrial impacts, and the Gaia hypothesis of global interactivity lead scholars to replace gradualism with the idea that human industrial and agricultural activity had caused abrupt and irreversible climate

change. At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, Western geological thinking had moved from the static classification of “different kinds” of rocks to historical accounts of formations so slow that natural history could still be framed, like the rocky stage in Cole’s *The Last of the Mohicans* scene, as a static arena on which turbulent human history played out separately (despite the destruction of nature by fire in that painting).⁴⁶

A different kind of split, between deep geological and momentary human time, characterizes William Stanley Haseltine’s (1835–1900) coastal *Rocks at Nahant* (1864; see p. XX). It was painted in the same year that Swiss-born professor of natural history Louis Agassiz (1807–1873) lectured in Nahant, Massachusetts, and published cutting-edge geological theories in an article titled “Ice-Period in America.”⁴⁷ Haseltine’s painting shares with Cole’s *The Last of the Mohicans* scene the Lockean quality of tactile, visual probing, but it invites us to concentrate on geological time instead of human history. Geologically informed landscape painters confronted the problem that while narratives of godly creation carried greater import than those of merely human history, landscape paintings lacked the dynamic instructional power of cross-sectional geological charts, which, since the beginning of the century, had revealed the causal forces that structure land beneath its surface.⁴⁸ Coastal scenes were at least free of concealing topsoil and foliage, but in *Rocks at Nahant* Haseltine went further by dramatizing the internal energy of the pale “vein” of frozen magma diagonally traversing the rocks from bottom right upward. The pale line Haseltine portrayed had been produced by an aggressive intrusion of liquid magma into fractures within horizontal layers of sedimentary gabbro, where it had cooled millennia ago.⁴⁹ Agassiz knew nothing about the action of tectonic plates, but

would have understood how veins of molten magma had frozen in the gabbro, how the gabbro had subsequently tilted and fractured, and how glaciers had accentuated fragmentation, even plucking out rock and carrying it away—as from the extensive inlet in the foreground of this painting, where the ocean surges in.⁵⁰

The vein pushes diagonally from the right foreground of the picture over rocks broken into blocks and tilted like picture frames. Erosion has reduced the original site of the image—viewed from Forty Steps Beach toward Castle Rock, Nahant—into a graveyard of its former appearance, yet my 2018 photograph shows that although almost all the original components of the painting still exist, it is impossible to capture a single viewpoint that aligns with the painting’s composition (fig. 6). Despite the passage of time, a comparison of painting and photograph shows to what extent the composition had been constructed to exaggerate a geological phenomenon. In particular, it shows that the channel that held the white magma (since washed away) still lines up over several fractures for a great distance, yet there is no evidence of its presence in the slab that

occupies the lower right-hand foreground, where it prominently initiates the main, inward, diagonal thrust of the painting. By introducing something that never existed, Haseltine rearranged the scene to emphasize this puncturing of gabbro layers. In doing so, the painting transcends the mere facts of locality to ask what vast powers—volcanic and glacial—operate both beneath and above the surface of the rock, and within and beyond the frame of the composition. What unimaginable forces pushed magma through rock, set the imponderably heavy slabs on a slant, broke them up, and plucked great segments out of them?

Haseltine wrote that “Everything in nature... is worth painting, provided one has discovered the meaning of it. The picture will then tell its own story.”⁵¹ My photograph shows that, somewhat differently, the painting obliges the scene to tell this story. Haseltine’s visual manipulations are contrived to match the narrative of divine providence Agassiz claimed for the evidence of geology: “It would seem that man was intended to decipher the past history of his home.”⁵² Like the shattered hand of a gigantic geological clock, the white vein invites us to reimagine the story of the rock’s



formation. The deep time of this narrative, however, is set in contrast to the transience of crashing waves, scudding yachts, and carefree fishermen. Despite the optical probing enacted by the composition, in which the compositional agency of the artist eerily colludes with the geological force of the creator, the two men featured in the painting are split off from and apparently heedless of the larger story of nature that sustains them.⁵³ In tactile pictorial enactments of this scientific kind, humans pose no threat to natural omnipotence.

