

Critical Mass: The Visual Arts in Popular  
Periodicals, *Scribner's Monthly* and  
*Century Magazine* c.1877 – 1913

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## Abstract

Assessing the art coverage provided in *Scribner's Monthly* and its successor *Century Magazine*, this thesis provides a detailed study of the significant intersections between the fine arts and American popular periodicals, which were a significant form of mass entertainment and erudition in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The editorial policies of the magazine are discussed in relation to Richard Watson Gilder, who was the Managing Editor of *Scribner's Monthly* and the Editor in Chief of *Century Magazine*. The thesis argues that the volume and qualities of the art writing and illustrations that were published in the magazine are attributable to Gilder's sense of patriotism, desire for social and political reform and belief in the power of artistic beauty as an agent with the potential to transform society. This belief is contextualized within the history of the Aesthetic Movement in America and its philosophical roots within the Arts and Crafts Movement which was popular in Britain during the mid-nineteenth century. In this way the thesis builds upon recent scholarship which has identified Gilder's appreciation of the spiritual qualities of art, and his pivotal role, through the work of his magazine, in the careers of numerous successful artists and writers of the so-called "Gilded Age". The structure of the thesis presents a historic narrative which charts the rise and decline of *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine* as a force within American culture; from the secession of the Society of American Artists from the National Academy of Design in New York in 1877, to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, and beyond that to the New York Armory Show of 1913. Various aspects of the magazine's history and Gilder's influence are analyzed during this history, including his friendships with artists and critics, the development of illustration, the publishing of articles and series on art's history, and the campaigns for free art.

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## Introduction

The impetus behind this thesis began with an interest in historic American art from the perspective of an outsider. Coming from a traditional British History of Art context, with its emphasis on the European canon of art, my interest in nineteenth-century American art was often frustrated by a limited experience of the socio-cultural context from which it came. Reading some of the seminal texts of American art history, such as Barbara Novak's *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism Idealism and the American Experience* and Wanda Corn's *The Great American Thing: Modern Art and National Identity 1915-1935*, helped to synthesize my prior knowledge of American social and political history with the history of American art, but they could not substitute the absence of experience that one gains through osmosis from growing up and living within a culture. I do not wish to suggest that there is a single or best experience to be had or that the viewpoint of someone from the outside does not carry significant value, quite the contrary. Rather, that the knowledge of my outsider status made me acutely aware of the significance of my perspective to my overall understanding of American art, and the history that I wrote. This preoccupation with perspective led me to ruminate over questions of context. Part of American art's challenge to me was the complex culture from which it emerged; simultaneously familiar and strange, developed from the combining and clashing of various cultural traditions over a short period of history.<sup>1</sup> As I read more recent American art history, often replete with quotations taken from historic newspapers and magazines, I found myself drawn to questions of context in relation to primary sources and became interested in illustrated magazines, and how their own histories and perspectives influenced the material that was published and

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<sup>1</sup> Angela L. Miller, Janet C. Berlo, Bryan J. Wolf, and Jennifer L. Roberts, *American Encounters: Art, History, and Cultural Identity* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2008), 655.

is now used by academics to support their arguments. Surely the context of evidence matters.

My research into the substantial primary source material that has been made accessible on the internet in the past decade or so led to my interest in popular illustrated literary magazines, specifically *Scribner's Monthly* (later *Century Magazine*), *Harper's Monthly*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* and *Lippincott's Magazine*. These periodicals struck me as particularly interesting subjects for a PhD thesis. They provided reflections of the society, culture and time in which they first existed. More than just reflect though, I came to realize that their popularity and location within the economic and cultural centers of the period meant that in many ways they helped direct the course of events by influencing public opinion and taste. This was particularly the case as it pertained to American art due to the vested interests of the magazines through their art departments, which produced the illustrations and decorative elements that distinguished the different titles. Popular magazines were patrons of American art as well as representations of its audience. They were the product of collaboration between numerous persons: editors, artists, engravers, printers, agents. The authors who wrote for the popular magazines came from numerous walks of life, each offering their own perspective. From Presidents in the capital to miners on the Western frontier, and some of the most renowned journalists, novelists, poets and critics of the period. Magazines were tapestries of interweaving threads which connected people, creativity and ideas across spaces, physical and conceptual, in a way that was contained within discrete entities which are inviting to scholarly study. The potential of magazines as subjects which could throw fresh light on American art history excited my art historical predilections. They connected art in direct and indirect ways to the society from which it was produced and consumed, forming a link in the broader socio-cultural history that art can reveal.

There were a great number of periodicals established in America during my time period, many of which were specialist interest titles

which focused specifically on the visual arts.<sup>2</sup> These titles offer interesting insights into the tastes and opinions of a subsection of American society. However, they were not widely read in a national context, did not have great longevity and were often the projects of cliques or individuals. As such, they are limited tools for establishing broad historical context.<sup>3</sup> Popular, general interest magazines have many advantages over smaller, specialty publications as subjects for this thesis. They were nationally available and tried to appeal to a broader market, incorporating all classes, genders and regions, at least initially in the case of *Scribner's Monthly / Century Magazine*. The scale of their operation brought significant technological and logistical advantages, meaning that they were able to bring together content from a variety of sources, both nationally and internationally. Once studied, magazines that spoke to

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<sup>2</sup> *The Aldine* (1871-1879), *The Art Amateur* (1879-1891), *Brush and Pencil* (1897-1907), and the *Fine Arts Journal* (1901-1919) would be amongst the most prominent examples.

<sup>3</sup> Kirsten MacLeod has recently published an impressive survey of so called “little magazines” in America during the 1890s. She has managed to identify two hundred and sixty-eight separate titles. The contents of these publications vary from aesthetic critique and political essays to humorous quotations and collections of proverbs. In many ways the proliferation of little magazines towards the end of the century was a reflection of European “avant-gardism” which had become fashionable in America. However, it was also the product of localized conditions, be they political, cultural or economic. One of the most important factors was the maturing of the printing and publishing industries, in line with broader economic trends as American industries became corporatized. Improvements in scale, quality and efficiency made idiosyncratic publishing ventures viable as a secondary industry. The majority of such magazines appeared in pamphlet form as opposed to the royal-octavo format of the illustrated monthlies such as *Harper's Monthly* and *Century*. Despite their increased ephemerality the physical qualities of little magazines were an important aspect to their production. Although there maybe a temptation to view such titles as more aesthetic, opposed in some way to the commercially driven mass-market magazines, MacLeod has argued that such distinctions of cultural hierarchy are not reflected in the material evidence. Popular magazines gave sustained coverage to avant-garde and niche subjects, whilst the content of many “little magazines” in the 1890s was commercially popular and traditional. MacLeod's research has provided a sense of broad context to this aspect of periodical culture at a particular historical moment, however the breadth of her study is a weakness as well as a strength. By taking the reader on a journey through such a large number of titles (which nonetheless we can assume is still only a slice of what once existed), the individual character of various publications is lost amongst the crowd. The detailed study of smaller and so called “little magazines” will be an important next step in the historiography of American periodicals, but I feel that it is important to first establish the (art) history of the most successful publications of the period. In fact this is vital as *Century Magazine* would have been particularly influential on the form and content of many artistically minded “little magazines” due to its renown for its aesthetic qualities and content during the editorship of Richard Watson Gilder. Kirsten MacLeod, *American Little Magazines of the Fin de Siècle: Art, Protest, and Cultural Transformation* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2018).

mass audiences in particular, can be used as important landmarks around which further and more detailed studies can orientate themselves, helping to recreate a period perspective and thereby enrich our understanding of the hows and whys of American art's historical development.<sup>4</sup> The role that the most popular titles such as *Scribner's Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly* played in American society in general, across social strata, in the post-bellum era was highly significant. An appreciation and understanding of the popular magazines of the period is therefore a crucial ingredient to histories of American art.

This thesis therefore proposes to examine in detail the relationships between American art and *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine*, one of the most successful monthly magazines directed towards a general readership during the period c. 1877-1913.<sup>5</sup> *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* has been selected as an exemplary specimen for the purposes of this thesis due to the strength of its connections with the American art world, the influential role it played within the development of American illustration, the extensive archival material related to art, its success with the public as the most widely read monthly magazine in America for a significant period, and the relative stability of its editorial team which equated to a strong sense of identity and culture within the enterprise. It is hoped that a thorough understanding of *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* and its long-standing editor, Richard Watson Gilder, will add to

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<sup>4</sup> My consideration of the reciprocal relationship between art and its broader socio-cultural history and the advantages of assuming historical perspectives are indebted to my appreciation of the scholarship of Jules Prown (*Art As Evidence: Writings on Art and Material Culture*, 2002), T. J. Clark (*Image of the People: Gustave Courbet and the 1848 Revolution*, 1973) and Michael Baxandall, who coined the term "period eye" as described in *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (1972).

<sup>5</sup> At this juncture I would like to clarify that during the course of this thesis I refer to the object of study as *Scribner's Monthly, Century Magazine* (sometimes contracted to *Century*), and the magazine. The title of the magazine was initially *Scribner's Monthly* and changed to *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* from November 1881 until October 1925, when it changed to *The Century* from November 1925 until May 1929, and then again to *The Century, A Popular Quarterly* until it was discontinued with the Spring 1930 issue. For the sake of consistency, brevity and to try to minimize confusion I refer to the title of the magazine as either *Scribner's Monthly* or *Century Magazine* depending upon the volume or issue being referred to.

future and past scholarship on other similar titles, and that the accumulation of a critical mass of material from popular periodicals will enable a more accurate and textured understanding of the period.

