



Voyages of the Self: Pairs, Parallels, and Patterns in American Art and Literature

Barbara Novak

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Barbara Novak is one of America's premier art historians, the author of the seminal books *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century* and *Nature and Culture*, the latter of which was named one of the Ten Best Books of the Year by *The New York Times* and was nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award. Now, with *Voyages of the Self*, this esteemed critic completes the trilogy begun with the two earlier works, offering once again an exhilarating exploration of American art and culture. In this book, Novak explores several inspired pairings of key writers and painters, drawing insightful parallels between such masters as John Singleton Copley and Jonathan Edwards, Winslow Homer and William James, Frederic Edwin Church and Walt Whitman, and Jackson Pollock and Charles Olson. Through these and other groupings, Novak tracks the varied meanings of the self in America, in which the most salient characteristics of each artist or writer is shown to draw from--and in turn influence--the larger map of American life. Two major threads weaving through the book are the American preoccupation with the object and our continuing return to pragmatism. Novak notes for instance how Copley's art mirrors the puritan denial of self found in Jonathan Edwards and how as colonial scientists they share an interest in sensation and observation. She sees Winslow Homer and William James as practitioners of a pragmatic self grounded in an immediate experience that looks for concrete results. Through such fruitful comparisons--whether between Copley and Edwards, or Lane and Emerson, or Ryder and Dickinson--Novak sheds unmatched light on our nation's artistic heritage. Wonderfully illustrated with dozens of black-and-white pictures and sixteen full-color plates, here is a stunning work that yields a wealth of insight into American art and culture--and concludes Novak's landmark trilogy.

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