Positive Answers: America

The Lockean formation of national character required topographical specificity that was harder for settlers to find in the unvariegated terrains of “untouched nature.” It is therefore striking how many American and Australian landscape paintings show wilderness scenes that furnish distant access for the eye but not for the body across pathless vegetation, precipices, and mountains. These terrains appear trackless even for the lone Indigenous observers planted within them as symbols of so-called primitive New Worlds (which were hardly new to them, having traversing them for millennia). In Asher Brown Durand’s (1796–1886) *Kindred Spirits* (1849, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art) or Eugene von Guérard’s (1811–1901) *Mount William from Mount Dryden* (1857; see p. XX), the eye shoots instantaneously over vast distances, leaving the tactile sense entangled, while in other paintings the strong directional forces of natural phenomena such as waterfalls, rivers, and volcano smoke confront the viewer held back from imagined physical entry into picture spaces. At the conclusion of Emerson’s “Nature,” outward and inward forces contend in the allegorical advance of summer

upon an onlooker who advances to meet it: “As when the summer comes from the South...so shall the advancing spirit create its ornaments along its path.... He shall enter [the kingdom of Man over Nature] without more wonder than the blind man feels who is gradually restored to perfect sight.”⁵⁴ Molyneux’s question recurs, but under idealist premises.

Considered a subset of natural science, the anatomy of human perception relied on the ideology of gradualism as much as geology did. In 1811 Charles Bell (1774–1842) conceived of the human eye as of a piece with the rest of divine creation. It did not evolve, but was “formed as it should seem at once in wisdom,” without the prior development of mutual reciprocity between animals and environment on which the evolution of distinct organs depends.⁵⁵ Yet it is upon such assumptions that a different order of perception arose in America that challenged the stability of gradualist ideology, opening the gate between human and nonhuman spheres that negative answers to Molyneux’s question closed.

At first Emerson was adamant in upholding the scientific “hypothesis of the permanence of nature” (gradualism), but argued that reason and imagination make the “outlines and surfaces” of nature “transparent” as “causes and spirits are seen through them.”⁵⁶ Berkeley was the greatest of the young Emerson’s philosophical heroes.⁵⁷ Being unable to decide whether the impressions of his senses corresponded with “outlying objects” or not effectively meant that by default Emerson sided with Berkeley against Locke, who harbored no such uncertainty. Emerson scorned the empirical task of spatializing retinal images by associating them with tactile memories “painfully accumulated, atom after atom, act after act, in an aged creeping Past.”⁵⁸ Instead, he claimed

Figure 6

View towards Castle Rock from 40 Steps, Nahant Mass, author’s photograph



the possibility of unmediated access to “one vast picture, which God paints on the instant eternity, for the contemplation of the soul.”⁵⁹ But in claiming total, instantaneous visual access to nature, Emerson misconstrued Berkeley, who no less than Locke and Molyneux, believed that one could not know about depth and shape from visuals alone. In contrast with static or gradualist views, Emerson conceived of a constant flux between soul and nature (closer to catastrophism), with one sphere diminishing the other as

Figure 7
Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–1892), *Standing on the Base Ground...I Become a Transparent Eyeball* (Illustration for Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature”), 1830–92, Pen and ink, 8 ³/₈ × 5 ¹/₁₆ in. (21.3 × 14.4 cm), Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Whitney Dall, Jr., in Memory of Emily Dall, 1976.625.20(1)

it enlarged itself, without the filter of flat retinal images detaching consciousness from experience. Hence Emerson’s heady feedback loop of perception “uplifted into infinite space” as “a transparent eye-ball” through which “the currents of the universe circulate” for a viewer who was “part or particle of God”—a dictum famously illustrated in a semiserious cartoon by Transcendentalist artist Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813–1892) (*Transparent Eyeball*, c. 1839, fig. 7).⁶⁰

Before the American Civil War (1861–65), unpredictable colonial terrains ravaged by “improvement” could have induced landscape painters to depict sublime visions of storm and flood that anticipated an unstable, multistate, anthropocenic earth, though the cause would have been understood to be divine retribution rather than human agency alone. From a spiritual point of view, such visions challenged the separation of human and nonhuman spheres. In this sense, the pursuit of manifest destiny vied with a conception of the universe in which the human soul was either enlarged by faith or dwarfed by greed, with nature as the final victor, for the destruction of humanity and nature was not mutual, as theorists of the Anthropocene predict today.⁶¹

Berkeley and the Newport Painters

A different approach to Berkeleian perception can be found in quieter and smaller landscape paintings by artists working around Newport, Rhode Island, in the 1850s and 1860s, where they chiefly catered to the tastes of urban elite vacationers. What distinguishes paintings by John Frederick Kensett (1816–1872), Fitz Henry Lane (1804–1865), Sanford Robinson Gifford (1823–1880), Martin Johnson Heade (1819–1904), and Worthington Whittredge (1820–1910) from their predecessors