### **The Historical Time Frame of this Study**

The timeframe of this study (1877-1913) has been specifically chosen because it offers the opportunity for a historic narrative that neatly resonates with both the magazine's rise and fall in popularity and its period of greatest cultural influence. The specific dates have been selected because they mark two events which were highly significant for the development of American art that echo each other in many respects. The year 1877 was when the Society of American Artists (SAA) was formed. This was a group of artists who had studied in Europe and were influenced by their contact with the most fashionable and daring European art movements. Feeling unappreciated by the conservative academicians, they broke away from the National Academy of Design in New York and established a rival organization. This secession from the Academy represented a generational shift beyond the hegemony of the mid-century landscape artists that would later be (mis)characterized as the "Hudson River School" and was interpreted by critics of the period as revolutionary.<sup>6</sup> At the other end of my historical spectrum is the Armory

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<sup>6</sup> I refer to the mid nineteenth-century prominent landscape artists based in the Northeastern United States as the "Hudson River School". This term was used to describe mid-century landscape painting in a pejorative sense as provincial by critics in the 1870s. The term is problematic as it implies that there was a formal association of artists organized into a "school" and that these artists and their art works were broadly visually similar. Important scholarship, initiated by Angela Miller's *The empire of the eye: landscape representation and American cultural politics, 1825-1875* (1993) has provided much needed nuance to conceptions of the art of the "Hudson River School". The "school" consists of a collection of artists and artworks from a period of three decades or more from c.1830-1860 who took the American landscape as their inspiration. Alan Wallach has persuasively shown that differing, even artistically competing, tendencies existed within the "Hudson River School" and that the smaller intimate works of artists such as John Frederick Kensett should not be denied from informing our understanding of later art and can be considered as "proto-modernist". Wallach argues that late "Hudson River School" artworks responded to the establishment of a cultural bourgeoisie in New York during the 1850s and 1860s that wished to distinguish itself through their artistic connoisseurship. This is an important theme that informs my own understanding of Richard Watson Gilder, *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* and

Show. Art-historical scholarship has mythologized this influential exhibition which toured New York, Chicago and Boston in 1913. The exhibition has been celebrated as the arrival of authentic Modernist art in America from Europe and as an event which shook the American art establishment and inspired a future generation of American Abstract Expressionists and other post-Modernists. Similar to the SAA's secession in 1877, this event has been interpreted as a decisive point of conflict between artistic authorities in New York and a younger generation of American artists. The period that this thesis covers, often referred to by scholars as the "Gilded Age", represents a contested ground for American art history, when a number of ideas, styles and movements exerted different pressures, encouraged and inspired by the rapid changes taking place globally.<sup>7</sup> The legacies of the changes from this period, whether they be political, social, economic or cultural, stretch deep into the twentieth century and even to the present day. Questions of cultural identity and

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their aims and motivations with regards to American art. The term "Hudson River School", whilst potentially misleading is useful for the purposes of this thesis as it was created and employed by the bourgeois cultural elites, including Gilder and *Century Magazine*, to differentiate themselves from the American art that had come before (Interestingly it is possible that Clarence Cook, who was associated with *Scribner's Monthly*, was the critic who first coined the term "Hudson River School" to refer to "establishment" landscape painters such as Frederic Edwin Church, Asher B. Durand, Jasper Francis Cropsey and Albert Bierstadt). The tendency to group these artists together into a "school" was surely encouraged by their apparent domination of the exhibitions and management of some of America's earliest art institutions, most significantly the National Academy of Design in New York. This gave American landscape painting of this period the appearance of an "establishment". This was a useful formulation for a new generation of artists who announced themselves in the 1870s, represented by Helena de Kay Gilder and championed by Richard Watson Gilder, as it gave them a tyrannical authority figure, real or imagined, to pitch themselves against. This is discussed in detail in my first chapter. See Kevin J. Avery, "A Historiography of the Hudson River School," in *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School*, (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 3-4. Alan Wallach, "Aestheticizing Tendencies in Hudson River School Landscape Painting at the Beginning of the Gilded Age," in *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge Research in Art History, 2019), Kindle Edition.

<sup>7</sup> Although the term "Gilded Age" was intended as a pejorative description in Mark Twain's *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873), it has grown into common usage amongst scholars to refer to the period c. 1870-1900 in America.

the nation's place in the world seem as pertinent to America now as they ever have been.

### **A Brief History of *Scribner's Monthly*, *Century Magazine* and Richard Watson Gilder**

In 1868 Dr. Josiah Gilbert Holland (1819-1881), an unsuccessful physician and newspaper proprietor-turned admired magazine contributor, travelled to Europe with Roswell Smith (1829-1892), an unsuccessful lawyer in poor health. During the course of their travels Dr. Holland proposed a plan to establish a new monthly magazine “devoted to American letters and American art [...] in America, by Americans, for Americans; it was to be a popular educator of the highest grade.”<sup>8</sup> Roswell Smith had been interested in magazine publishing for some time. He had a habit of ruminating over each issue of *Harper's Monthly* and assessing its strengths and weaknesses.<sup>9</sup> Smith seized the opportunity and Dr. Holland arranged a meeting with his friend and publisher, Charles Scribner, upon their return to America in 1869. Scribner involved his partners Andrew C. Armstrong and Arthur J. Peabody, as well as the *New York Times* editor and journalist Edward Seymour. The magazine was launched in November 1870 with Holland assuming the role of Editor in Chief. In spirit and chronology *Scribner's Monthly* took up the baton from *Putnam's Monthly*, which had established itself as the patriotic challenger to *Harper's Monthly* by virtuously publishing American rather than British literature and poetry, usually to its financial detriment.<sup>10</sup> *Putnam's* had finished in 1857 but was relaunched in 1868. The second incarnation struggled quicker than the first and the final issue appeared in November 1870, when many of the magazine's staff and contributors moved to the newly established *Scribner's Monthly*, which had itself

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<sup>8</sup> George Washington Cable, *A Memory of Roswell Smith* (New York: Privately Printed, The De Vinne Press, 1892), 24.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>10</sup> The lack of international copyright meant that reprinting content from British periodicals and authors was commonplace amongst magazines of the time. *Harper's Monthly* notably exploited this opportunity in its early years.

taken over the subscription list of Scribner and Co.'s in-house magazine, *Hours at Home*.<sup>11</sup> Initially Dr. Holland was a dominating presence within the magazine, contributing much of the editorial content and serialized fiction. Both Holland and Roswell Smith were devout puritanical Christians and imparted a moralistic tone to some of the commentary pieces, particularly in the regular department "Topics of the Times".<sup>12</sup> Still, this did not prevent *Scribner's Monthly* from growing into one of the most successful national monthly periodicals of the 1870s. Frank Luther Mott, a founding figure within the study of American periodicals, wrote that Holland "should be named in any list of the half-dozen greatest American magazine editors."<sup>13</sup> *Scribner's Monthly* flourished in its early years, with Richard Watson Gilder gradually assuming the role of a Managing Editor as Dr. Holland's health deteriorated. Under his influence the magazine became well-known for its illustrations, initiating a long-running competition with *Harper's Monthly* on these grounds.<sup>14</sup> In 1881 the magazine suffered significant changes to its circumstances. Charles Scribner had died in 1871 and differences had developed between the partners of the publishing firm which ultimately meant that the magazine was sold to the newly established The Century Company, with an agreement that Scribner and Co. would not launch another magazine for at least five years.<sup>15</sup> The Century Company renamed the magazine *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*.<sup>16</sup> This title was intended to be a continuation of *Scribner's Monthly* in all but name, retaining the

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<sup>11</sup> Alan Nourie and Barbara Nourie, eds., *American Mass-Market Magazines*, (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1990), 460.

<sup>12</sup> George Washington Cable, *A Memory of Roswell Smith*, (New York: Privately Printed, The De Vinne Press): 1-21. Nourie, *American Mass-Market Magazines*, 460.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 459.

<sup>14</sup> Nourie, *American Mass-Market Magazines*, 460.

<sup>15</sup> *Scribner's Magazine* was launched after this period had elapsed in 1887.

<sup>16</sup> The title was an homage to New York's Century Association, a private members club for eminent men of letters and the visual arts that had started as The Sketch Club in 1847. Many prominent artists and associates of Richard Watson Gilder were also members including Frederic Church, Asher B. Durand, John La Farge, Winslow Homer, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Frederick Law Olmsted and Stanford White.



same staff, the subscription list and cataloguing, with the first issue for November 1881 numbered “Volume 23, Issue 1”. However, Dr. Holland died before *Century Magazine* was launched and Richard Watson Gilder took charge as Editor in Chief. The Century Company, in which Gilder held stocks, was managed by Smith and grew into a well-respected publisher of books as well as the magazine.

Under Gilder’s management the magazine grew to a circulation of over two-hundred and fifty thousand subscribers by the 1890s.<sup>17</sup> The so-called “rule of five” which estimated that each issue of a periodical was read by at least five people places the readership of the magazine well in excess of a million during its heyday.<sup>18</sup> Competition from cheaper, more journalistic periodicals such as *McClure’s*, *Munsey’s*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Everybody’s*, *Collier’s*, and *Ladies’ Home Journal* led to a steady decline in readership from the mid-1890s until the mid-1920s, but the magazine maintained a status as a high-brow establishment figure within the industry and was able to continue to publish the works of America’s most renowned authors.<sup>19</sup> Although Gilder’s high cultural tastes influenced the magazine, it was addressed to the American public *en masse* until competition fragmented its audience. The magazine has been characterized along with its competitors *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper’s Monthly* as a “custodian of genteel culture” and a “bellwether of the entire

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<sup>17</sup> There are no accurate readership figures for American magazines during this period but scholars agree with the numbers claimed by the magazines themselves, and some evidence exists within contemporary trade publications. Circulation numbers became a more pressing issue as the influence of advertising increased and companies needed to make assessments as to where best to spend their marketing budgets. Whatever the actual figures, *Century Magazine* was accepted as being the most widely read publication of its type in America by 1890. Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885*, 467, 475. Brooks E. Hefner and Edward Timke. “Beyond Little and Big: Circulation, Data, and American Magazine History,” *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 11, no. 1 (2020): 25-51.

<sup>18</sup> “Topics Of The Time: “The Century’s” First Year Under Its New Name,” *Century Magazine*, October, 1882, 939. This “rule” held true throughout the period and was repeated in Earnest Elmo Calkins and Ralph Holden, *Modern Advertising* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 211.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Chielens, ed., *American Literary Magazines: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986), 367.

Gilded Age”.<sup>20</sup> Gilder’s editorship has been similarly described as “walking the fine line between popularity and Comstockery on the one hand and artistic integrity on the other.”<sup>21</sup> This tension between ambitions to promote the finest art and at the same time appeal to the general populace was embedded within the character of its editor and was reflected in the content published on art by *Scribner’s Monthly/ Century Magazine*. The history of the magazine between 1877 and 1909 inevitably draws heavily upon the personal history of Richard Watson Gilder, the man who dedicated most of his life to its success and imparted much of his personality into its pages.

Richard Watson Gilder was born in Bordentown, New Jersey in 1844. His mother came from a family of successful farmers and his father was a “high church Methodist” minister who ran a private school in the town and edited religious journals.<sup>22</sup> Gilder had contemplated following his father into the ministry and then a career as a lawyer, but his plans were curtailed suddenly when his father died of smallpox in 1864 whilst serving as a chaplain in the Union Army. This forced Gilder to regretfully forgo college and seek work in order to support the family. His first job in periodicals came as a newspaper reporter for the *Newark Daily Advertiser* before moving on to establish his own newspaper in 1869 called the *Newark Morning Register*. This venture ended due to financial failings several years later and saddled Gilder with substantial debts. During the late 1860s Gilder had also found additional work with Charles Scribner and Sons as editor of *Hours At Home*. He was the magazine’s Editor in Chief in 1869 when it was absorbed into the new title, *Scribner’s Monthly*, to be edited by Dr. Holland.<sup>23</sup> Gilder was subsequently made Assistant Editor and continued to work for the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., xii, 364.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 366.

