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John Muir, Jeanne Carr, and Ralph Waldo Emerson: A Case-Study of the Varieties of Transcendentalist Influence

STEVEN J. HOLMES

For scholars and the general public alike, there is an obvious and intuitive—one might even say "natural"—connection between present-day appreciation of and concern for the natural world and the cultural legacy of American Transcendentalism. Those searching for a Euro-American grounding for nature writing and spirituality, for ecological consciousness, or for environmental activism, often begin by pointing to the thought and writings that grew up out of the rocky soil of New England, especially Concord, Massachusetts. In particular, Transcendentalism is often said to have had its greatest concrete influence through the life and work of the pioneering environmentalist and nature writer John Muir (1838-1914), widely considered the founder of the "old" conservation movement at the turn of the century and revered as a prophet of the "new" environmentalism that began in the 1960s. Muir is often interpreted as the person who, even more than Thoreau, put the Transcendentalist (and specifically Emersonian) philosophy into practice, thus channeling the intellectual wellsprings into the currents of social and political action. According to an influential essay by Donald Fleming, reading Emerson in college was "the decisive encounter of Muir's life," and for the rest of his life "Muir practiced what Emerson preached." Similarly, Roderick Nash (in his classic *Wilderness and the American Mind*) asserts: "For John Muir Transcendentalism was always the essential philosophy for interpreting the value of wilderness."[1]

When we begin to inquire into the details of this philosophy, however, the situation becomes much less straightforward, for there is little direct correlation between specific Transcendentalist influence and Muir's own mature environmentalist thinking. This is partly because of the conceptual elasticity—some might term it "vagueness"—of Transcendentalist thought. Many of the attitudes characteristic of Transcendentalism—including, in Fleming's words, "a resort to nature for wisdom and healing, an aversion to brutal dealings with it, a magnification of the perceiving eye over the shaping hand, a cultivation of the gifts of contemplation and perception rather than analysis"—were shared by much of the rest of nineteenth-century Romantic or aesthetic culture; thus, to note that Muir expressed this sort of stance (as he undoubtably did) is to go little towards establishing any solid connections between him and the Transcendentalist movement. Nash adds a more distinctive philosophical component when he defines the core of Transcendentalism as "the belief that a correspondence or parallelism exists between the higher realm of spiritual truth and the lower one of material objects"; in the words of Emerson himself, "It is not words only that are emblematic; it is things which are emblematic. Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact." With this definition, Nash claims that "most of Muir's ideas were variations on the Transcendentalists' staple theme: natural objects were 'the terrestrial manifestations of God.'" Again, however, the Transcendentalists had no corner on the assertion of correspondence or harmony between the spiritual and the material realms; indeed, various conceptions of such interrelationship were a standard of nineteenth-century Christian culture, for example in the image of a "Book of Nature" as containing truths parallel to those found in the "Book of Revelation," Scripture. For many evangelical Protestants—as for countless previous generations of Christians—the heavens and earth proclaimed the glory of God, and these proclamations could be heard or read through reason and science as well as through faith. Thus, Muir's insights into "the terrestrial manifestations of God" may have represented mainstream Protestantism as much as any Transcendentalist alternative to it.[2]

Moreover, Muir often disagreed with his Transcendentalist "teachers" on a range of literary and philosophical issues. Stephen Fox lists a number of these disagreements, as expressed in Muir's marginal commentary on various of Emerson's essays:

> Emerson: "The squirrel hoards nuts, and the bee gathers honey, without knowing what they do." Muir: *How do we know this.*

> Nature "takes no thought for the morrow." *Are not buds and seeds thought for the morrow.*
>
> . . .
>
> "The soul that ascends to worship the great God is plain and true; has no rose-color." *Why not? God's sky has rose color and so has his flower.*
>
> "The beauty of nature must always seem unreal and mocking, until the landscape has human figures." *God is in it.*

Such independence of mind suggests that Muir was both more sensuous and more Christian than Emerson, but it also suggests that the latter's intellectual influence was quite ambiguous—perhaps he served merely as stimulus or propaedeutic rather than as teacher. Indeed, Fox concludes that Muir studied the major Transcendentalist writings only after his "mature attitudes about wilderness and civilization were already in place," and so despite the later echoes of those writings in his literary style, "Emerson and Thoreau only corroborated ideas that Muir had already worked out independently."[3]

"Influence," however, is not only a phenomenon of mind upon mind, idea upon idea, or style upon style; it may also be a matter of body upon body, or of person upon person. That is, perhaps it is too narrow to situate Muir (or anyone) within the Transcendentalist (or any other) tradition solely on the basis of convergences of thought or of literary style, important as those may be; perhaps we can also look for something more human and warm, a set of actual relationships between persons that express or give rise to a way or vision of life. To get at this deeper, more personal dimension of "influence," we need to ask different questions: What was Muir's contact with Transcendentalism as a *social* phenomenon? What sort of personal relationships did he have with Transcendentalist figures? How did he experience those relationships on an emotional level? What self-images and public roles did those figures and relationships encourage or allow? Such questions are especially appropriate in considering Muir's early, formative years—a time for all of us when persons loom larger than the printed page, when philosophical ideas and literary images serve perhaps most of all as tools for negotiating relationships and for constructing a self.

From this perspective, the debate about Muir's expression or adoption of certain philosophical tenets or attitudes is secondary to the dynamics and meanings of his actual relationships with people. As it turned out, among the major Transcendentalists, it was only Emerson with whom Muir had a personal relationship, centered on the Concord sage's 1871 journey to Cali-

fornia and to Yosemite Valley. The meeting between Emerson and Muir in Yosemite has been described often, most interpreters viewing it as an awkward mis-union of old and new, an embarrassment for Emerson and a disappointment for Muir; Fleming refers to it as a "comedy of foiled embraces."[4] However, if we view the incident in the context of Muir's social experience and psychological development—asking what it actually meant for and to him at the time rather than what it might or should have meant in an ideal world—a different picture emerges. As we shall see, their meeting would indeed shape the younger man's subsequent intellectual and literary development, but of more fundamental importance were the ways in which it shaped Muir's personal development, his senses of self and of his place in the world. Before specifying just what these deeper effects of his contact with Emerson were, however, we must get to know some of the paths and prods that brought young man Muir to Yosemite in the first place; in particular, we must know more about the person who would introduce Muir to Emerson and whose emotional presence would color their relationship from the start, Jeanne Carr.