Figure 8
John Frederick Kensett, *Almy Pond, Newport*, c. 1857, oil on canvas, 32.1 × 56.2 cm, Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection (1992.42)

is not only their modest scale and choice of “middle” or “civilized” scenery, long shorn of native trees by the British before the battle with wilderness moved westward,⁶² but also the way their horizontal bands of landscape resolve into spatial wholeness without the thrusts and balances of conventional compositions. True, in Kensett’s *Almy Pond, Newport* (c. 1857; fig. 8), a farmer and a line of children trailing a wayward dog demonstrate linear motility in heading toward cattle set spatially afloat in the middle distance. Compared to the staffage and vectors typical of Cole, however, their halting momentum entails a slight delay in opening up the depths of picture space, while the scattered details are overwhelmed by atmospheric effects that act more as invitations for the gaze to drift beyond the frame than as repoussoirs driving it inward. Offering implicit resistance to J. Gray Sweeney’s indictments of the nationalist agenda and financial motives behind the invention of the term “Luminism” to promote these artists’ work in the 1960s,⁶³ Mark D. Mitchell restores a nuanced spiritual interpretation to these Newport coastal scenes, arguing that Berkeley’s theory of vision remained a living force in the work of painters in the area because it was a “philosophical landscape” where Berkeley had lived and lastingly influenced successive

generations of the exceptionally intellectual community that resided there.⁶⁴ While waiting in Newport for funds that never arrived from the English Parliament to found a mission to the impossibly distant Bermuda islands, Berkeley wrote *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher* between 1729 and 1731, in which he trenchantly revised aspects of his *Essay towards a New Theory of Vision* to refute “minute philosophers,” his derogatory term for free-thinking atheists.

“Geometry over realism,” “objects perceived...at various distances...seen collectively in the field of vision, rather than in any tangible interrelation,” “stripped to their most basic elements,” “essentialized,” “flattened,” “reductive,” “abstracted,” “intensification,” “distilled,” “endless sweep of luminous space,” and “horizontal amplitude” are some of the terms that Mitchell uses (and quotes) to insist on the legacy of Berkeley in these artists’ avoidance of compositions like those of the Hudson River School that, under the tactile pressure of narrative, had forced the eye into landscape depth.⁶⁵ Mitchell keeps his distance from the text of Berkeley’s *Alciphron*, but I conjecture that the passages that might have appealed to artists were those in which vision is defined as a language divorced from a material universe.⁶⁶



Unfortunately, I can find no evidence to support Mitchell's unreferenced claim that Whittredge's papers gave other artists the practical link to Berkeley's ideas.⁶⁷ Moreover, Berkeley's theory does not imply the abstractions of aestheticized vision, for it was designed to explain the role of vision in practical life. At this point I cannot ignore the technical difficulties that aesthetic commentators usually avoid in discussing Berkeley's arguments. Berkeley contends that since God provided vision to sustain and defend us,⁶⁸ it does not deviate from the normal, practical, anticipatory experience of reality. We have already seen that he conceived of the evidence of vision and touch as incommensurate with each other, yet thought that visual *signs* convey the tactile qualities of distance, figure, magnitude, and situation of visual objects, as words do referents, without conveying awareness of signs as such: "In themselves," he writes, "they are little regarded, or upon any other score than for the connexion with tangible figures, which by nature they are ordained to signify."⁶⁹ For Berkeley, the slight delay I have ascribed to the viewer's recognition of depth in Kensett's *Almy Pond, Newport* would not be typical of the experience of the language of vision, but rather of Molyneux's blind person, someone who is only in possession of "intermediate fluency," struggling to construe visual signs much as a non-native speaker would falteringly construe a second language.⁷⁰

Though I consider Mitchell's abstractionist reading of Berkeley incorrect, it may well reflect how Newport painters responded to his text through misunderstandings of or resistance to the issues it raised. The consequences for our attempts to recognize environmental concerns in period painting are clear, however. Unlike the local variations in human language, vision for

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theorists was natural, universal, and established by God: "A visible square, for instance," Berkeley affirmed, "suggests to the mind the same tangible figure in Europe that it does in America."⁷¹ However much like the Newport landscape lent itself to the newly established aesthetic taste of mid-nineteenth-century New York elites,⁷² these paintings transcended local ecological concerns, though it is hardly the fault of Berkeley or these artists that, encircled by mansions, its aquatic life almost extinct due to pollutants, Almy Pond is no longer the angler's paradise that Kensett painted.