<sup>22</sup> Arthur John, *The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner’s Monthly, and Century Magazine, 1870-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 5.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

magazine as Managing Editor and then Editor in Chief until his death in 1909.

Throughout his career as an editor Gilder maintained his ambitions of becoming a successful poet and published several collections of poems.<sup>24</sup> His poetry was versatile in style, initially starting as Romantic and concerned with themes of ideal beauty. After his death the poet and critic George Edward Woodberry characterized his verses as “impressionistic” and attributed Gilder’s relatively modest success as a poet to his “contemporaneousness”.<sup>25</sup> His poetry featured regularly in his own magazine and he also contributed poems and articles to other prestigious publications including *The Outlook* and *Atlantic Monthly*. His lasting legacy however was due to his philanthropic work, as a “moral force in politics” at the local and national levels.<sup>26</sup> His reputation for acts of citizenship resulted in him featuring on the cover of *The New York Times Illustrated Weekly Magazine* for June 5, 1897 (fig. 0.1). The emphasis on this aspect of his career was reflected in the thematic structure of his “collected letters,” edited by his daughter Rosamond Gilder in 1916, with chapter titles such as “Public Affairs (1881-1885)”, “International Copyright (1888 -1891)”, “Civil Service Reform (1891-1894)”, “The Tenement House Commission (1894-1896)”, and, “Municipal Politics (1896-1900).”<sup>27</sup> Gilder died in 1909 from a heart attack at the home of his close friend and art critic for *Century Magazine*, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. His Gilded Age aestheticism continued to inform the timbre of *Century Magazine* until its eventual demise in 1930.

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<sup>24</sup> *The New Day* (four editions, 1876-1887), *The Poet and His Master* (1867), *Lyrics and Other Poems* (two editions 1886, 1887), *The Celestial Passion* (1887), *Two Worlds* (1891), *The Great Remembrance* (1893), *Five Books* (1894), *For The Country* (1897), *In Palestine* (1898), *Poems and Inscriptions* (1901), *A Christmas Wreath* (1903), *In The Heights* (1905), *A Book Of Music* (1906), *The Fire Divine* (1907), *Poems* (1908).

<sup>25</sup> George Edward Woodberry, “Mr Gilder’s Public Activities: I. As Poet,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1910, 625-626.

<sup>26</sup> Henry Van Dyke, “Mr Gilder’s Public Activities: II. As A Moral Force in Politics,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1910, 627. Jacob Riis, “Mr Gilder’s Public Activities: III. His Philanthropic Work,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1910, 628-629.

<sup>27</sup> Richard Watson Gilder and Rosamond Gilder, ed., *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), contents page.

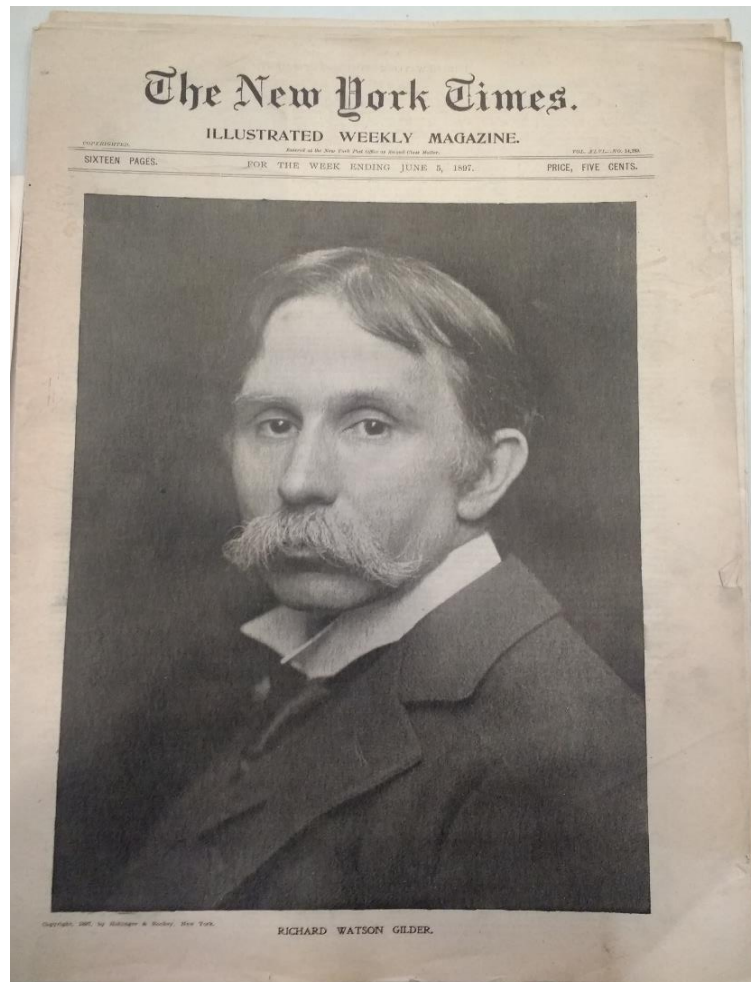


Figure 0.1. Front cover of The New York Times Illustrated Weekly Magazine for June 5, 1897 displaying a photograph from Hollinger & Rocky Studio, New York of Richard Watson Gilder. Box 36, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

### A Note on “Periodical Studies”

Given the subject and methodology of my thesis, it is important to briefly discuss “periodical studies”, its digitization, and how my thesis sits in relation to this relatively young sub-discipline. Sean Latham and Robert Scholes’s article from 2006 successfully articulated an initial terrain for the emerging field and attributed the increase in academic interest in periodicals to advances in technology and the adoption of digital platforms by libraries and archives.<sup>28</sup> Arguably, periodical studies started in America with Frank Luther Mott’s comprehensive multi-volume work

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<sup>28</sup> Sean Latham and Robert Scholes, “The Rise of Periodical Studies: The Emergence of Periodical Studies as a Field,” *PMLA* 121, no. 2 (March 2006): 517-531.

on American magazines which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1939.<sup>29</sup> However, in the intervening eight decades since the publication of Mott's magnum opus there was little effort on the part of scholars in mapping out a new discipline within the humanities. This changed in the late 1990s when library and archive indexes were digitized and became readily "searchable", coupled with an enthusiasm for interdisciplinary research within universities.

The digital archive may be identified as a reason for changes in the type of scholarship being produced in recent years, but in fact the digital has been absorbed into the humanities since the creation of electronic databases and the ability to "search". This simple term trivializes the complex processes of "algorithmic mining" which are really taking place.<sup>30</sup> This digitization of research methods has already had a measurable impact on scholarship, with an increased use of periodical material as evidence.<sup>31</sup> It is in part for this reason that studies such as my own which take a detailed look from the perspective of particular academic disciplines at individual titles are vital in the current research climate in order to better appreciate the contexts behind the quotations frequently wrested from the digital archive.

Academics who engage with periodicals as their primary research focus are now making a case for a new discipline. Authors such as Latham and Scholes, Maria DiCenzo, Scott E. Casper, Andrew King, Laurel Brake, Ryan Cordell, Linda K. Hughes and James Mussell have all stressed the importance of bringing the periodical into the center stage of academic enquiry; to make it more than an incidental detail recording the appearance of interesting ideas, but instead assert its materiality and consider it as a complete object for serious study.<sup>32</sup> However, this is not

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 520.

<sup>30</sup> Ted Underwood, "Theorizing Research Practices We Forgot to Theorize Twenty Years Ago," *Representations* 127, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 64.

<sup>31</sup> Ian Milligan has tracked increases in citations of newspapers in dissertations, with a noticeable increase amongst those written in the "database age". Ian Milligan, "Illusionary Order: Online Databases, Optical Character Recognition, and Canadian History, 1997-2010," *Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (December 2013): 540-569.

<sup>32</sup> Scott E. Casper, "Periodical Studies and Cultural History/Periodical Studies as Cultural History: New Scholarship on American Magazines," *Victorian Periodicals*

straightforward with many of the acknowledged problems inherent in studying periodicals still unresolved or lacking a consensus view amongst the academic community. Reliable readership figures are missing for many publications before the twentieth century. This is a clear limitation for a discipline so concerned with context. The archiving of periodicals by libraries, often on microfilm, has caused disaggregation of the original material into what has been judged to be relevant and irrelevant, the culturally valuable and the worthless. These practices have been repeated by recent digitization processes. This has stripped away a great deal of material, particularly advertising, from the front, back and middle sections of many magazines, and exacerbated issues of under-representation of various communities within the archive.<sup>33</sup>

Digitization has removed many of the physical impracticalities of undertaking research which focuses purely on a single or select group of periodicals, and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) software has made these artefacts “searchable”. However, the degree to which digitization should be celebrated by the field has been disputed by scholars.<sup>34</sup>

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*Review* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 1996): 261-268. James Mussell, “Teaching Nineteenth-Century Periodicals Using Digital Resources: Myths and Methods,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45, no. 2 (2012): 201-209. Ryan Cordell, “What Has the Digital Meant to American Periodicals Scholarship?,” *American Periodicals* 26, no. 1 (2016): 2-7. Linda K. Hughes, “SIDEWAYS!: Navigating the Material(ity) of Print Culture,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 1 ((Spring 2014): 1-13.

<sup>33</sup> Latham and Scholes, “The Rise of,” 520. Lauren Klein, “The Image of Absence: Archival Silence, Data Visualization, and James Hemings,” *American Literature* 85, no.4 (2013): 662.

For examples of recent periodicals studies scholarship which tackles the challenges of under-representation within the archive see Jim Casey and Sarah H., Salter, “Challenges and Opportunities in Editorship Studies,” *American Periodicals: A Journal of History and Criticism* 30, no. 2 (2020): 101-104. This introduces a series of case studies into multiethnic periodicals from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries written by Kelley Kreitz, Jewon Woo, Jacqueline Emery, Ayendy Bonifacio and Todd Nathan Thompson.