1

John Muir was born in 1838, the third child and first son of a middle-class family in Dunbar, Scotland. The family moved to the wild Wisconsin frontier in 1849, not so much for economic reasons as to allow father Daniel Muir a wider arena for evangelization and a more undisputed mastery of his own family. A lifelong religious seeker who had recently joined the transatlantic Campbellite movement (later known as the Disciples of Christ), Daniel saw it as his religious duty to instill the word of God both in the wider society and in the circle of his family—in the latter case, by whipping and tyrannical authority, if need be. Thus, the shocks and challenges of John's childhood—the familial battles of wills and bodies, the dramatic losses and gains of emigration, the backbreaking work of clearing and planting on the frontier—left him with a physical toughness and endurance, a near-complete knowledge of the entire Bible, a quick wit, and an ambiguous relationship with both of his parents. His deep love for his mother, positively reciprocated when he was a young child in Scotland, was frustrated by the multiplying forces that competed for Anne Muir's attention (other children, husband, and the sheer work and worry of emigration to the frontier); his equally strong allegiance to his father as role model and guide was strained (but also intensified) by the pain, rigidity, and self-effacement that Daniel's

fathering entailed. With respect to both parents, John was left with a felt experience of love, caring, closeness, and passionate spiritual intensity—but also with a sense of distrust of himself and of his own desires, and a strong need and longing to reconstitute parental relationships in more satisfying forms as he entered adulthood.[5]

Thus, by his early twenties, despite his intellectual talents and promise—as displayed in the ingenious clocks and other inventions he had begun constructing in his spare time as a teenager, as an escape both from the monotony of farm work and from the stultifying atmosphere of his father's religiousness—Muir found himself emotionally unequipped to move away from home and into a new life of his own. Fortunately, however, other local farmers were able to serve as alternative father-figures for Muir and to encourage his intellectual and personal growth. For example, William Duncan, a fellow Scots immigrant who had taken an interest in the family (occasionally confronting Daniel Muir over the harshness of his child-rearing practices), lent John books (literature and the classics) and gave him much-needed encouragement and companionship in his inventing: Duncan "was wont to come along about chore time in the evening; then he and the boy would duck down cellar to inspect some new contrivance. There they would talk in whispers so as not to disturb Daniel studying in the room above. Duncan was so proud of John he couldn't keep from telling folks about the latest clock that would 'work like a man with a brain.'"[6] With the help of such mentors, Muir was able to leave farm and family at age twenty-four, first to an abortive apprenticeship and then to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, about twenty-five miles away from home. For the next two and a half years, Muir would maintain his close ties with his family roots but also begin to develop his own ideas, visions, and selfhood, in a much more supportive and nourishing environment than he had previously experienced.

On a purely intellectual level, the university's scientific curriculum offered the mid-century rapprochement of science and liberal religion embodied in figures such as Louis Agassiz, the famous Harvard geologist, allowing Muir both to retain much of his strongly-held religious worldview and to move forward into the creative work that held his future. Through science, one could "study the handiwork of the Builder of Worlds,"[7] and the sense of the presence of God in the physical world formed the bedrock of Muir's scientific education: "Nature is, in its most extended sense, all that is created; or, according to the poet 'a name for an effect whose cause is God.'"[8] As Muir recalled in his later autobiographical reflections, the essence of what

he got from his studies in Madison was insight into "the attraction and repulsion of the atoms composing the globe, marching and retreating—the harmony, the oneness, of all the life of the world, etcetera—the methods by which nature builds and pulls down in sculpting the globe; one form of beauty after another in endless variety" (46:11823). A passage from his scientific notebook reflects the enthusiasm and sheer delight with which the young Muir absorbed his chemistry lessons and made them a part of his entire worldview.

> Some animaliculi are said by those who have measured the same to be of such a size that thousands can go hop skip and jump side by side through a needle's eye. Now it may be proved by mathematics which cannot lie that when one of these chaps draws aside his tail, he draws ourselves and all the earth aside, and of course the mischief does not stop here but the glorious sun is moved and then other suns and others through all immensity. (31:65).

Eventually, this exposure to chemistry would strongly shape his thought and language throughout his life; as one example, we see in this passage the core insight formulated later as one of the adult Muir's most well-known aphorisms: "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." Along with chemistry, Muir took his greatest delight in the study of botany: "Like everybody else I was always fond of flowers, attracted by their external beauty and purity. Now my eyes were opened to their inner beauty, all alike revealing glorious traces of the thought of God, and leading on and on into the infinite cosmos."[9]

Clearly, the university's and Muir's philosophical interpretation of science was marked by Romantic liberalism as well as by traditional Christianity, and in fact much of this ethos can be connected directly with American Transcendentalism through Muir's personal relationships. As during his last years on the farm, Muir actively sought out older men and women as mentors and role models to help guide him through the university experience, relationships that were motivated and shaped both by the strengths and by the inadequacies of his relationships with his own parents. In particular, as is well known, many of Muir's closest Madison teachers and friends were transplanted New Englanders with roots in and continuing connections with the Transcendentalist movement: Professor James Davie Butler, a native Vermonter who had graduated from Middlebury College in 1836, taught Muir the classics with an Emersonian twist; Professor Ezra Slocum Carr's understandings of geology were shaped largely by the teachings of Agassiz and his circle at Harvard; his wife, Jeanne C. Carr—another native Vermonter

and a personal friend of Emerson—would be Muir's closest friend, mentor, and intellectual influence over the next ten years, introducing him to numerous other like-minded spirits (in person or in books) along the way.[10] However, the exact shape and meaning of this early Transcendentalist presence is difficult to determine. Although it is often presumed that Butler and the Carrs must have introduced Muir to the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, there is no evidence that they did so, and in fact he seems not to have read them until the early 1870s. Rather, it was through their personal relationships, conversation, and example that Butler and the Carrs themselves embodied Transcendentalism for Muir—as a way of life, as an ideal of character, and as a mediator of relationships more than as a set of abstract ideas.

Interestingly, a few incidents that are often used to show the early influence of Transcendentalist thought and language on Muir in fact suggest his initial *resistance* to those lessons of his mentors. In 1866, after having left the university and Wisconsin for a two-year sojourn in Canada (motivated in part by his desire to avoid the Civil War draft), Muir returned to the United States to continue his work as inventor and mechanic. From an Indianapolis factory, he wrote to Jeanne Carr of his experience of finding a particular flower, *Calypso borealis*, in an Ontario swamp. The letter was stolen by James Butler and sent to the *Boston Recorder* for publication, with an introduction by Butler that frames Muir in overtly Transcendentalist terms as "a young Wisconsin gatherer of simples . . . not a whit behind Thoreau as a scrutinizer and votary of nature": "Who of us outsiders can fail to envy him [Muir] his esoteric raptures in his close communion with virgin nature? as well as to wish with all the heart that ours were such a vision and faculty divine, and that for us also culture or genius had added a precious seeing to the eye, transforming every weed to a flower, and transfiguring every flower with seven-fold beauty?" Muir's own words, however, present the experience in more traditional, evangelical Christian terms:

> I never before saw a plant so full of life, so perfectly spiritual. . . . I felt as if I were in the presence of superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come. I sat down beside them and wept for joy. Could angels in their better land show us a more beautiful plant? How good is our Heavenly Father in granting us such friends as are these plant-creatures, filling us wherever we go with pleasure so deep, so pure, so endless.