Positive and Negative Answers: Australia

Australian landscape painting has so far played a minor role in this account because it lacks engagement with one of the perceptual theories I have been tracing. In the service of empire, almost every early Australian image discussed in Bernard Smith's *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1965) clove to the empiricist tradition of scientific realism. Later Australian art history followed Smith's lead.⁷³ Idealist philosophy, by contrast, did not take root in Australia until the establishment of universities from the 1850s onward. Even then, émigré British-trained professionals pursued not Berkeleyan immaterialism but the role of Hegelian spirit in the task of nation-building.⁷⁴

Artists are capaciously receptive, however. Future research may discover how they gleaned currents of idealism from well-informed patrons, literary luminaries, and religious activists earlier in the century, but it is likely that idealist theories came to Australia through the "Düsseldorf effect" that Ruth Pullin documents elsewhere in this volume.⁷⁵ As Pullin argues, given his interests, tastes in reading, and the circles in which he moved in both Germany and Australia, Düsseldorf-trained

artist von Guérard was almost certainly familiar with most works by pan-synoptic scientist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), whose *Cosmos* betrays many idealist assumptions embedding consciousness in nature. In the second volume (1847), for example, Humboldt advocates for the construction of panoramic buildings to increase the public's "conception of the natural unity and the feeling of the harmonious accord pervading the universe."⁷⁶ It is a conception that will furnish us with a rare example of more-than-human environmental concern embodied in a landscape painting.

After visiting von Guérard's *View of Tower Hill* (1855; fig. 9) at the Warrnambool Art Gallery in Victoria, I discovered it was only possible to capture a semblance of the painting at its nearby site, Tower Hill Reserve, by putting my camera on the panorama setting (fig. 10). Once again, a contemporary photograph helps to unravel the interplay of pictorial conventions and perceptual theories in an original painting. In *View of Tower Hill* we sense von Guérard's identification with the idealism of Humboldt's panoramic idea in the way he interpolates the spectator into a felt unity of curvilinear space. While distilling Humboldt's wholist conception of landscape as the work of the creator, however, von Guérard scatters sharp focal points about the scene to trigger erratic redirections of the gaze as it refocuses on loosely connected, even unrelated groups of creatures—Indigenous people, kangaroos, ducks, and flocks of birds—moving in different directions at different speeds. These effects are remarkably consistent with Humboldt's empirical theory of the outwardness and tactile motility of vision in *Über Denken und Sprechen* (*On thinking and speaking*, 1801), gleaned from a close reading of Étienne Bonnot de Condillac's (1714–1780) *Traité*

des sensations (Treatise on the sensations, 1754), which revolutionized Humboldt's thought.⁷⁷

At first Condillac had joined a succession of British and continental philosophers who had offered positive answers to Molyneux's question,⁷⁸ but in *Traité des sensations* he changed his mind.⁷⁹ In a famous thought experiment, he successively endowed a statue with the senses of smell, hearing, taste, and vision, denying that any of them would furnish any understanding of an outer world and so any corresponding awareness of self. Only with the introduction of touch does the statue escape solipsism and gain consciousness. Touch therefore becomes the teacher of the other senses by enabling a form of attention through which the rest learn to make, as Humboldt understood it, "analogical inferences."⁸⁰ Condillac suggests a cross-modal consciousness *equivalent* to positive answers to Molyneux's question. In the 1798 edition of the treatise, Condillac crucially added movement to his observations on touch,⁸¹ an amplification Humboldt registered and recognized in *Über Denken und Sprechen*.⁸² Tactile awareness of spatial movement is conferred on the eyes when objects appear to break away from one another within their field of vision.

Von Guérard's paintings invite both profound reverie at overall effect and shifting focus on detail. They give an impression of tremendous volatility in the eye's attention to nascent movements in manifold life forms and weather systems within a geologically dynamized landscape. This is their main difference from, say, the more static synthesis of unity and scientific detail in the American paintings of Frederic Edwin Church (1826–1900). *View of Tower Hill* is not a primordial scene, for sailing ships on the horizon harmonize with evidence of other living creatures in a painting that respected the landowner's pastoral



Figure 9
Eugene von Guérard, *View of Tower Hill*, 1855,
oil on canvas, 68.6 × 122, Warrnambool Art
Gallery Victoria (on loan from the Department of
Sustainability and Environment), Gift of Mrs E.
Thornton, 1966



Figure 10
Tower Hill Reserve Victoria, author's photograph

interests without decentering the rest of creation living off the environment that envelops it. A sense of the observer's freedom to change focus in following creatures that move of their own volition seems to coexist with the ironclad dictates of divine destiny.