<sup>34</sup> Stephen J. Murphy, “Visualizing Periodical Networks,” *Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 5, no.1, (2014): vi. Roxanne Shirazi, “A “Digital Wasteland”: Modernist Periodical Studies, Digital Remediation, and Copyright,” in *Creating Sustainable Community: The Proceedings of the ACRL 2015 Conference, March 25–28, Portland, Oregon*, ed. Dawn M. Mueller, (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2015), 192-199. Maria DiCenzo, “Remediating the Past: *Doing* “Periodical Studies” in the digital era,” *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 41, no. 1 (March 2015): 20 and 28.

Digitization adds another layer between the present-day reader and the source material. As academics staring at computer screens, we are not experiencing the periodical in an authentic manner.<sup>35</sup> By further removing the reader from the physical object, digital versions of periodical archives risk encouraging us to forget what is missing. We do not see the removed covers and the gaps where advertisements or supplements would have been, and we diminish the possibility of stumbling upon something interesting and completely unexpected when searching for “keywords” rather than turning the pages semi-casually.<sup>36</sup> Indeed the amount of “searchable” archival material is now at a level that confirmation bias is an issue that scholars need to be vigilant against, with “evidence” for just about any argument readily obtainable from niche sources, which when aggregated through a search tool which can cast a very wide net, may make it appear more historically significant than it really was.

Digitization has also installed a further filter through which only some periodicals have passed. An initial problem of survivorship has been doubled. Archives and libraries have kept some titles safe for future generations, whilst others have been unpreserved and neglected. If a title does not appear on a searchable digital database, it is as good as forgotten.<sup>37</sup> Scanning microfilm (in the majority of cases) and submitting the results to software analysis takes both time and resources, which has understandably led to prioritization. This has automatically imposed a suggested hierarchy of value. Which titles have been chosen first for digitization and why? What further barriers to access have been erected, mostly due to commercial imperatives? Who makes these decisions and

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<sup>35</sup> John Nerone, “Introduction: The History of Paper and Public Space.” *Media History* 21, no. 1 (2014): 1-7.

<sup>36</sup> The importance of browsing in a digital context is discussed at length in Stephen Ramsay, “The Hermeneutics of Screwing Around; or What You Do with a Million Books,” in *Pastplay: Teaching and Learning History with Technology*, ed. Kevin Lee (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 111-120.

<sup>37</sup> Laurel Brake has explained that whilst the four hundred or so nineteenth-century titles that were digitized in the first decade of this century may appear overwhelming to academics working in the field, they represent less than one percent of the known fifty-thousand titles which have been indexed. Laurel Brake, “Half Full and Half Empty,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17, no. 2 (2012): 225-227.

what happens to the publications deemed not worth the effort or expense incurred? What marks and signs of historical human use and preservation of the physical artefact are not recorded by the digitization process?<sup>38</sup> These questions are rhetorical to an extent and not unique to periodicals. Issues of survivorship have always existed before digitization. However, large digital archives such as the Making of America Project, the Hathi Trust Digital Library or Project Gutenberg which are at once vast and apparently graspable within the confines of a personal computer screen threaten to mislead users into assuming that the titles available are comprehensive or by implication the most important and influential.<sup>39</sup> The vast amounts of information being produced by digital archiving can also lead to temptations amongst scholars to use this data and present the results as the product of research.<sup>40</sup> This is numerical data extracted from bibliometric data, or, as Dallas Liddle puts it: “data about data”.<sup>41</sup> Such practices threaten to overlook the flaws in the source material and discourage a reading of texts in favor of a “processing” of texts. This takes us further away from real understanding of how these objects were used.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> There is no standardized practice in place which assures consistency in the results of digitization. This is a major problem. Latham and Scholes have called upon archivists to go beyond the “Guidelines for Best Encoding Practices,” of the Digital Library Federation, and follow the more scrupulous guidelines they established during the course of the Modernist Journals Project. However, the processes by which periodicals are being digitized today still vary from organization to organization. Latham and Scholes, “The Rise of,” 522-527.

<sup>39</sup> Adrian Bingham, “The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians,” *Twentieth Century British History* 21, no. 2 (2010): 229. DiCenzo, “Remediating the Past,” 31. Patrick Leary, “Googling the Victorians,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005): 82-83.

A description of the processes and choices made during digitization of periodical archives is found in James Mussell, “Digitization,” in *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers*, eds. Andrew King, Alexis Easley and John Morton (London: Routledge, 2016), 17-28.

<sup>40</sup> Franco Moretti, “Network Theory, Plot Analysis,” *LitLab Pamphlet* 2, (May 2011): 1-31. Franco Moretti, “Style, Inc. Reflections on Seven Thousand Titles (British Novels, 1740–1850),” *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 2009): 134-158.

<sup>41</sup> Dallas Liddle, “Reflections on 20,000 Victorian Newspapers: “Distant Reading” *The Times* using *The Time Digital Archive*,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17, no. 2 (2012): 230.

<sup>42</sup> This kind of research has been termed “distant reading” and has been critiqued by Mark Sample as “non-consumptive reading”. “The Poetics of Non-Consumptive



The process of digitization however can also bring our attention to the imperfections and ephemerality of the physical archive. James Mussell has defended the digital archive as a “modification” rather than a “simulation” of the physical artefacts which are “witnesses” of the “processes that produced them, the society in which they circulated, and the archival practises that kept them safe.”<sup>43</sup> Bringing this into the purview of my own research, The Hathi Trust hosts multiple versions of the “same” volumes of *Scribner’s Monthly* and *Century* from Harvard, Indiana University, University of Michigan, Michigan State University, University of Minnesota, University of California and The Ohio State University.<sup>44</sup> Using the different “copies” of the same volumes online brings into focus the discrepancies that exist and have stemmed from decisions both recent and historical regarding preservation. For example, some scans seem to have been optimized for images whilst others seem to favor text; offering a tantalizing glimpse into the different value systems at play at various strata within the historical record, and a reminder that the illustrated monthly magazine resists characterization by the text/image dichotomy. Being made aware of these differences has caused me to consider the place of my own research in relation to the physical artefact and the digital archive, as well as content and form and the relationship between the two.

My approach is ostensibly traditional in that I focus on an object of study and draw assessments of its content in relation to the historical record, supporting my arguments with evidence found in secondary sources and archives, be they physical or digital. However, I must acknowledge that the digital has facilitated this research, much of which has been undertaken thousands of miles away from the physical volumes

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Reading,” Sample Reality, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://www.samplerreality.com/2013/05/22/the-poetics-of-non-consumptive-reading/>.

<sup>43</sup> James Mussell, “Digitization,” in *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers*, eds. Andrew King, Alexis Easley, and John Morton (London: Routledge, 2016), 27-28.

<sup>44</sup> The Hathi Trust has taken some of these when it took on the database created by the Making of America Project - a collaboration between Cornell and University of Michigan to digitize a collection of primary sources selected for their significance to the historical development of the United States – and a further layer of remediation not apparent to users within the digital archive.

on shelves in American libraries that I have read but never touched. As an art historian I am aware that the physical artefact is important to metaphysical content and that if I am concerned with the recreation of historical context the tactile, experiential qualities of magazines need to be held in mind. To try and mitigate this loss of the physical I have purchased examples of bound volumes and individual issues of illustrated magazines throughout my period, including *Scribner's Monthly*, *Century*, *Scribner's Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly* and *Harper's Monthly*. These have afforded me a physical encounter with my subjects, but even those in "excellent and complete" condition are missing substantial ephemeral matter, most of which was advertising, from the front and backs of individual issues. The process of collecting physical examples of my objects of study has also shed light on the ways in which these objects were used and remediated by their consumers throughout history. Searching online shops and auctions, one regularly finds examples of material that has been clipped and framed from the original magazine, repackaged to appeal to contemporary interests in the Civil War, celebrated authors such as Mark Twain or artists associated with the Golden Age of American illustration such as Maxfield Parrish and Howard Pyle.<sup>45</sup> Seeing these items brings to mind the matter that has been discarded and poses questions on how the significance of the pages that have been saved might be affected by their new context as objects of so called "vintage" decorative art.

The material substance of periodicals is a significant aspect of their study amongst scholars. Approaching the periodical from an English Literature perspective, Laurel Brake has argued for research which acknowledges periodicals' special status as a distinct literary format, defined by material qualities which condition content. Many of the

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<sup>45</sup> For this reason, complete individual issues from the point at which color covers became standard are scarce and amongst the most expensive. Similarly, one finds examples of "May" issues of *Century* from the late 1880s onwards more than other months due to the more artistic front cover designed by Elihu Vedder which was used to mark the start of each new year of the magazine's existence, and presumably was a reason that people have kept these issues in particular. The designs of the front cover are discussed in the second chapter of this thesis.

period's most significant works in fields such as fiction, criticism, history and art history were published in periodicals and first encountered by readers within a matrix of other material which provided an initial anchoring within a broader cultural, intellectual and historical context. This contrasts with the "self-containment" suggested by books; the main medium through which we encounter these same significant historical works today.<sup>46</sup> The imaginative recreation of this context, both physical and intellectual is important to understandings of content, and this is what my research intends. The physical reality of the periodical as artefact is affirmed through acknowledgement and analysis of the commercial, geographical and technological history of periodicals.<sup>47</sup> My thesis therefore incorporates analysis of the New York art world in which the magazine played an active and reflective role (Chapter One in particular), as well as the technical advances in printing and publishing which the magazine led (Chapter Two).

In recalling these physical and material contexts I seek to balance philosophical suppositions with acknowledgement of the commercially expeditious nature of the magazine as ultimately something ephemeral created to be sold to a mass audience.<sup>48</sup> The relationship with the commercial was a key component of popular magazines which helps to explain their success as a product of industrialization made to cater to the wants and desires of the growing urban middle classes.<sup>49</sup> Many titles were initially founded as marketing opportunities for publishers (including *Scribner's Monthly*). The popularity of serialized fiction can also be explained by looking through an economic lens, as another form of

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<sup>46</sup> Laurel Brake, "Writing, cultural production, and the periodical press in the nineteenth century," in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen (Harlow, England: Addison Wesley Longman, 1997), 54-55.

<sup>47</sup> Laurel Brake, "Markets, Genres, Iterations," in *The Routledge Handbook to Nineteenth-Century British Periodicals and Newspapers*, eds. Andrew King, Alexis Easley, and John Morton (London: Routledge, 2016), 237-248.

<sup>48</sup> "The industrialisation of print enabled the proliferation of printed ephemera, underscoring the connection between multiplication and disposability." James Mussell, "The Passing Of Print," *Media History* 18, no. 1 (2012): 79.