Rather than an abstract correlation between the spiritual and physical worlds, Muir's image is of a personal relationship with the flower as a messenger

of God—much as the nineteenth-century evangelical "religion of the heart" stressed the believer's personal relationship with Jesus. To be sure, Muir was able to reject certain aspects of a traditional Christian denigration of the natural world (such as was propounded by his father): "I cannot understand the nature of the curse, 'Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.' Is our world indeed the worse for this 'thistly curse?' Are not all plants beautiful? or in some way useful? Would not the world suffer by the banishment of a single weed? The curse must be within ourselves." Even here, however, Muir felt the need to justify the natural world in terms of its usefulness as well as its beauty, showing the continued hold of more traditional Christian ideals upon his life.[11]

Similarly, another letter to Carr from the same year reveals how both his literary skill and his sense of self were being shaped by the broad cultural world he shared with her, with Transcendentalism present only in a submerged form if at all: "I have stood by a majestic pine witnessing its high branches waving 'in sign of worship,' or in converse with the spirit of the storms of Autumn, till I forgot my very existence, and thought myself unworthy to be made a leaf of such a tree" (1:463–64). The phrase "in sign of worship" was one of Muir's favorites from Milton (*Paradise Lost* V:194), but he immediately offered a less traditional (and more Romantic) interpretation by suggesting that the pines are communing not with God but with "the spirit of the storms." The phrase "forgot my very existence" does parallel Emerson's "transparent eyeball" passage at the beginning of "Nature," and Muir may have learned such language (and/or ideas) from Carr and his other teachers (though again, almost certainly not from Emerson's writing itself); however, his references to feeling "unworthy" and (later in the letter) "like an insect" betray an emotional experience grounded in the continued legacy of his father's Christian denigration of self, and it was this legacy that still guided the major outlines of his thought. Perhaps most importantly, it is clear that Muir was mainly interested in writing to Carr not to exchange ideas but for much more personal reasons, to strengthen the emotional bonds of their relationship as a powerful presence in his life: "I have not before sent these feelings and thoughts to anybody, but I know that I am speaking to one who by long & deep communion with Nature understands them, and can tell me what is true, or false and unworthy in my experiences" (1:463).

Indeed, the presence of Transcendentalist language and images in the correspondence between Muir and Carr often served as a way to symbolize or

express the most intimate feelings of their relationship, helping to overcome the physical (and social) barriers that separated them. Utilized as a poetic metaphor rather than as a philosophical doctrine, the core Transcendentalist notion of a spiritual world standing behind and parallel to the material can serve as a potent means of imagining an absent loved one as present in spirit if not in the flesh—more precisely, of feeling the spiritual presence of a particular person *through* the "flesh" of another being, such as a plant, flower, or bird. For example, after Muir had suffered a severe injury to his eye in a factory accident in Indianapolis, Carr sent a long quotation from an unnamed "best beloved friend," whom she nicknamed "The Priest" but who was in fact the Reverend Walter R. Brooks, a Baptist minister with strong Transcendentalist leanings.

> I had a fancy that there is a universe of spiritual bodies and forms of which the material plant and animal are the exact counterpart in the physical world—that there is a pre-existent spiritual body for every moss, lichen, & plant of every kind; growth is an actual "clothing upon" of themselves by these spiritual beings. They gather from nature its substances to make themselves a garment exactly fitting their persons. . . . So the poor things get a relation to us and our life which will make them nearer and dearer when they and we all are spiritual bodies again. (1:521–23)

Shifting to her personal experiences of such "relations" with natural beings, Carr continued: "I feel myself shaken with a strange inexplicable emotion in hearing the notes of some solitary birds—as if they called me to the silences of unknown worlds. They are the only true lovers I have known (as the flowers are your beloveds) and we shall exchange the secrets of our existence soon. Have they grief and pain also, these sinless creatures? Do they rejoice to be gathered?" (1:523–24). Whatever she may have meant on an intellectual level by saying that she and the birds "shall exchange the secrets of our existence soon," such writing served more personal and emotional ends, as a way for her to exchange her deep secrets and feelings with Muir.

Although Muir in a later letter confessed his inability to follow her friend's spiritual philosophy, he responded to the more intimate, even erotic feelings underlying it. Perhaps taking his cue from her own mention of mosses and lichens (which were long of special interest to them both), Muir noted that he read her letter "upon a moss-clad fallen tree" before giving his own careful observations on their lives and clothing: "The dear little conservative spring mosses have elevated their capsules in their smooth shining shafts,

and stand side by side in full stature, & full fashion, every ornament & covering carefully numbered and painted & sculptured as were those of their Adams and Eves; every cowl properly plaited . . . their fashions never changing because ever best" (1:549–50). The sexual imagery and emotional intensity of passages such as this one suggest that even though Carr's Transcendentalist language was still foreign to Muir, he felt her underlying emotional message and was able to respond in kind.

Thus, for Muir, it was primarily the philosophically-interpreted science of botany—rather than Transcendentalist philosophy itself—that served as a method of representing or encountering the spiritual presence of another person in and through the natural world. Further, it was the actual physical activity of gathering those "sinless creatures" beloved to them both that carried some of the deepest meanings of Muir's relationship with Carr (and those with other loved ones—friends, teachers, and family members). Following a common mid-nineteenth-century pattern of gendered science, Muir often served as male specimen-gatherer for Carr, who would in turn classify and preserve the specimens in her own home collection.[12] Carr's botanical collection was housed in her combination library and flower conservatory, created by her and her husband in order to fulfill her desire to unite her position as a woman with an active intellectual life; similarly, it symbolized for Muir a partial reconciliation between the predominantly male realm of formal science, represented by Ezra Carr, and the more informal religious and emotional meanings of botany that he had developed in the context of his relationships with women. A letter from 1865 (written while Muir was still in Canada) suggests how botany served both as a mode of relationship with Carr and as an ideal for his own life-activity, personal and professional.[13] After extending thanks to Ezra Carr, "who first laid before me the great book of Nature," Muir went on to express his own vision of nature-study in an intimate image of Jeanne's own library/conservatory.

> O how frequently, Mrs. Carr, when lonely and wearied, have I wished that like some hungry worm I could creep into that delightful kernel of your house —your library—with its portraits of scientific men, and so bountiful a store of their sheaves amid the blossom and verdure of your little kingdom of plants, luxuriant and happy as though holding their leaves to the open sky of the most flower-loving zone in the world! (1:381)

Despite being indoors, the library seemed as expansive and life-giving as the "open sky"; imagining himself as a worm on one of the plants, Muir too shared in the life and delight of Carr's presence—and in the rigorous

scientific activity of the men whose faces peered down from the walls.