Though von Guérard would likely have sided with Humboldt in Condillac's negative answer to Molyneux's question, his paintings seem to fuse idealism and empiricism. Few works have had more benevolent effects on the environments they represent. *View of Tower Hill* was commissioned by James Dawson (1806–1900), a leading preservationist, champion of Aboriginal rights, and defender of animal rights. He protested when the site deteriorated from the pristine health depicted in von Guérard's painting, which, after Tower Hill became Australia's first national park, served as a model for restoring it to its original condition. It is now again under Aboriginal management.⁸³

I have tried to suggest that Molyneux's question was not merely a formative element in colonial landscape aesthetics, but itself the product of colonial imagining. In questioning the relations between what is seen and what is touched, it helped transport minds to distant places, including places of the mind designed for aesthetic dreaming, where ethnic and ecological conflicts were safely relegated to outside the picture frame. Empiricism was the guiding philosophy of the colonial project because there was no better doctrine for grasping the reality of alien territories in order to expropriate, control, and exploit Native peoples and their lands. Though idealist theories of perception challenged the myth of natural permanence and provided moral precedents for anthropocenic thinking, they did this by substituting a bourgeois dream world that cut ties with nature and easily

incorporated machines within what Emerson called "the Great Order."⁸⁴ Predicated on positive answers to Molyneux's question, the flight of the eye beyond the limits of the body propelled the speeding bullet and put artists at the forefront of railway, tourist, and urban developments inspired by easel paintings of inaccessible natural wonders. Molyneux's question lives on in the human-machine interface of sensory substitution based on a vastly greater sense of brain neuroplasticity, though whether the impact of trans-modal technology will be better or worse for the environment remains to be seen.⁸⁵

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Leigh Astbury, Andrew Hamilton, Philip Mead, Alan Michelson, Chris Mortensen, Ruth Pullin, Nick Saul, and Jeffrey D. Vervoort for scholarly advice. Special thanks are due to P. J. Brownlee for helping to initiate and support the processes explained in his foreword and to the Terra Foundation for American Art for funding our collaboration with the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the University of Western Australia from which this book arose. Above all, my thanks to Kenneth Haltman for his scholarly acuity, wisdom, and friendship in collaborating on this volume.

1 William Hazlitt, “Wilson’s Landscapes at the British Institution,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P. P. Howe, 21 vols. (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1930–34), 18:24.

2 James Thomson, *The Four Seasons, and Other Poems* (London: J. and A. Millar, 1735). See John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730–1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 6–34.

3 Hazlitt, “Wilson’s Landscapes,” 18:24.

4 Hazlitt, “On Going a Journey,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 8:187.

5 Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature,” in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 10 vols. (1836; repr., Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 1:16.

6 Locke quotes Molyneux’s question from a private letter and answers it in *John Locke: An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (1694; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), book 2, chapter 9, paragraph 8. Hazlitt quotes Molyneux’s letter and Locke’s answer verbatim in his “Lectures on English Philosophy,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 2:182.

7 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. C. A. Koelin and J. P. Pettegrove (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 108.

8 Quoted in Hazlitt, “Lectures on English Philosophy,” 2:182; emphasis added.

9 Hazlitt, “On Gusto,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 4:78.

10 Hazlitt, “Wilson’s Landscapes,” 18:24.

11 Hazlitt, “On the Pleasure of Painting,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 8:7.

12 Hazlitt, “Wilson’s Landscapes,” 18:28.

13 James J. Gibson, “What is a Form?” *Psychological Review* 58, no. 6 (1951): 403.

14 Hazlitt, “Wilson’s Landscapes,” 18:26.

15 See Michael J. Morgan, *Molyneux’s Question: Vision, Touch and the Philosophy of Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 59–62, 100–105.

16 Hazlitt, “On Locke’s Essay on the Human Understanding,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 1:175, 1:172.

17 Hazlitt, “The Dulwich Gallery,” in *The Complete Works of William Hazlitt*, 10:19.

18 Cheselden quoted in George Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, in *George Berkeley: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Desmond M. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 34–35.

19 John Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols. (London: George Allen, 1903–12), 3:350–51.

20 Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 15:27n.

21 Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 3:164.

22 Ruskin, *The Elements of Drawing*, 15:27n.

23 Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 3:485–56.

24 Ruskin, *The Eagle’s Nest*, in *The Works of John Ruskin*, 22:194.

25 Ruskin, *Modern Painters I*, 3:141.

26 Quoted in Elizabeth Mankin Kornhauser and Tim Barringer, *Thomas Cole’s Journey: Atlantic Crossings*, exhibition catalogue (New York: Metropolitan Museum, 2018), 166.

27 Quoted in Tim Barringer, “The Englishness of Thomas Cole,” in *Thomas Cole: Landscape into History*, ed. William H. Truettner and Alan Wallach, exhibition catalogue (New Haven: Yale University Press; Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 2.