<sup>49</sup> The influence of paper as a commodity on the proliferation of magazines and other ephemera in the nineteenth century is described in Andrew M. Stauffer, "Ruins of Paper: Dickens and the Necropolitan Library," *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net* 47, (2007): 1-28.

credit which offered the middle classes the possibility of paying for multiple new books in installments.<sup>50</sup> Commerce can offer perspectives on periodical content as well as form: Brake hypothesizes that the increase in emphasis towards fiction in magazines in the latter part of the nineteenth century is evidence of a commercial strategy to selectively target female readers.<sup>51</sup> But topics which supposedly deterred women readers according to Brake, such as politics, philosophy and religion, were covered in detail by *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century*, albeit in a deliberately non-partisan manner, alongside romantic fiction and poetry. In fact, the consistency of a range of material from the scientific, to the critical, humorous, artistic, whimsical and informative, implies an orientation towards both genders throughout its existence; that is if the Victorian supposition that women were primarily attracted to fiction, particularly romantic fiction, holds true.<sup>52</sup>

Gradually advertising by third parties looked to capitalize on the success of popular periodicals. *Century* is credited with being an innovator amongst magazines of the period in its exploitation of advertising which revolutionized the funding model for magazines, from revenue gathered from readers' subscriptions to revenue generated from selling advertising space, helping to create a new industry of agents and marketers. The effects of this change, unforeseeable to the likes of its editors, were fundamental and have impacted media to the current day.

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<sup>50</sup> This also impacted the professionalization of writing, as authors, including celebrated figures such as Charles Dickens and Henry James saw financial stability and opportunity in the new form serialization facilitated by literary periodicals. Looking at the magazine and its editor through a socio-economic lens which identifies relationships between different types of capital brings to mind the theories of Pierre Bourdieu which are discussed in the first chapter of this thesis.

<sup>51</sup> Laurel Brake, "Writing, Cultural Production, and the Periodical Press in the Nineteenth Century," in *Writing and Victorianism*, ed. J. B. Bullen (London: Routledge, 2018), 60-61.

<sup>52</sup> Brake also acknowledges that contemporary standards of what constitutes "literary" writing hold less currency in the case of nineteenth-century periodicals which develop multidisciplinary and "intertextual" formats. Ibid. 62-63. Recent scholarship is re-examining the ways in which women were involved in periodicals at all levels as writers, editors, illustrators and consumers. The collection of essays published in 2019 and edited by Alexis Easley, Clare Gill and Beth Rodgers contains some of the most up to date research in this regard, albeit mostly within the British context. Alexis Easley, Beth Rodgers and Clare Gill, eds., *Women, Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1830s-1900s: The Victorian Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019).

Increasing the amounts of advertising brought periodicals into closer contact with the worlds of commerce and business, and the power dynamics of the relationship shifted, as large magazines became reliant on the revenue from their advertisers. This change played a significant role in the shift to more sensationalist and provocative magazine content designed to appeal to mass audiences in the 1890s, and encouraged magazines to be thought of as increasingly cheap and disposable. Ironically these developments brought the decline of the so called “genteel” periodicals like *Century Magazine* by the start of the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup>

The ephemerality of periodicals is a defining feature of their materiality. James Mussell has noted that their historical value lies precisely in their assumed disposability: “For the historian, the value of all types of ephemera lies in the properties that once made it valueless. The connection of ephemera to the prosaic, transitory and mundane is both the reason that it should not have survived and the reason that it is so valuable for us today.”<sup>54</sup> Literary historians have paid attention to the ephemera of print, including the “wrappers” or “supplements” with pages of advertising that were affixed to the front and back of popular literary magazines, as evidence of the network of connections between publishers, authors and magazines. However, taking an art historical perspective on this content as it appears in publications such as *Century Magazine* yields further evidence for the development of a middle-class material culture which both supports and complicates our understandings of cultural hierarchy, as the magazine’s claims to high-cultural superiority are seemingly undermined by literal wrappings of commercialism. Considering this material whenever possible helps to further the

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<sup>53</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 9-12. Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class At The Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 81-117 and 175-218. Carl Robert Keyes, “Introduction: Advertising in American Periodicals before Madison Avenue,” *American Periodicals* 24, no. 2 (2014): 105-09. Michael Epp, “Good Bad Stuff: Editing, Advertising, and the Transformation of Genteel Literary Production in the 1890s,” *American Periodicals* 24, no. 2 (2014): 186-205. Sidney A. Sherman, “Advertising in the United States,” *Publications of the American Statistical Association* 7, no. 52 (December, 1900): 1-44.

<sup>54</sup> James Mussell, “The Passing Of Print,” *Media History* 18, no. 1 (2012): 83.

establishment of an “authentic” context for the magazine, as much as can be achieved when encountering historical artefacts. Jennifer Greenhill has brought an art historical perspective to some of the advertisements in popular nineteenth-century American magazines, demonstrating how knowledge of aesthetic theory and psychology informed the commercial artwork of Will Bradley.<sup>55</sup> The seriousness with which Greenhill approaches these objects as art historical artefacts and her use of trade publications as a key form of evidence for her arguments provides a stimulating example of art history intersecting productively with periodicals studies methodologies.

Unfortunately, much of the original advertising content no longer exists in the volumes of magazines such as *Scribner’s Monthly* and *Century* held by libraries, although some has survived the binding, microfilming and digitization processes. Where available I have considered this and incorporated it into my discussion of topics in this thesis, such as the commercial success and cultural tone of the collaboration between Joseph Pennell and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (chapter two) and the significance of World Fairs on the tastes of the middle-class readership (chapter four). Consideration of this material is in sympathy with scholarship in American art history which is interested in the history of material and visual culture, and social art history more broadly through the contemplation of artefacts normally separated by cultural hierarchies.<sup>56</sup>

Whilst it is important to acknowledge periodicals as artefacts and recreate their context as best possible through consideration of their physical realities (geographic, commercial and technological), it should be recognized that authentic experience is impossible. Whatever it is that we encounter through the archive, it is always a remediation of an individual

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<sup>55</sup> Jennifer Greenhill, “Selling Structures: The Periodical Page and the Art of Suggestive Advertising c. 1900,” in *Visuelles Design: die Journalseite als gestaltete Fläche / Visual Design: The Periodical Page as a Designed Surface*, eds. Andreas Beck, Nicola Kaminski, Volker Mergenthaler, and Jens Ruchatz (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2019), 427–450.

<sup>56</sup> For example, Katharine Martinez, “At Home With The Mona Lisa: Consumers and Commercial Visual Culture, 1880-1920,” in *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in American Visual Culture*, ed. Patricia Johnston (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 160-176.

artefact which was a single iteration of a mass produced whole. James Mussell has thoughtfully concluded that ephemera can provide us with insights on the past but cannot restore it in its true complexity. In a reflection of the relationship between the digital and physical archive, the ephemerality of print “stands as a metonym for what we have forgotten.”<sup>57</sup>

The plausibility of a field of periodical studies may appear to be fatally undermined, yet there remains great potential. Periodical studies can help to add to the texture of history without having to prove itself as a panacea to problems shared by other areas of the humanities. The insights which bibliometric analysis offers should not be dismissed out of prejudice and the visualization tools for this data, borrowed and developed from “digital humanities” by conscientious scholars, can yield interesting and relevant results.<sup>58</sup> Periodical studies remains an emerging field, but still one which appears to be growing increasingly self-assured. Major studies which place the physical periodical at front and center of their attention have been completed or are now well underway and anthologies of recent scholarship that seeks to address the methodological questions have been published.<sup>59</sup> There are also attempts to embed the research of periodicals within the structural framework of university humanities departments, sharing the responsibility of scholarly research with the individual specialists and scholarly societies such as the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals (founded in 1968) and the Research Society for American Periodicals (founded in 1991). With regards to American periodicals, the recent establishment of the British based, North American Periodical Society (founded in 2015), with funding from The Eccles Centre and the British Association of American

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<sup>57</sup> James Mussell, “The Passing Of Print,” *Media History* 18, no. 1 (2012): 78.

<sup>58</sup> Moretti, “Network Theory,” 2. Murphy, “Visualizing,” vii.

<sup>59</sup> Andrew King, Alexis Easley, and John Morton, eds., *Researching the Nineteenth-century Periodical Press: Case Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2017). David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, Bill Emmott, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

Studies is an affirmation that increasing numbers of scholars are using the opportunities of digital archives in order to study periodicals and that the potential for this area of academia is acknowledged at an institutional level. This is further supported by the opening of the Centre for the Study of Journalism and History at the University of Sheffield in 2009. One of the center's stated aims is "to provide a focus for methodological conversations about the exploitation of digital resources."<sup>60</sup> This is an acknowledgement of the importance of resolving the theoretical and methodological questions for the field, as well as a claim to act as the locus for the discipline in Britain.

It has been necessary to provide the above foregrounding because the periodical, as object, shares the focus of my study. I am uncertain of the extent to which I should be, or wish to be, considered a member of a sub-discipline of periodical studies. The field's assertion that the periodical is a physical object which can offer historical perspectives appeals to my own studies on the context of American art between 1877 and 1913. However, my interest in the source material comes from a particular academic discipline; I am an art historian interested in historic American art, and transport that focused perspective to my research on popular periodicals in order to contribute to a more textured historical setting to the artistic developments which took place during my period. I am not unique in acknowledging my own disciplinary bias. None of the academics who make up this field have come from a periodical studies background at undergraduate or postgraduate level and each individual brings with them their own subject specific tools as well as interests and prejudices. This study is relatively unusual for periodical studies, coming from an art-historical rather than historical or literary perspective, but the academic prism through which I am choosing to study periodicals does not negate the potential relevance of this thesis to periodical studies more broadly from a methodological perspective. I wish to position my research at the interface between periodical studies and art history;

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<sup>60</sup> "About the Centre," Sheffield University, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/journalism/research/journalism-history/about> .



looking in one direction to scholarship that challenges traditional perceptions of cultural hierarchy within the art historical record, and in the other direction as a response to digital humanities and so called “distant reading” approaches which highlight the continued need for scholarship which offers detail and nuance through sustained focus.<sup>61</sup> Periodical studies is a field of enquiry that I maintain an interest in as a means to define and overcome the challenges of studying magazines for academic research. However, the intention of this thesis is to contribute in a meaningful way to the art-historical scholarship of American art. This thesis has more to offer American art-history than periodical studies.

### **Literature Review and Methodology**

This thesis is archival in approach, with an emphasis on allowing the primary sources lead the discussion rather than illustrate a broader theory. This tried and tested method of writing history has been employed as a means to establish a solid scholarly foundation of the subject matter, in the hope that the material presented will be a source of detail and nuance for broader discussions on late nineteenth-century American visual culture and the history of popular American magazines. The primary sources consulted first and foremost were the issues of the magazine itself. This study was made possible due to the digitization of American universities’ holdings of popular magazines, including *Scribner’s Monthly* and *Century Magazine*, made available on the Hathi Trust’s Digital Library platform. Other contemporary sources such as books, pamphlets and catalogues have been accessed via the Internet Archive online platform, which has been another vital resource for this project.