Moreover, the emotional and social meanings of Transcendentally-tinged botany also had the potential to speak to Muir's continued struggle with the question of occupation and life's work (even though this potential remained limited by social and personal factors). For years, he had been increasingly dissatisfied with inventing without knowing where else to turn; family and friends (including both Jeanne and Ezra Carr) had at various times urged him to consider careers as inventor, as preacher, or as doctor—in any case, to use his intellectual gifts for the benefit of humanity. Significantly, a career in botany was not an option, given the social, cultural, and scientific standards of mid-nineteenth-century America: most actual botanical research was undertaken by amateurs, especially privileged women (like Carr) or young students (like Muir); even most recognized botanical authorities were not professionals but wealthy, leisured gentlemen or nobility (like, for example, Muir's hero, the renowned German naturalist Alexander von Humboldt). In another letter from Muir's Indianapolis period, however, Carr—perhaps as a result of her own increasing sense of the role of nature in his life and in their relationship—for the first time envisioned for Muir a fancied career as naturalist. "Who knows but we shall see South America yet?" she wondered. "You will gather seeds for us in South America, and we will have a Conservatory Fund and by and by we will appoint John Muir F.R.B.S. Bot Prof. [Fellow Royal Botanical Society Botany Professor] and director . . . and he shall have a little study in the greenhouse. . . . All this if you don't make a minister" (1:536). Given his still-weakened state after the factory accident, however, the questions of work and career could be put on hold for a while; as an aside, she mentioned another possible place he might go, not so much as a naturalist but as a fellow devotee of nature: "Get some good friend to read you a description of the Yo Semite Valley, and try to realize what God's landscape gardening is. Oh this house of our Father! I would like to know all its mansions—and after to meet and compare notes with you who love it with the same fervent love" (1:537). In any setting—South America, a greenhouse, or California—contact with the natural world, as an implicit (maternal) companion to the divine Father and in the midst of his human companions, was what she prescribed for his weakened physical condition: "The dear old mother will heal you fast when you get upon her lap once more" (1:536–37).

Thus, by 1867 Muir had had extended exposure to Transcendentalist thought, imagery, and ideals, and he used them not so much for purely in-

tellectual speculation as for his own life-purposes: to help reconcile his continued Christian beliefs with the new scientific approaches that he learned while at the university and afterwards; to establish a social context of teachers, friends, and mentors; to mediate the deeper and more complex feelings of his relationships with particular important persons, perhaps most of all Jeanne Carr; and to point the way towards a more satisfying public persona (including career) than he had previously been offered, in the form of a simultaneously scientific and religious study of the natural world. All of these tactics and achievements, however, were at this point partial and provisional; it would be years before he could fully shape his life according to these patterns and goals. In particular, these meanings and associations would saturate the next major period of his life, the five years he spent in California's Yosemite Valley—years spent in the imagined presence of Carr and, on one occasion, the actual presence of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

2

By August 1867, at age twenty-nine, Muir was still unable to return to his factory work, but he had recovered from his accident enough to resume botanizing. After a leisurely botanical journey from Indianapolis back home to Wisconsin, he departed on a much longer expedition through the South, intended to bring him to the Amazon in emulation of his hero Humboldt. When he reached the Gulf coast of Florida, however, he was struck down by malaria and again found himself in bed for over a month; after regaining enough strength to travel, he eventually settled on California rather than the Amazon as a place conducive to full recovery.[14] After a trip through the Sierra (including two weeks in Yosemite) in summer 1868, he worked as a shepherd in Twenty Hill Hollow in the Central Valley during winter 1869; in late spring, however, an offer from another sheep owner took him back to Yosemite. After pasturing his flocks there the whole summer, he would briefly return to the foothills in the fall but then go back to Yosemite for the winter—eventually staying there for the next four years, until autumn 1873.

This initial immersion in Yosemite would prove to be a turning point in Muir's life, especially as described in his autobiographical classic *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911). Although *First Summer* has usually been taken as a lightly-edited transcription of his original journal from this period, it is clearly a much revised and rearranged version, and so cannot be used as

a straightforward account of his actions or perceptions that summer. In particular, the heavily Transcendentalist language with which Muir describes and interprets his experiences is almost certainly a much later addition; as we shall see, the influence of Emersonian language would not appear in his writing for another three years. Rather, his initial experiences of Yosemite were shaped most strongly by the same religious worldview and associations that he had developed over the preceding years in the Midwest, marked especially by the presence, thought, and language of Jeanne Carr.[15]

During the Southern walk, Muir's correspondence with Carr had suffered from the uncertainty of his location, but the intensity of their feelings for each other—and their association of each other with nature—had if anything increased. In spring 1868, soon after Muir had arrived in California, one of Carr's letters finally reached him: "I feel your presence and sympathy in all the gladness of the opening season, but I also feel very keenly the loss of you in my life" (1:626). In his response, written after his brief stay in the Sierra early that summer, he referred to their discussion of Yosemite in their Indianapolis letters.

> I thought of you, Mrs. Carr, when I was in glorious Yo Semite, and of the prophecy of "The Priest" that you would see it and worship there in company with your Doctor, priest and I. It is by far the grandest of all the splendid temples of Nature I was ever permitted to enter. It must be the sanctum sanctorum of the Sierras, and I trust that you will all be led to it. (1:642)

In November he again referred to the possibility of their meeting in Yosemite, writing that "I know too the abode of many a precious mountain fern. I gathered plenty for you but you must see them at home" (1:660). Thus, from the beginning he interpreted Yosemite through familiar categories—the love of ferns he shared with Carr, and the contrasting joys of gathering specimens for her conservatory collection and of meeting plants in their own homes.

The next spring, their prophecy seemed about to become reality: Ezra Carr had resigned his post at the University of Wisconsin, and he and Jeanne were coming to Oakland, where he would join the faculty of the new University of California. By May 16, Muir was writing detailed directions and instructions for Jeanne's voyage to Yosemite, displaying his excitement and concern in extended speculation as to the possible routes she could take, what scenery she might enjoy best, warnings to bring enough blankets, and so on. His overt feelings about their meeting had increased even further: "Dear

friend, the thoughts of again meeting with you & with the mountains make me scarce able to hold my pen.... My soul is athirst for mountain things.... I intended to enjoy another baptism in the sanctuaries of Yo Semite whether with companions of 'like passions' or alone, surely then my cup will be full when blessed with such company" (2:727). Clearly, his excitement and anticipation were not only directed towards Carr but also towards Yosemite itself; on some levels, he had already merged the two into an emotional unit. Thus, his feelings toward Yosemite, in particular the psychological and religious meanings it would carry for him, were already being shaped by the emotional presence of Carr, while his relationship with her was itself being transformed by their sharing an imagined experience of Yosemite.