28 The debate arrived in America well before Hazlitt’s writings. See C. Oliver O’Donnell, “Depicting Berkeleyan Idealism: A Study of Two Portraits by John Smibert,” *Word & Image: A Journal of Visual-Verbal Enquiry* 33, no. 1 (2017): 18–34, and

Jennifer L. Roberts, *Transporting Visions: The Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 34–49.

29 Thomas Cole, 1835 journal entry, in *Thomas Cole: The Collected Essays and Prose Sketches*, ed. Marshall Tymn (St. Paul: J. Colet Press, 1980), 131.

30 Thomas Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” *American Monthly Magazine*, January 1836, 11.

31 See Barbara Arneil, “The Wild Indian’s Venison: Locke’s Theory of Property and English Colonialism in America,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 1 (1996): 60–74. Jedediah Purdy, in “Locke and the Commoners’ Terrain,” *After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), sharply distinguishes between Locke’s theory of fantasy as a libertarian fantasy in America, its illiberal application in general, and the autocratic inequality of Locke’s city planning in Carolina, which incorporated slavery. For the application of Locke’s theory in Australia, see Ernest Scott, “Taking Possession of Australia—The Doctrine of Terra Nullius (No-Mans Land),” *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 26, no. 1 (1940): 1–19. Thomas Jefferson also excluded vast numbers of African slaves from his national vision, despite their work on the land. See Michael S. Hogue, “The Cultural Reputations of Nature in American History: Towards a Geography of Hope,” in Peter John Brownlee, Michael S. Hogue, and Angela L. Miller, *Manifest Destiny/Manifest Responsibility: Environmentalism and the Art of the*

American Landscape, exhibition catalogue (Chicago: Terra Foundation for American Art; Loyola University Museum of Art, 2008), 15.

32 See Tim Barringer, “The Course of Empires: Landscape and Identity in America and Britain, 1820–1880,” in *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820–1880*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Tim Barringer, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Publishing, 2002), 39.

33 Sir Thomas Mitchell quoted in Bernard Smith, *European Vision and the South Pacific, 1768–1850: A Study in the History of Art and Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), 212.

34 Angela L. Miller, *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825–1875* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 9.

35 Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893; repr., London: Penguin, 2008), 32.

36 Steven M. Dworetz, “Locke, Liberalism and the American Revolution,” in *The Selected Political Writings of John Locke: Texts, Background Selections, Sources, Interpretations*, ed. Paul E. Sigmund (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2005), 391.

37 See Ellwood C. Parry III, “Cooper, Cole and the Last of the Mohicans,” in *Art and the Native American: Perceptions, Reality and Influences*, ed. Mary Louise Krumrine and Susan Clare Scott (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2001), 165–67.

38 Cole, “Essay on American Scenery,” 12.

39 Jennifer Raab, catalogue entry 30, in Tim Barringer, Gillian Forrester, Sophie Lynford, Jennifer Raab, and Nicholas Robbins, *Picturesque and Sublime: Thomas Cole’s Trans-Atlantic Inheritance*, exhibition catalogue (Catskill, NY: Thomas Cole National Historic Site; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 152–53.

40 Kathleen Ash-Milby, “The Imaginary Landscape,” in *Off the Map: Landscape in the Native Imagination*, ed. Kathleen Ash-Milby, exhibition catalogue (Washington, DC, and New York: National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2007), 23. The difficulty with this value-loaded cultural comparison, however, is the corollary that European artists were alienated even in the countries where landscape painting originated, though this is not inconceivable.

41 Smith, *European Vision*, 51.

42 See Michael Williams, “Clearing the Forests,” in *The Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Michael P. Conzen (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), 164–66, and Joëlle Gergis, *Sunburnt Country: The History and Future of Climate Change in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018).

43 Williams, “Clearing the Forests,” 165.

44 Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier*, 14.

45 See Robert Dixon, *The Course of Empire: Neo-Classical Culture*

in *New South Wales, 1788–1860* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986), frontispiece, 2–4.

46 Kathryn Yusoff, “Geosocial Strata,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 34, no. 2–3 (2017): 11–12.

47 Louis Agassiz, “Ice-Period in America,” *Atlantic Monthly* 14, no. 81 (July 1864): 86–93. See Rebecca Bedell, *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825–1875* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 109–121. For the full background on Agassiz and Haseltine at Nahant, see Ruth Pullin’s essay in this volume (pp. XX–XX).

48 See Martin J. S. Rudwick, “The Emergence of a Visual Language for Geological Science, 1760–1840,” *History of Science* 14, no. 3 (1976): 149–95.

49 See Daniel deStefano, “Nahant Rocks: Geology of an Island,” April 13, 2007, <https://danieldestefano.wordpress.com/2007/04/13/nahant-rocks-geology-of-an-island/>.