The initial stages of research centered around the indexing of material from the magazine published between 1875 and 1915 that took the visual arts or a closely connected topic as its primary focus. This

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<sup>61</sup> Ryan Cordell, “What Has the Digital Meant to American Periodicals Scholarship?,” *American Periodicals* 26, no. 1 (2016): 6.

resulted in an initial database of approximately one thousand three hundred entries that was then analyzed and from which themes and lines of further enquiry were developed. Another crucial aspect of my approach has been my research in various archives in America, which I was fortunate enough to gain access to whilst undertaking a fellowship at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C.. The Archives of American Art holds several useful collections that were consulted; foremost the Richard Watson Gilder and Helena de Kay Gilder papers, 1874-1878, the Century Magazine letters, 1870-1918, the Robert Underwood Johnson letters, 1882-1937 and the Timothy Cole papers, 1883-1936. I was also able to access the materials on Timothy Cole held at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History due to the generosity of Helena Wright, the curator in the Division of Work and Industry at the Museum. Further to these I consulted the Century Magazine Correspondence, 1885-1914, held at the Huntington Library in Pasadena, and the large repository of approximately twenty-three thousand items including letters, paintings, press clippings, journals, sketch books and photographs, that make up The Gilder manuscript collection, 1781–1984, stored at the Lilly Library at the University of Indiana.

My further research has taken in the scholarship that has been produced on the history of various forms of art writing and the professionalization of art criticism in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. John Simoni's doctoral thesis on, "Art Critics and Criticism in Nineteenth-Century America" (1952) remains a solid introductory survey. Other PhD projects by Linda Jones Docherty and Emily Halligan have been able to build upon these foundations, offering lines of argument that connect the study of art criticism with the broader scholarship on American art history.<sup>62</sup> Susan Casteras's book, *English Pre-Raphaelitism And Its Reception In America In The Nineteenth*

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<sup>62</sup> Emily Halligan, "Art Criticism in America before *The Crayon*: Perceptions of Landscape Painting, 1825-1855" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2014). Linda Jones Docherty, "A Search for Identity: American Art Criticism and the concept of the "Native School" 1876-1893" (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1985).

*Century* (1990), has provided a more recent update to the scholarship of Roger B. Stein and William H. Gerdts on Ruskin's influence on American art writing and the history of the specialist American art magazines *The Crayon* and *The New Path*.<sup>63</sup> The collection of essays published in support of the exhibition, *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925*, held at the National Academy of Design in New York in 2000, is a valuable resource which focuses on the historical evolution of criteria for art criticism in America.<sup>64</sup> In particular, the essays by Margaret C. Conrads: "'In the Midst of an Era of Revolution': The New York Art Press and the Annual Exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in the 1870s," and Trudie A. Grace: "The National Academy of Design and the Society of American Artists: Rivals Viewed by Critics, 1878-1906," were useful in providing a platform for the discussion on the critical responses to the Society of American Artists in the first chapter of this thesis. Information on individual critics working in the 1870s is included in the appendix to Margaret C. Conrads's, *Winslow Homer and the Critics: Forging a National Art in the 1870s* (2001), which provides an interesting example of a monograph study which suggests that contemporary criticism can be used to provide renewed interpretations of complex artworks. Karen L. Georgi has written more recently on three key figures of Gilded Age art criticism: William J. Stillman, James Jackson Jarves and Clarence Cook, in *Critical Shift: Rereading Jarves, Cook, Stillman, and the Narratives of Nineteenth-Century American Art* (2013). Stillman and Cook both wrote for *Scribner's Monthly/Century Magazine*, and Cook's influence on events and the early opinions of Richard Watson Gilder is discussed in the first and third chapters of this thesis. Georgi attempts to bring a more sophisticated scholarly reading to the art history and criticism of these authors by employing concepts of historical

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<sup>63</sup> Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America, 1840-1900* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967). Linda Ferber, William H. Gerdts, Kathleen A. Foster, Susan P. Casteras, *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1985).

<sup>64</sup> David B. Dearing, ed., and The National Academy of Design, *Rave Reviews: American Art and Its Critics, 1826-1925* (New York: National Academy of Design Distributed by University Press of New England, 2000).

and narrative theory borrowed from Hayden White.<sup>65</sup> Georgi's identification of modernist "narrative desires" which were supported by selective interpretations of Gilded Age art writing to further claims of American exceptionalism is a valuable contribution to the historiography on American art criticism which opens the way for fresh approaches to the material. Georgi provides proof of her thesis by offering a re-reading of the publications of her three subjects which stresses their continuities and agreements rather than the discord identified by earlier studies. Georgi is successful in highlighting the synthetic nature of written history but her text fails to establish a detailed art historical context for her chosen case studies. Her book is therefore of greatest interest to scholars who employ linguistic or theoretical approaches to the history of American art criticism.

Scholarship which focuses on popular American magazines during the Gilded Age is less well represented. Matthew Schneiroy's *The Dream of a New Social Order: Popular Magazines in America, 1893-1914* (1994), Ellery Sedgwick's *A History of the Atlantic Monthly, 1857-1909: Yankee Humanism at High Tide and Ebb* (1994) and Mark J. Noonan's *Reading The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine: American Literature and Culture, 1870-1893* (2010), are the book-length examples, but none of them deal with the connections to American art in a meaningful manner.

Sources which provide information on the histories of Richard Watson Gilder and his magazine are the *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, published in 1916 and edited by his daughter, Rosamond Gilder, Herbert F. Smith's biography of Gilder published in 1970 and Arthur John's 1981 study *The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner's Monthly, and Century Magazine, 1870-1909*. The edited collection of Gilder's letters is interspersed with Rosamond Gilder's reminiscences of her father and is organized into chapters which emphasize Gilder's political and social activism in the later decades of his life. Still, this book provides useful factual information and photographs

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<sup>65</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

relating to Gilder's early childhood, his marriage to Helena de Kay and his time working under Dr. Holland at *Scribner's Monthly* in the 1870s. Herbert S. Smith's biography is useful to the art historian for its factual content but little else. It focuses upon Gilder as a poet and man of letters rather than his connections to the American art world. The most useful of the above listed sources is Arthur John's study of the magazine. Based upon solid research methods and benefiting from the input of Gilder's children, Rosamond Gilder and Rodman Gilder, it offers a straightforward history, based around various themes of Gilder's life with two chapters which specifically address illustration and Gilder's interest in visual art. However, John was not writing as an art historian and his prose on the art of the magazine and Richard Watson Gilder's aesthetic tastes is informative rather than inciteful. Further information on the lives of Richard and Helena de Kay Gilder may be taken from studies written about their close friends and colleagues. Most prominent amongst these would be the autobiographies written by Gilder's deputy editor Robert Underwood Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays* (1923), and Helena de Kay's close friend, Mary Hallock Foote, *A Victorian Gentlewoman in the Far West The Reminiscences of Mary Hallock Foote* (1972). More recently published sources include Annette Dunlap's *Frank: The Story of Frances Folsom Cleveland, America's Youngest First Lady*, (2009), Judith K. Major's *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic in the Gilded Age* (2013), and Mary Anne Goley's *John White Alexander: An American Artist in the Gilded Age* (2018).

The scholarship which is closest to my own in discussing the connections between Richard Watson Gilder, *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* and American art is represented by two theses submitted in 2012: Jayme Yahr's "The Art of *The Century*: Richard Watson Gilder, the Gilder Circle, and the Rise of American Modernism (University of Washington, 2012) and Page Knox's "*Scribner's Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World (Columbia University, 2012). Both of these theses have claimed to be the first serious academic writings on the subject. I have benefitted from their efforts, absorbing

their arguments and consulting their bibliographies in shaping this thesis. I view my own contribution as part of a collaborative enterprise which builds upon the primary sources referred to by these scholars and brings this important material to the attention of American art history by showing its rich potential for pluralistic interpretations.

Yahr has taken a complex, multi-faceted approach which seeks to analyze the reciprocal contributions of Gilder and his magazine to “The Gilder Circle”, which she defines as a group of American artists who frequented the weekly social meetings normally held at Gilder’s home on Friday evenings. The thesis identifies the social relationships between various well-known artists such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Albert Pinkham Ryder and Cecelia Beaux which existed in part due to their mutual connections with Gilder and *Scribner’s Monthly/ Century Magazine*. Yahr argues that these social connections, previously overlooked or downplayed in the respective scholarship for each artist, had significant impacts on changes in artistic style towards modernism, which Yahr defines as a movement toward abstraction and experimentation that was to a significant degree initiated by “literal and figurative” changes to the American landscape. Yahr layers her argument by combining themes of gender and conceptions of Victorian masculinity as they pertained to Gilder and his Circle with landscape, and modernism in both an artistic and broader cultural sense. Gilder is identified as a “continuous modern thinking” figure with a “frontier-orientated” and nationalistic mindset, who refutes conventional analyses of the elite Gilded Age society as “genteel” and “prudish”. Yahr cites evidence for Gilder’s prescient modernity by identifying his equal treatment of the genders at the Friday soirées, his promotion of female artists through his magazine, his embrace of new half-tone printing technologies in the late 1890s and his editorial and personal support for new “art, writing and social causes”. By championing the modern, Gilder challenged the American public’s cultural horizons, and in so doing encouraged artists to be more stylistically radical. This “subtle radicalism”, according to Yahr, was the precursor to twentieth-century modernism, and the Gilder Circle

foreshadowed the social and artistic group of modernist Ashcan artists that came after them in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Yahr presents a thought-provoking analysis which is dedicated to the identification of modernist traits within the material. Her thesis highlights the complex and multi-faceted nature of a figure like Gilder whose career spanned a considerable period, as well as the complicated task of establishing social and professional connections between different agents acting in the art world. Her perspective pre-supposes that the development of twentieth-century modernism, understood as a movement towards stylistic abstraction, was inevitable. Her equation of Gilder's "America First" nationalism with support for artistic modernism diminishes its cosmopolitanism and the trans-national exchanges (both trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific), which are surely defining features of its history.<sup>66</sup> Yahr states that she hopes her thesis acts as a point of departure for identifying the interconnectedness of artists around figures like Gilder and illustrated magazines more broadly, and I wish to submit my own research as a contribution in this regard. Her complex synthesis of intellectual themes provides scholars with an interesting take which sparks intra and inter-disciplinary dialogues with recent scholarship. Her structure of an essay on Gilder and the magazine followed by six short chapters on the careers of artists who were part of "The Gilder Circle" helps to open up her thesis to pluralistic academic interests, but at the expense of a strong sense of historical development as the subjects of analysis move backwards and forwards in time. I hope that my own thesis goes some way to establishing a narrative arc to the history of both Gilder and the magazine as a cultural force.