As it turned out, Carr got to Yosemite before Muir but was forced by circumstances to leave before he arrived, and so they did not meet that summer. In fact, they would not meet in Yosemite until 1873, but over that time Muir continued to develop the imaginative associations between Carr and that place. In particular, he often wrote to her from and of the Yosemite waterfalls, perhaps because she had written so movingly about them in describing her brief stay there: "John Muir, I wish I *could* tell you how full of God his Universe seemed when I stood on that little bridge by the Nevada fall. I never was *interfused* with the interior life of things as that day" (2:783). For Muir, all of Yosemite—but particularly its waterfalls—had become infused with the presence of Carr:

> In all my wanderings through nature's beauty, whether it be among the ferns at my cabin door or in the high meadows and peaks or amid the spray and music of waterfalls, you are the first to meet me and I often speak to you as verily present in the flesh. Last Sabbath I was baptized in the irised foam of the Vernal & in the divine snow of Nevada, and you were there also & stood in real presence by the sheet of joyous rapids beneath the bridge. (2:859)

By spring 1871, Muir had developed a new language—at once scientific, religious, and emotional—for describing his intimate connections both with Carr and with the natural world. During one ecstatic night spent at Yosemite Falls, he risked his life to climb out on a narrow ledge behind the falls and view the moon through shafts of falling water; after retreating to drier land and building a fire, he wrote to her (see 2:906–10):

> O Mrs. Carr that you could be here to mingle in this nightnoon glory. I am in the Upper YoSem falls & can hardly calm to write but from my first baptism hours ago you have been so present that I must try to fix you a written

> thought. . . . How little do we know of ourselves[,] of our profoundest attractions and repulsions[,] of our spiritual affinities[.] How interesting does man become considered in his relations to the spirit of this rock and water[.] How significant does every atom of our world become amid the influence of those beings unseen, spiritual, angelic mountaineers that so throng these pure mansions of crystal foam and purple granite.

Drawing on the chemical concepts of affinities, attractions, and repulsions he had learned at the university, Muir painted a picture of the intermingling of the spiritual and the material worlds in order both to describe his experience of relationship with the waterfall itself and to evoke the emotions of his relationship with Carr. Again, despite its clear parallels with Transcendentalist thought, Muir's language was more directly indebted to scientific terminology and to various strains of popular Christianity (with respect to the "angelic" "unseen beings").[16] Ultimately, given Muir's continued inability to meet Carr in the flesh, such writing helped to deflect the emotions of his human relationships into a deeper sense of the invisible spiritual presence in the natural world.

By spring 1871, then, Muir's intellectual and emotional life had been profoundly shaped by the presence of Transcendentalism—but as a matter of particular human relationships and of poetic images that mediated his experiences of self, nature, and emotion, not as a direct intellectual or stylistic influence. The latter types of influence would appear only after Muir's meeting with one of Carr's most illustrious acquaintances, Ralph Waldo Emerson. The aging Emerson had undertaken a trip through the West with an entourage of friends and fellow literati; after visiting the Carrs in San Francisco in early May 1871, the group journeyed up to see the natural wonders of Yosemite, which by this date had received much publicity in the Eastern press—and which seemed a likely candidate to bear out Emerson's own predictions of the ultimate moral and spiritual influences of the vast American natural heritage. Emerson and his entourage stayed in the Valley for a week, touring the famous stands of sequoia, the waterfalls, and the peaks, domes, and rock cliffs, and discussing points of philosophy and literature as they lunched in the groves or dined in the hotels. Although Carr had urged both Muir and Emerson to meet, it was not until the fourth day that the unknown handyman and botanist gained the courage to approach the famous writer and lecturer, and then only by sending a somewhat awkward note asking for an audience. As we have seen, prior to their meeting, Muir had had only very limited contact with Emerson's writings: the only

certainty is that he had read the poem "The Song of Nature," a copy of which Carr had sent him while he was herding sheep in Twenty Hill Hollow in 1869; his response to that poem was approving but fairly subdued. At the same time, he of course knew of Emerson as a cultural figure and a hero to many, including the Carrs, James Butler, and others; thus, his initial orientation towards Emerson was not as a thinker but as a role model and inspiration.[17]

Their meeting in May 1871 is usually discussed in terms of their contrasting life-trajectories—Emerson at the end of his creative life, Muir at the beginning; the older man protected by his entourage from the cold night air, the younger man warmed by his own energy and enthusiasm. However, from the perspective of Muir's psychological development what is most striking is the way in which he strove to *identify with* Emerson, denying or even reversing their obvious differences. After his initial shyness and uncertainty, Muir acted in a possessive, almost controlling manner, aggressively telling the Sage of Concord how he should best experience Yosemite. Although Muir surely looked up to Emerson as another in a series of father-figures (perhaps the greatest yet), that very relationship seems to have brought out Muir's own father-like persona. At the same time, he tried to forge (one might say force) a sense of identity through the opposite approach: as John McAleer notes, Muir "seemed to think he could invest Emerson with his own boyishness," and in later letters he would try to "infus[e] Emerson with his own zest and strength." Given Muir's long-standing need for role models and heroes to give direction and structure to his life, along with Emerson's public fame and (perhaps even more important, for Muir) private association with Carr, Muir seemed determined to make his meeting with Emerson into a powerful, archetypal, even life-defining moment—almost regardless of the concrete circumstances of the situation. To this end, Muir attempted to get Emerson to agree to camp out with him under the stars and sequoia for a sublime transcendental night. According to his own later reminiscence, during the visit Muir told Emerson, "You are yourself a Sequoia. Stop and get acquainted with your big brethren"; he also quoted one of Emerson's own lines (from "Wood-notes"), "Come listen what the pine-tree sayeth." That Muir would have experienced such a night with Emerson through the lens of his previous imagined nights with Jeanne Carr is suggested by a letter to a friend soon after: "How naturally he [Emerson] would have taken his place among the pure and happy ghosts of the upper mountains" (2:935).[18]