50 Jeffrey D. Vervoort (Washington State University), in discussion with the author, April 5, 2018.

51 Quoted in Bedell, *The Anatomy of Nature*, 120.

52 Agassiz, “Ice-Period in America,” 92.

53 Rachael Z. DeLue writes about the political meaning of this split in her essay in this volume (pp. XX–XX).

54 Emerson, “Nature,” 1:45.

55 Quoted in William N. Dember, *Visual Perception: The Nineteenth Century* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), 20.

56 Emerson, “Nature,” 1:31.

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58 Emerson, “Nature,” 1:36.

59 Emerson, “Nature,” 1:36.

60 Emerson, “Nature,” 1:10.

61 See Gene Edward Veith, *Painters of Faith: The Spiritual Landscape in Nineteenth-Century America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2001), 58–61, 70–76, 94, 99, 116–19. For theorists today, see “Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction,” United Nations System for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2019, <https://gar.unisdr.org>.

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63 J. Gray Sweeney, “Inventing Luminism: ‘Labels are the Dickens,’” *Oxford Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (2003): 96–99.

64 See Mark D. Mitchell, “Newport and the Illusion of Art,” in *Luminist Horizons: The Art and Collection of James A. Suydam*, ed. Catherine E. Manthorne and Mark D. Mitchell, exhibition catalogue (New York: National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts; New York: George Braziller, 2006), 69–81. This essay is my source for historical background.

65 Mitchell, “Newport and the Illusion of Art,” 72, 74, 76, 79, 85, 87.

66 For example, see George Berkeley, *Alciphron, or The Minute Philosopher*, in *George Berkeley: Philosophical Writings*, 281. 8

67 Mitchell, “Newport and the Illusion of Art,” 75.

68 Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, 62.

69 Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, 60.

70 Rebecca Copenhaver, “Berkeley on the Language of Nature and the Objects of Vision,” *Res Philosophica* 91, no. 1 (2014): 44.

71 Berkeley, *An Essay towards a New Theory of Vision*, 64.

72 See Alan Wallach, “Rethinking ‘Luminism’: Taste, Class, and Aestheticizing Tendencies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American Landscape Painting,” in *The Cultured Canvas: New Perspectives*

on *American Landscape Painting*, ed. Nancy Siegel (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2011), 115–47.

73 See, for example, Andrew Sayers, *Australian Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Pres, 2001), 23–42, and Sasha Grishin, *Australian Art: A History* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2013), 47, 62.

74 See Marnie Hughes-Warrington and Ian Tregenza, “State and Civilization in Australian New Idealism, 1890–1950,” *History of Political Thought* 29, no. 1 (2008): 89–108.

75 For example, Charles Harpur, Australia’s first established poet, read Emerson. See Elizabeth Perkins, “Emerson and Charles Harpur,” *Australian Literary Studies* 6, no. 1 (1973): 82–88. Dixon cites Berkeley in the context of Australian circulating libraries of the 1830s in *The Course of Empire*, 2–4, 201. For Pullin, see pp. XX–XX in this volume.

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79 My discussion is informed by Hans Aarsleff with the assistance

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80 See Aarsleff and Logan, “An Essay on the Context and Formation of Wilhelm von Humboldt’s Linguistic Thought,” 771. I follow Aarsleff and Logan’s complex argument in this essay, 766, for redating Humboldt’s essay to 1801. For excerpts and commentary on Condillac’s statue analogy, see Morgan, *Molyneux’s Question*, 72–79.

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85 See, for example, Paul Bach-y-Rita and Stephen W. Kercel, “Sensory Substitution and the Human-Machine Interface,” *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 7, no. 12 (December 2003): 541–46.

Biographies

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David Peters Corbett is Professor of American Art and Director of the Centre for American Art at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He has previously been Professor of Art History and American Studies at the University of East Anglia and Professor of History of Art at the University of York. Publications include *An American Experiment: George Bellows and the Ashcan Painters* (2011), and *Anglo-American: Artistic Relations between Britain and the US from Colonial Times to the Present* (2012, co-edited). Between 2007 and 2012, he was Editor of *Art History*.

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David Hansen has worked as a regional gallery director, a state museum curator and an art auction house researcher and specialist. In 2014, he was appointed Associate Professor at the Centre for Art History and Art Theory at the Australian National University. With over 30 years of professional experience in the visual arts and museum sectors, Hansen has curated more than 80 exhibitions, and his writings on art have been widely published. He has a special interest in colonial art, particularly in the work of the Anglo-colonial picturesque landscape painter John Glover and in early settler representations of Aboriginal Australians.