Page Knox's doctoral thesis takes a more restricted view of the material, focusing upon the period 1870 to 1881, when *Scribner's Monthly*

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<sup>66</sup> A majority of the eleven artistic figures that Yahr focuses on during the course of her chapters were trained by European masters, for the most part whilst the artists lived and worked in Europe for substantial periods during their artistically formative years, and some of those that did not benefit from these advantages, like Stanford White and Maria Oakey Dewing, still worked in styles that were heavily influenced by European aesthetics.

became *Century Magazine*. Her approach and themes are closer to my own. Knox contextualizes the magazine in terms of the developing phenomena of mass-visual culture with an emphasis on the technological and artistic evolution of magazine illustration, the function of images in popular magazines and their relationship with text. Knox charts these movements in parallel with broader changes in artistic tastes from wide frontier landscapes to more intimate and expressive subjects which reflected international, academic styles. Knox's thesis discusses themes in relation to *Scribner's Monthly* which I pick up in a longer history presented in my second chapter. She perceptively identifies the appearance of new forms of art criticism and literature with improvements in reproductive engraving and the rise of Gilder as a force in the magazine's management. Knox is also interested in the interconnectedness of relationships between the publishing industry and American art, responding directly to Jo Anne Mancini's call for scholarship which identifies the creative exchanges that took place in the Gilded-Age American art world between editors, publishers, critics, authors, artists and the public, in order to present fresh explanations of the substantial aesthetic changes that took place c. 1890-1910.<sup>67</sup>

My thesis builds upon some of the themes of Knox's analysis and offers new perspectives on others. Knox explains how the improvements in both technology and content enabled Gilder to promote art more generally to the American public as a valuable pursuit worthy of their attention. Knox's analysis of Gilder's aims identifies a desire to "convey the notion of the spiritual in art to a society searching for alternative religious experiences."<sup>68</sup> She illustrates this point with reference to Gilder's editorials and the magazine's publishing of illustrated articles offering visual experiences of art from Catholic and non-Western religious cultures. According to Knox, these images served to sanction "alternative aesthetic experience to achieve transcendence" for a middle class that was

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<sup>67</sup> Jo Anne Mancini, *Pre Modernism: Art-World Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Page Knox, "*Scribner's Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), 7-8.



in search of insulation from external threats of economic and societal disruption, and internal moral corruption initiated by materialism. This analysis is original and compliments my own arguments in my second and third chapters relating to Gilder's guiding sense of "critical patriotism" and the significance of Matthew Arnold in enabling him to reconcile his elite and cosmopolitan artistic tastes with his social and political concerns. I build upon Knox's analysis by drawing connection between Gilder's support for the spiritual benefits of art to society as an aspect of civic reform, and the philosophy of the Aesthetic Movement which came to prominence in America during the late 1870s and 1880s.

This thesis makes important interventions into the current scholarship on Gilder and the magazine's connections to American art which have repercussions for American art history more broadly. This project began with an intentionally undirected approach to the material encountered in the pages of the magazine over a forty-five-year period. During this initial research it became clear that the magazine interfaced with American art in numerous ways, above and beyond the most obvious examples of illustration and art-criticism. This thesis presents a range of material to reflect this, considering the following topics: the magazine's front cover, its patronage of engravers, travel writing, art historical writing and educational material, editorials, political activism, competitions and direct engagement with the art market, in addition to illustration and art criticism. It is important to consider magazines holistically as objects of material culture that support analysis from a wide variety of perspectives due to their synthetic nature.

This thesis also offers some points of resistance to interpretations of Richard Watson Gilder as a culturally proto-modernist man, as seen through his relationships with artists and the content of his magazine. I argue that there is a need for nuance in distinguishing between progressive and modernist tendencies. Gilder was in many respects progressive, particularly (and unsurprisingly) in his earlier years, and he did support artists and architects who laid foundations for what would eventually become American modernism. However, it is too simplistic to

see him as one thing or another. His progressiveness was allied to his patriotism, but on cultural matters he maintained a personally strictly stratified view of cultural hierarchy and the duty of a cultural elite (which he and his magazine was clearly part) to direct the artistic tastes of an ignorant public. My thesis argues that direct connections should be drawn between his civic-minded patriotism and philanthropy, and his ideas on art; that they come from the same well of inspiration, and that this helps to explain the persistence of artistic content of various types throughout his editorship of one of America's most popular and influential literary monthly magazines.

This thesis takes a focused study of the magazine well beyond 1881 (the point at which Knox's thesis concludes). By structuring the material within a narrative arc which broadly conforms to the historical chronology, I open up the possibility for nuanced discussion on the attitudes of the magazine and Gilder, and importantly acknowledge that these developed and changed over time. In considering the achievements and relationships of an intricate enterprise such as a magazine, or indeed its editor, it is inevitable that complex circumstances and contradictions come to light. By endeavoring to present material from over thirty-five years of a busy and distinguished career, my argument seeks to embrace the reality of such contradictions and treat them as important historical insight which adds complexity to our understanding.

### **Precis of the thesis**

The first chapter of this thesis focuses upon the period c. 1875-1881, describing the historical setting of rising frustrations amongst certain critics and artists at the perceived conservatism of the National Academy of Design in New York. The chapter describes the establishment of the Society of American Artists (SAA) in Richard Watson Gilder's home in 1877. Gilder was connected to the SAA through his wife, Helena de Kay Gilder, who is introduced as a significant influence on Gilder's artistic tastes, and the means through which he became personally connected with important New York artists such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens and John La Farge. These figures had a lasting impact on Gilder's life and by

extension on the outlook of the magazine he edited. The chapter seeks to contextualize Gilder and his magazine within the broader cultural economy of New York in the 1870s, using tools for interpretation taken from Pierre Bourdieu's influential conception of cultural capital. This chapter also considers the historical significance of the 1877 secession. Viewed in historical perspective it becomes clear that this event was not led by genuine revolutionaries. Nevertheless, their self-perception as an American avant-garde in the mold of European artists, particularly those based in Paris, was a significant factor which led to the construction of parallel institutions and networks outside of the academy system, expanding the opportunities and audience for American art substantially. Paris as a model for the modern, global city gained currency in New York amongst the artistic circles in which Gilder moved and exerted considerable influence on the aesthetic tastes of the New York cultural elite who wished to see American culture, including visual art, be taken seriously on the global stage. Finally, this chapter also considers *Scribner's Monthly's* coverage of the secession within the context of contemporary responses from leading critics in other periodicals and the New York press, and its direct involvement in the promotion of the SAA's cause, most notably through the publishing of William Crary Brownell's important essay, "The Younger Painters of America." The chapter seeks to show that the magazine's increased interest in art and its developing sense of artistic taste coincided with the rise in influence of Richard Watson Gilder.

The second chapter takes a thematic view of the material concerning the visual arts that was published by the magazine with Richard Watson Gilder as editor and suggests that an understanding of Gilder's broader philosophical outlook informed the choices he made with regards to arts coverage in his magazine. Gilder, who was renowned for his selfless involvement with projects for civic improvement and pleas against political corruption, adopted the perspective of a "critical patriot," offering constructive criticism and guidance. He was committed to the American democratic experiment but keen that the nation grow and learn

from the best that Western Civilization had achieved elsewhere. The chapter looks at the ways in which the magazine attempted to foster art feeling amongst the general populace at various levels of society and took its responsibilities seriously in directing national tastes and patronizing new generations of artists. It considers the ways in which Gilder oversaw changes to the magazine's appearance and how the work of the illustration department was one of its most important and defining features. It then explains how the magazine was able to use its preeminence in reproductive engraving, particularly the work of Timothy Cole, to publish educational articles and series on the history of Western art. The chapter closes with a discussion of the editors' use of their platform in a popular magazine to exert pressure in the campaigns against the art tariff, a taxation levied against the importation of artworks to America. Trans-Atlantic cultural exchange was not antithetical to the development of a national art in the eyes of Gilder, a view which provides interesting nuance to our understanding of his patriotism.

The third chapter builds directly upon the foundations outlined above and looks in detail at Gilder's personal relationships with artists and critics, with a view to how these influenced the magazine. It discusses the American Aesthetic movement as an independent offshoot of European aestheticism and examines the ways in which it reflected Gilder's tastes and broader philosophical convictions, as well as Gilder's early association with the influential critic Clarence Cook. This chapter argues that Gilder was able to ameliorate his personal taste for the art of the Aesthetic movement with his idealistic and patriotic values through an understanding of the popular writings on matters of culture by Matthew Arnold, whom Gilder knew personally. Arnold's best-known work, *Culture and Anarchy* (1869) had suggested that the political and social health of the nation was directly impacted by society's appreciation or otherwise of culture. This view was reflected in Gilder's own interest in

promoting art as a fundamental part of American life.<sup>69</sup> The chapter then contextualizes the artist John La Farge as an important figure of the American Aesthetic movement, whom Gilder came to know closely through his marriage. La Farge was an artist that Gilder promoted and provided opportunities to through the magazine. Discussion of the archival correspondence between the two provides an interesting window into the nature of their relationship and the ways in which Gilder involved himself in the creation of content for the magazine, particularly content on artists or subjects with which he was personally connected. The final part of the chapter offers a brief discussion of another of Gilder's closest friends who had a significant impact on his attitudes towards art, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. Van Rensselaer was an art critic and expert on architecture and landscape gardening. She wrote numerous articles for *Century Magazine* and was a pioneering figure in the emergence of a professional art criticism in the late nineteenth century. She was also a close family friend to the Gilders and was part of the artistic colony that they helped to establish in Marion, Massachusetts.