Despite Muir's insistence and cajoling, he and Emerson did not camp out

together under the sequoia; the Bostonians forbade it, afraid lest the old man catch cold. What the two *did* do together in Yosemite, however, was not without its own deep and complex set of meanings. For most of the final two days of his visit, Emerson climbed up into Muir's little shack by the waterfall, where the two of them pored over his collection of botanical specimens, rock samples, and drawings while they talked of nature, religion, and Yosemite. Although somewhat ludicrous from the perspective of Emerson's sophisticated followers—and even of the later Muir's public persona as the archetypal outdoorsman—the intimate, semi-domestic scene fit perfectly and powerfully in the development of Muir's patterns of self, relationship, and emotional and cultural meaning. In his own private space, Muir's ambitions and desires for emotional contact, for male relationship, and for a model for public identity were brought inside the familiar patterns of action and meaning that had once made him long so deeply to be with Carr in her botanical conservatory. No longer forced to imagine himself a mere worm in the presence of Carr's portraits of illustrious scientific men, Muir took his place in a familiar, shared cultural world with the most illustrious thinker of all. In fact, Muir tried to give his best specimens to Emerson, striving to make human contact with him in the best way he knew, much as the botanical specimens that he had long collected for Carr had carried some of the deepest emotions of their relationship. At the same time, Muir's energy and enthusiasm could not be wholly contained within such patterns, and in fact it was he who did most of the talking, expounding his knowledge of the natural world with the great man almost literally at his feet. When Emerson was about to leave, Muir's desire for companionship expanded to include all of Yosemite: "And now once more in the name of Mts. Dana & Gibb, of the grand glacial hieroglyphics of Tuolumne Meadow & Bloody Cañon. . . . In the name of a hundred cascades that barbarous visitors never see . . . & in the name of all the spirit creatures of these rocks & of this whole spiritual atmosphere Do not leave us now" (2:925). Later, Muir went alone to camp out by the fire on ferns and sequoia branches. Thus, as in the case of the moonlight waterfall letter to Carr, Muir's powerful but ambivalent encounter with Emerson was ultimately deflected into a deeper sense of relationship with the natural world—but also into a stronger sense of self, a firmer grasp of the rightness of his path and his personal trajectory, alone and lonely as it sometimes left him.

In later years, Muir would remember his meeting with Emerson as one of the two great moments of his life (the other being his encounter with

Calypso borealis in Canada), and Emerson himself as "the most serene, majestic, sequoia-like soul I ever met."[19] Of course, such images are usually constructed out of equal parts of actual specific memory, conflation with other experiences or with stereotypic ideals, and the psychological power of what one wants (or needs) the experience to have been; in a sense, then, Muir's reconstructed, idealized memory of his meeting with Emerson constitutes yet another avenue of Transcendentalist influence upon his life. The meeting itself did have more immediate impact, however, as the two began a three-year correspondence that, although intermittent, would have important ramifications for Muir. Interestingly, when Muir made his important discovery of the first living glacier in Yosemite in July 1871, he first wrote of it not to Ezra Carr or other scientific colleagues but to Emerson, using language that he had learned from Jeanne Carr: "The dear Mother has told me one magnificent truth since you were here" (2:942). Along with his letters, Muir sent Emerson numerous botanical specimens, some of which found their way to the eminent Harvard botanist Asa Gray. Muir would come to establish his own botanical relationship with Gray, and indeed Gray would come to Yosemite for a week-long botanical expedition in 1872 (as would America's other premier botanist, John Torrey). Emerson also put Muir in contact with C. Clinton Merriam of the Smithsonian Institute and even with Agassiz himself; soon, Muir was collecting specimens for Gray, writing botanical and geological reports for Merriam, and sending papers on Yosemite glaciers to be read at meetings of the Boston Academy of Science by John D. Runkle, president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (whom Muir met in Yosemite in September 1871). Moreover, Emerson himself repeatedly called for Muir to join him in Concord and Cambridge, to embark upon a formal scientific career among the finest minds and resources of the day—and in the proper cultural and philosophical setting. Perhaps to give a taste of the philosophical treasures he might expect to find in the East, in early 1872 Emerson sent Muir a copy of a two-volume edition of his own essays.

As we have seen, Muir would respond critically to many of Emerson's specific assertions, but in time an Emersonian influence would sink deeply into Muir's thought and writing. The process was a complex and many-layered one, however, as Muir worked out his own ideas and voice in the presence of a wide array of influences. While his scientific interest shifted from botany to geology beginning in 1871, Muir's core religious and philosophical concern remained the interrelationships between the spiritual and the physical

worlds—between the divine realm, the natural, and the human which participates in both. Going beyond the chemical metaphor of "affinities," Muir increasingly understood humans as literally composed of the same stuff as the natural world: "Man is so related to all of Nature that he is builded of small worlds. . . . Squeeze all the universe into the size & shape of a perfect human soul & that is a whole man" (23:433). Accordingly, the human emotional response to natural beauty is itself an elemental process. In discussing Ruskin in an 1872 letter to Jeanne Carr, Muir speculated that "[p]erhaps we owe 'the pleasurable emotions which a fine landscape makes in us' to a cause as radical as that which makes a magnet pulse to the two poles. I think that one of the *properties* of that compound which we call man is that when exposed to the rays of mountain beauty it glows with *joy*" (2:1191). Conversely—and in direct contrast to Ruskin's denigration of the "pathetic fallacy"—the natural world possesses the same properties as do humans:

> Gravitation universal
> So also music
> " " life
> " " love
> properties of *Matter* (23:337)

Interestingly, this journal entry may have been inspired by Muir's reading of *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* by Sampson Reed, a Swedenborgian. Emerson had sent the book to him, and in late 1872 Muir wrote Carr that "[i]t is full of fountain truth" (2:1192). Discussing gravitation as a "uniform" and "all-pervading" principle, Reed asks, "[W]hat all-pervading power is there by which gravitation is itself produced, unless it be the power of God?" A little later, he describes music as "that harmony which pervades . . . all orders of creation; the music of the harp of universal nature . . . the voice of God."[20]

Thus, Reed's insights as well as Muir's own provided the answer to Ruskin's critique of anthropocentric personification, in the form of a profoundly religiocentric worldview. Muir's humanization of the natural and his naturalization of the human were but two sides of a single impulse: the assertion of a world infused with divinity. He ultimately valorized music, life, and love in religious terms—as properties of the divine, or as evidence that "Matter" was itself divine. By 1872, he understood divine presence as existing in and through the world itself: "The warm blood of God through all the geologic days of volcanic fire & through all the glacial winters great & small

flows through these mountains granites, flows through these frozen streams, flows through trees living or fallen, flows through death itself" (23:483). While earlier (e.g. in the moonlight waterfall letter to Carr) he had spoken of our contact with the spiritual realm in terms of "angelic" beings, he now could refer to direct contact with God; in telling Carr of his plans for a long mountain excursion in the late summer of 1872, he exclaimed, "I will fuse in spirit skies. I will touch naked God" (2:1148). Most strikingly, instead of his longstanding construction of God in terms of a divine Person with whom one might have an individual relationship, Muir wrote of the love of God —or, the Love that is God—as flowing though the whole world, including humans. To his friend Catherine Merrill's statement that good men are "nearer to the heart of God than are woods and fields, rocks and waters," he responded:

> Such distinctions and measurements seem strange to me. Rocks and waters, etc. are words of God and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out, only from narrow chinks and round bored wells here and there in favored races and places, but He flows in grand undivided currents, shoreless and boundless over creeds and forms and all kinds of civilizations and people and beasts, saturating all and fountainizing all. (2:1123)

Significantly, this letter also contains one of the first clear evidences of the specific intellectual and literary influence of Emerson. Muir advised Merrill to "bathe in [the sea] . . . and allow the pure and generous currents of universal uncolleged beauty to blow about your bones" (2:1123), echoing Emerson's famous phrases from the beginning of "Nature" ("Standing on a bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air . . . the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me . . ."). Similarly, one of Muir's early published works, "Twenty Hill Hollow" (also from 1872), interestingly modified Emerson's words: "Presently you lose consciousness of your own separate existence; you blend with the landscape, and become part and particle of Nature."[21] The transparency of these adaptations—virtual quotations—suggest a young man in the process of searching for an acceptable literary voice by trying on the style of a revered cultural figure. As such, it is impossible to tell at this early stage how deeply the ideas themselves had sunk into Muir's consciousness: on the one hand, he was most probably employing them as literary imagery more than as philosophical assertion; on the other hand, the very fact of using such phrases carried with it a powerful new self-image and public persona, that of the Transcendentalist scientist/

writer, which once again helped Muir to redefine his identity and his place in the world.

Eventually, as his later writings show, Muir came to be more successful in creating his own voice, a fusion of Emersonian images, scientific insight, and Muir's own religious faith and fervor. For example, by 1873 Muir could write in his journal:

> Now all of these varied forms high & low are simply portions of God radiated from Him as a sun, & made terrestrial by the clothes that they wear, & by the modifications of a corresponding kind in the first God essence itself. The more specially terrestrial a being becomes the higher it ranks among its fellows, & the most terrestrial being is the one that contains all the others, who has indeed flowed through all of the others & borne away parts of them, building them into itself. Such a being is man, who has flowed down through other forms of being & absorbed & assimilated portions of them into himself thus becoming a microcosm most richly Divine because most richly terrestrial. (23:594-95)

Whatever meaning he may have intended in scientific terms, the language of this passage echoes the long quotation from Carr's friend Walter Brooks ("the Priest") that she had sent Muir during his convalescence after the 1867 factory accident in Indianapolis (quoted above): "[T]here is a pre-existent spiritual body for every moss, lichen, & plant of every kind; growth is an actual 'clothing upon' of themselves by these spiritual beings. They gather from nature its substances to make themselves a garment exactly fitting their persons" (1:521-23).[22] However, where that quotation had ended with human and natural beings shedding their material bodies and uniting in the spiritual realm, Muir's reformulation united the human and the divine in the "terrestrial." Muir also may have been influenced by the Swedenborgian Reed: "As we behold the external face of the world, our souls will hold communion with its spirit; and we shall seem to extend our consciousness beyond the narrow limits of our own bodies, to the living objects that surround us. The mind will enter into nature by the secret path of him who forms her; and can no longer be ignorant of her laws, when it is a witness of her creation."[23]

Finally, we can discern powerful traces of the writings of Emerson himself. Muir's passage both incorporates and responds to an Emersonian view of nature: "The world proceeds from the same spirit as the body of man. It is a remoter and inferior incarnation of God."[24] More concretely, Emerson had sent a handwritten copy of "The Song of Nature" to Muir in 1872 (see

2:1044-45), the same poem that Carr had sent to Muir in 1869, when he had newly arrived in California. The central conceit of the poem clearly parallels the main theme of Muir's "terrestrial divinity" passage, describing the numberless achievements and creations of Nature and the processes by which "out of spent and aged things / I formed the world anew" in elemental and living forms. However, one final creation has not yet appeared: "And still the man child is not born / The summit of the whole." The formation of a divinely human being from the inner processes and materials of the natural world, and as the "summit" of that world, may have guided Muir's philosophical assertion that humans are "most richly Divine because most richly terrestrial." The passage is quite unlike Muir (but very like Emerson) in exalting humanity as the crown of creation, an idea Muir seldom if ever expressed again in his writings. Thus, Emerson's writings—not only as philosophical doctrine but also as story and imagery—by degrees gave Muir yet another way to envision the merging and interrelationship of the human, the natural, and the divine.

Along with these specific literary and intellectual influences, the example of Emerson was important in helping Muir address one of the many unresolved practical issues that still confronted him in the early 1870s, that of his career. Frederick Turner claims that it was Emerson's insistence on the union of the practical and the intellectual that convinced Muir that he must *act* in society, *do something* with the insights he had gleaned of and from the natural.[25] However, the impulse towards duty was firmly instilled in Muir both by his familial religion and by the prevailing practical ethic of land-grant institutions such as the University of Wisconsin; no particular Emersonian influence need be assigned here. At the same time, as we have seen, the urgings and ideals of Muir's Transcendentalist friends had long been a part of his deliberations concerning exactly *which* field of endeavor would make the best career for Muir: inventor, doctor, preacher, botanist, or perhaps some other. As we have seen, Muir's meeting with Emerson (and the continued friendship of Jeanne Carr) brought him into contact with a number of influential figures in the scientific world; had he so desired, Muir *could* have chosen to establish a formal scientific career, and no less a personage than Emerson repeatedly tried to entice him East to do so. Ultimately, however, it was Emerson's own life rather than his words that held most weight for Muir: rather than following Emerson's suggestion to go east for a scientific career, Muir stayed west and ultimately pursued a literary one. Such a career would allow him to relate to the natural world in the way he

knew best, as an amateur—that is, as a lover[26]—and thus to stay true to what he had learned most deeply from the Concord sage. Again, the deepest influences of Transcendentalism on Muir came not through specific ideas but through ideals of life, through empowering self-images, and through the personal relationships that provided inspiration and support for achieving such ideals and images.

From such beginnings, Muir's thought and writings would eventually come to be saturated by bits and pieces of Emersonian—and perhaps even more, Thoreauvian—phrases, ideas, and images.[27] Beneath the specific philosophical and literary reflections, however, Muir was first nourished and shaped by the Transcendentalist movement in personal and interpersonal rather than purely intellectual ways: as a social context, a set of concrete meetings with remarkable and supportive men and women; as a language, imagery, and activity that mediated the private emotions and ideals of intimate relationships; as a source of possible self-images and of spiritual and intellectual identity; and as a guide for expanding that identity into a professional and public life. Thus, in discerning the varieties of influence that Transcendentalism exerted upon Muir, or upon the environmental movement in general—and even upon American culture as a whole—we must be sensitive to the intangible power created when two persons meet, when lives cross, when the creative contact and tension of an actual human relationship shift the trajectories of individual development, of a social movement, of the growth of culture. By such small acts and private happenings is history made.