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Alan Michelson is a New York-based, Mohawk artist and member of the Six Nations of Grand River, whose work addresses place and history in multilayered, multimedia installations. He studied at Columbia University and earned his BFA from Tufts University/ School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Michelson has exhibited and lectured widely, and his work was featured in the exhibition *The Western: An Epic in Art and Film at the Denver Art Museum*. International exhibitions include the fifth Moscow Biennale (2013), *Sakahàn: International Indigenous Art* (2013) at the National Gallery of Canada, and the 18th Biennale of Sydney, Australia (2012). He was MacGeorge Fellow at the University of Melbourne in 2018 and has been

the recipient of several awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists Fellowship, Native Arts & Cultures Foundation Artist Fellowship, and an Eiteljorg Contemporary Art Fellowship. His work is in the permanent collections of the National Gallery of Canada and the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC.

Chris Pease

Chris Pease has established himself as a prominent Western Australian visual artist since transitioning from a background in graphic design and art education over the past 17 years. Since winning the Painting Prize at the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards in 2002, Pease has continued to evolve and mature an individual style that draws significantly on his Indigenous background and his interest in the complex intertwined history of Australia since the arrival of Europeans. In particular, his work focuses on the interpretation of land and systems of belief relating to land (scientific, spiritual, and cultural). His work often reveals the propaganda, mythology, and manipulation of the landscape through art by juxtaposing scientific, cultural, or other symbolic elements against the work. His work has focused on the Minang area around the towns of Albany and Denmark in Western Australia, and the dark history of drawings made by Robert Dale and subsequent prints by Robert Havell.

Ruth Pullin

Dr. Ruth Pullin is an independent art historian and curator, a Eugene von Guérard specialist,

and continuing fellow at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. On the basis of her doctoral research, she curated, with co-curator Michael Varcoe-Cocks, the National Gallery of Victoria’s 2011 major touring exhibition, *Eugene von Guérard: Nature Revealed*, and she is the author and commissioning editor of the book of the same title. She has held fellowships at the State Library of New South Wales (2009), and the State Library of Victoria (2012). Her research has been published in the *Melbourne Art Journal*, the *Journal of New Zealand Art History*, and *The La Trobe Library Journal* (2014). Additional projects include papers presented at, and published by, the Geological Society, London (2016), and the book, *The Artist as Traveller: The Sketchbooks of Eugen von Guérard* (2018).

Richard Read

Richard Read is Emeritus Professor of Art History and Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Western Australia. He has published in major journals on the relationship between literature and the visual arts; nineteenth and twentieth-century European, American, and Australian art history; contemporary film, and complex images in global contexts. His book *Art and Its Discontents: the Early Life of Adrian Stokes* (2003) was the winner of a national book prize. An ARC Discovery Grant funded his extensive research project on The Reversed Canvas in Western Art and sections have appeared in several major journals. In recent years, he has taught and lectured at the University of Bristol, the National Gallery of Victoria, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC,

the University of Aberystwyth, Tate Britain, the University of East Anglia, and King’s College, Cambridge University, and the Institute for Advanced Studies at the University of Durham. He convened the symposium and teaching units from which this anthology derives and helped to conceive the exhibition project with Peter John Brownlee.

Catherine Speck

Catherine Speck is Professor of Art History at the University of Adelaide, and coordinator of postgraduate programs in art history and curatorial and museum studies co-taught with the Art Gallery of South Australia. Publications include *Painting Ghosts: Australian Women Artists in Wartime* (2004), *Heysen to Heysen: Selected Letters of Hans Heysen and Nora Heysen* (2011), *Beyond the Battlefield: Women Artists of the Two World Wars* (2014), “Forging Culture: Australian Art in the Nineteenth Century,” in *A Companion to Nineteenth Century Art*, edited by Michelle Facos (2016); and *Australian Art Exhibitions: A New Story* (2017).

Peter John Brownlee

Peter John Brownlee is Curator at the Terra Foundation for American Art. His recent projects include the Terra Collection Initiative exhibitions *Refiguring Twentieth-Century American Art*, co-organized with the Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2020–2021); *Atelier 17: Modern Printmaking in the Americas*, co-organized with the Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Universidade de São Paulo (2019); and *Pathways to Modernism: American Art 1865-1945*, co-organized with the Art Institute of Chicago and the Shanghai Museum

(2018). Publications include *The Commerce of Vision: Optical Culture and Perception in Antebellum America* (2018), “Landscape Painting in the Americas: Charles Sheeler and Tarsila do Amaral,” *American Art* (Summer 2017), and as contributing Editor, *Samuel F. B. Morse’s Gallery of the Louvre and the Art of Invention* (2014).