Notes

1. Donald Fleming, "Roots of the New Conservation Movement," *Perspectives in American History* 6 (1972): 9; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), 125. For a more recent interpretation that similarly stresses Muir's Transcendentalist roots, see Catherine Albanese, *Nature Religion in America: From the Algonkian Indians to the New Age* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1990), 95-105.

2. Fleming, "Roots of the New Conservation Movement," 8; Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 85, 125; Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," in *Emerson: Essays and Lectures* (New York: Library of America, 1983), 20. On Muir's lifelong Christian faith, see Dennis Williams, "John Muir, Christian Mysticism, and the Spiritual Value of Nature," in *John Muir: Life and Work*, edited by Sally M. Miller (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 82-99; Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 184-202; and Richard Cartwright Austin, *Baptized into Wilderness: A Christian Perspective on John Muir* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1987).

3. Stephen Fox, *The American Conservation Movement: John Muir and His Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 6, 84, 83.

4. Fleming, "Roots of the New Conservation Movement," 6.

5. For the best full biography of Muir, see Frederick Turner, *Rediscovering America: John Muir in His Time and Ours* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1985). For an extended treatment of Muir's childhood, youth, and young adulthood, see my *Blessed Home: Nature, Culture, and Human Relationship in the Early Life of John Muir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, forthcoming).

6. Linnie Marsh Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness: The Life of John Muir* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1945), 55.

7. Merle Curti and Vernon Carstensen, *The University of Wisconsin, 1848-1948* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), 86.

8. Muir college notebook, from the *Microform Edition of the John Muir Papers*, edited by Ronald H. Limbaugh and Kirsten E. Lewis (Alexandria, Va.: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986), reel 31, frame 37. Subsequent references to original Muir materials from the microfilm edition will be cited in the text by reel and frame number, e.g. this citation would be given as "31:37." Used by permission: John Muir Papers, Holt-Atherton Department of Special Collections, University of the Pacific Libraries. Copyright 1984 Muir-Hanna Trust.

9. John Muir, *The Story of My Boyhood and Youth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 157.

10. For a discussion of Muir's lifelong connections with New Englanders, see Edmund A. Schofield, "John Muir's Yankee Friends and Mentors: The New England Connection," *Pacific Historian* 29(1985): 65–89. Schofield stresses the particular importance of the Vermont school of Transcendentalism, centered around Rev. James Marsh, whose study of the German idealists and especially of Coleridge led to the initial introduction of these figures into American intellectual life; indeed, Marsh's 1829 edition of Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* was one of the initial sparks of the Transcendentalist movement. Interestingly, Marsh's cousin was George Perkins Marsh, whose 1864 *Man and Nature*, a study of the destructive effects of human action on the Mediterranean lands, would be a fountainhead for the later development both of ecological thought and of environmental activism. For a full biography of Jeanne Carr, see Bonnie Gisel, "Jeanne Carr: Into the Sun. Toward a Nineteenth-Century American Woman's Experience in Nature and Wilderness" (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1997).

11. James D. Butler, "The Calypso Borealis: Botanical Enthusiasm," *Boston Recorder* 51, no. 51 (Dec. 21, 1866): 1.

12. For a full discussion of the social, gender, and religious patterns that shaped 19th-century botany, see Elizabeth B. Keeney, *The Botanizers: Amateur Scientists in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

13. This letter contains another hint of Muir's early resistance to the Transcendentalist language of his mentors. Directly quoting Carr's previous letter, he spoke reverently of "'the pure and deep communion of the beautiful, all-loving Nature,'" but his own language remained more traditionally Christian, as he wrote of "the glorious chart of God in Nature" (1:380).

14. For Muir's journal of his walk through the South, see John Muir, *A Thousand Mile Walk to the Gulf* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916).

15. For the details of my argument concerning the revised character and hence the autobiographical unreliability of *First Summer* (and its existing early drafts), see Holmes, *Blessed Home*; I also give fuller accounts of his Southern experiences and of the process by which he came to Yosemite.

16. In addition, the term "affinity" had also taken on a technical meaning in the popular religious discourse of the day, mainly associated with the Spiritualists, and Muir may have been aware of these ideas. I have found only one concrete reference to Spiritualism during these early years in Yosemite (see 2:881, where he writes of "souls ... allowed to go rapping & visiting where they please"); Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 172-173 gives a humorous account of his skepticism at a spiritualist seance in San Francisco in 1873. To the extent that his use of the term "spiritual affinities" in the moonlight letter to Carr reflects the influence of such ideas, he was bringing the

natural world into a language that was usually reserved for discussion of human (or human-divine) relationships.

17. The visit of Emerson to Yosemite is described in Turner, *Rediscovering America*, 212–219, and Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 145–151; for the perspective of Emerson's companions, see James Bradley Thayer, *A Western Journey with Mr. Emerson* (Boston: Little, 1884).

18. John McAleer, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Days of Encounter* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), 602, 606; Muir, *Our National Parks* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1991), 101; Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 148.

19. Wolfe, *Son of the Wilderness*, 147; John Muir, *John of the Mountains: The Unpublished Journals of John Muir*, edited by Linnie Marsh Wolfe (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1938), 436.

20. Sampson Reed, *Observations on the Growth of the Mind* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols, 1859), 31, 57.

21. John Muir, "Twenty Hill Hollow," *Overland Monthly* 9, no. 1 (July 1872), 86.

22. Muir's thought and writing has parallels and contrasts with other passages of Brooks as well: "The earth around us, in its variety of creature and life, is not merely a varied form of matter; it has a meaning; it is a revelation; the character of God is spread over it, and the thoughts of God are revealed in it. ... So in the world there is a living God, a divine and moral meaning; and if we see not this we do not see the world" (Walter R. Brooks, *God in Nature and Life: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Walter R. Brooks* [New York: Anson D.F. Randolph, 1889], 20). However, it is unclear how much actual contact Muir had with Brooks' writings or sermons, outside of Carr's mediating letters.

23. Reed, *Observations*, 90.

24. Emerson, "Nature," 42.

25. Turner, *Rediscovering America*, 217–218.

26. Erik Erikson discerns this sense of amateur as lover—in particular, of the amateur scientist as lover of nature—in Thomas Jefferson's contribution to natural history, *Notes on the State of Virginia*. See Erikson, *Dimensions of a New Identity* (New York: Norton, 1974), 22.

27. See, for example, Richard F. Fleck, "John Muir's Transcendental Imagery," in *John Muir: Life and Work*, edited by Sally M. Miller (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1993), 136-151.