The final chapter returns to a focused view of a significant event in the history of American art: the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago. The chapter concentrates on the art and architecture at the Exposition and argues that the aesthetics of the fair represented the ascendancy of Gilder and *Century Magazine's* cultural vision. It was a moment of personal triumph for Gilder. Many of the artists that he had supported since the 1870s were appointed to important positions in the fair's administration and the display of American art prominently exhibited the works of artists that he and the magazine had promoted. The World's Fair provided evidence that American art was a genuine competitor to many European nations, possibly even France, and that *Century Magazine's* cultural perspective was no longer avant-garde but had in fact become the establishment view. The magazine's coverage of

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<sup>69</sup> Gilder's appreciation of Arnold also helps explain why William Crary Brownell, a less well known figure in the history of American art, became associated with *Scribner's Monthly*.

the fair emphasized its utility as an aesthetic lesson for American society to build upon in the future in order to create a society as naturally artistic as the French. However, this chapter also identifies points at which the connection between the magazine's lofty aesthetic vision and democratic ideals broke down. It becomes clear that in matters of art the magazine was no longer speaking to an idealistic conception of a unified American society, but rather to a more niche, East-Coast, cultured, cosmopolitan elite, itself threatened in its self-perception as the guardians of American culture by the expansion of the country and cities such as Chicago, and significant changes to the social, ethnic and class constituencies of the nation. This occurs at the point at which *Century Magazine* was itself experiencing significant challenges to its status as America's most popular monthly magazine from *Munsey's Magazine*, which became a monthly periodical in 1891. *Munsey's*, and slightly later *McClure's*, which was established in 1893, were aggressive arrivals in the magazine industry, undercutting on price and embracing new mechanical half-tone processes for the reproduction of images and streamlined manufacturing methods. They reflected the changing American capitalist business culture which led into the progressive era. These magazines attempted to speak directly to the American every-man and every-woman and took up social causes by publishing so called muck-raking journalism by the end of the 1890s. Their social reform agenda was actually shared by Gilder, who had been a consistent voice and servant of civic reform throughout his time as editor of *Century Magazine*. But Gilder's tempered voice, promoting high culture's elevating effects to society was being undermined by new art that sought to challenge and critique the bourgeois standards exemplified by the World's Columbian Exposition and *Century Magazine*.

The historical narrative concludes with an epilogue discussing the magazine's response to the Armory Show of 1913. This event was a significant moment in the history of American art, reminiscent in many ways of the SAA's secession in 1877. The contrast in the magazine's coverage of the two events serves to illustrate its decline in cultural

relevancy. Gilder was at the center of the New York art world when the SAA was formed in the studio to his home in 1877, and had used his magazine to enthusiastically promote the cause for the new art that he believed in. He had encouraged the rise of the artists that he admired to a point of cultural dominance by 1893. Yet by 1913 *Century Magazine* found itself on the cultural fringes, as the Aesthetic movement perspective was being replaced with new, modernist art.

1. The Society of American Artists, *Century Magazine* and the last years of *Scribner's Monthly* (c. 1875-1881)

This chapter begins by establishing the art historical context of New York in the 1870s when *Scribner's Monthly* and Richard Watson Gilder were building their cultural status. In 1877 a group of artists and critics protested against their treatment at the annual exhibition of the National Academy of Design in New York and established a rival organization called the Society of American Artists (SAA). This event has been viewed as a significant point on the timeline of American art, a watershed marking the replacement of a previously eminent generation of landscape artists who would become referred to as the "Hudson River School" by a new generation equipped with styles and subjects influenced by contemporary European art. Whilst this moment was undoubtedly significant, the long-term success of the SAA was never preordained. I focus on the events surrounding the establishment of the SAA and their apparent schism with the Academy because *Scribner's Monthly's* coverage of art during this period was exceptional amongst the publications of its class in its clear support for the "younger men" as they came to be known. Drawing upon the articles published in *Scribner's Monthly* between 1875 and 1881, in addition to archival materials which reveal the strength of the connections between the magazine and the SAA, it is clear that the magazine's then Managing Editor, Richard Watson Gilder, played a significant role in promoting the efforts and aims of the SAA, and that for a time their cultural ambitions were interdependent. Gilder was personally invested in the success of the SAA through his marriage to Helena de Kay, but *Scribner's Monthly*, a patriotic, literary illustrated magazine edited by the conservative Dr. Holland, was not a natural fit as a mouthpiece for a youthful New York "avant-garde". The magazine's explicit and implicit support for this new generation therefore provides evidence of Gilder's ascendancy within the management of the magazine and his sense of personal cultural mission. The early history of the SAA written by Saul Zalesch supports my own understanding of the key events.<sup>70</sup> This chapter extends Zalesch's

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<sup>70</sup> Saul Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict in the New York Art World," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn 1994): 103-120.



interpretation of the schism as a clash of social classes competing for cultural and economic power in the art world beyond the artists involved, to include their supporters in the press and periodicals, most significantly Gilder and *Scribner's Monthly*. Employing sociological concepts from Pierre Bourdieu, this chapter contextualizes Gilder as an individual and the magazine within the “cultural field” of New York in the 1870s, and explains why the interests of Gilder, *Scribner's Monthly* and the artists of the SAA aligned during this period. As Zalesch acknowledges, the early SAA exhibitions were disappointing in terms of cultural influence and sales. It is not therefore apparent why their European-influenced aesthetic tastes should have succeeded to the extent which they did. This chapter demonstrates that detailed knowledge of the period's media, newspapers and magazines, and the persons that worked in them is key to understanding how interpretations of history are formed.

### **The Fractures in American Art**

Histories of the schism which occurred between the National Academy of Design and the group of younger artists that *Scribner's Monthly* referred to by Gilder as “the movement,” have sometimes had a tendency to focus on the immediate events around the founding of the SAA, without contextualizing these within a longer history of disaffection with the Academy. Complaints that it was aesthetically backward, provincial and stifling to younger artists had been gaining momentum in the New York press since the end of the Civil War.<sup>71</sup> The disaster of the American art exhibition at the 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris had been a significant moment for many critics, who took it as proof of the need for dramatic changes in order to avoid repeat embarrassment as the nation approached its centenary celebrations in 1876.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Margaret C. Conrads, ““In the Midst of an Era of Revolution”: The New York Art Press and the Annual Exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in the 1870s,” in *Rave Reviews: American Art and its Critics, 1826 – 1925*, ed. David Dearing (London: University Press of New England, 2000), 93-107.

<sup>72</sup> Carol Troyen, “Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris,” *American Art Journal* 116, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 2-29.

A survey of art criticism in the New York newspapers from the late 1860s onwards reveals that dramatic change was heralded on numerous occasions before the Academy exhibition of 1877 and the subsequent secession of the SAA. It becomes apparent that many critics had been hoping or even agitating for changes within American art's administration for some time. Ten of the daily New York newspapers contained regular art departments and three major New York newspapers had a permanent position for a full-time art-critic: *The Post*, the *New York Tribune* and *The World*.<sup>73</sup> These were joined by the *New York Times* in 1877. The art critics at these papers were George William Sheldon (*The Post*), Clarence Cook (*The Tribune*), William Crary Brownell (*The World*), and Charles de Kay (*The Times*), all of whom had direct personal connections with artists who would form the SAA, and in the case of Cook, Brownell and de Kay, also very close connections to *Scribner's Monthly*. It is not a coincidence that young artists in New York and writers working in newly established professions for newspapers and magazines came from similar backgrounds in terms of social class, and shared aesthetic tastes and ambitions to improve their relative standing within a cultural hierarchy.<sup>74</sup>

Clarence Cook's lively criticisms of the National Academy of Design's annual exhibitions provide evidence of the consistent frustrations that critics held with the perceived stagnation of American art.<sup>75</sup> The landscape artists that rose to prominence in the 1850s and

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America had sent eighty-two of its best paintings by the likes of Frederic E. Church, Sanford R. Gifford, Eastman Johnson, Albert Bierstadt and Winslow Homer, and had only been awarded a single silver medal, for Church's *Niagara* (1857).

<sup>73</sup> These were: *Commercial Advertiser*, *Evening Express*, *Evening Mail*, *Evening Post*, *Evening Telegram*, *New York Tribune*, *New York Herald*, *New York Times*, *New York World*, and *New York Sun*. Conrads, "In the Midst," 93.

<sup>74</sup> Gilder's position should be considered similarly. In the 1870s he was still a young man with aspirations of becoming a successful poet, working in a new enterprise that was competing to cut its own furrow within a publishing industry that had been populated by figures like George William Curtis at *Harper's Monthly/Weekly* and Dr. Holland at *Scribner's Monthly*: genteel men of letters for whom work for magazines and newspapers was taken up in addition to or because of previous careers. Gilder was a member of a generation for whom the role of a professional editor working for a monthly magazine was a viable career.

<sup>75</sup> Clarence Chatham Cook (1828-1900) was a leading figure who can be credited with advancing the role of the art critic in America from the genteel tradition of the 1850s to

1860s, later known as the “Hudson River School,” had progressed to a hegemonic position in the Academy by the 1860s, and it was feared that this was having a stifling effect on new blood with fresh ideas. Cook’s review of the 1868 Academy exhibition proclaimed hopefully that, “The Exhibitions of the last five years have given evidence that the Fine Arts in this country are in a state of revolution.”<sup>76</sup> Cook was not alone in announcing significant change from 1868 onwards. The year 1868 was a sensitive and particularly uncertain time in American history. Following the shocks of the Civil War, the nation had entered into its period of reconstruction, a time of introspection which encouraged honest evaluation of all aspects of the national character, cultural as well as political.

The 1867 Exposition Universelle in Paris was a chastening experience for artists and critics who came into direct, comparative contact with contemporary European art.<sup>77</sup> In 1868 the perennial “Hudson River School” favorites of the Academy, artists such as Thomas Rossiter, Asher B. Durand, Daniel Huntington, Thomas Hicks and John Kensett, received noticeably less attention in the appraisals of that year’s exhibition than some of the “younger artists” who had started to return works which boldly bore the stamp of their training in European ateliers. Some critics reasoned that this shift in emphasis was due to a greater general understanding and appreciation of European art in America.<sup>78</sup> Some reasoned that the changes were symptomatic of a straightforward succession from one generation to another with new artists bringing fresh ideas.<sup>79</sup> The pain and destruction of the Civil War is another probable catalyst for changes in artistic tastes. The nationalistic landscapes of the

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a more acerbic, opinionated and entertaining form of criticism which grew rapidly in the late 1860s and 1870s.

<sup>76</sup> Clarence Cook, “The National Academy of Design. Forty-Third Annual Exhibition,” *New York Tribune*, May 4, 1868, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Carol Troyen, “Innocents Abroad: American Painters at the 1867 Exposition Universelle, Paris,” *American Art Journal* 16, no. 4 (Autumn 1984): 2-29.

<sup>78</sup> Clarence Cook, “The National Academy of Design. Forty-Third Annual Exhibition,” *New York Tribune*, May 4, 1868, 2.

<sup>79</sup> “Art in New York. Past and Present,” *New York World*, January 2, 1868, 4.

“Hudson River School” had provided both image and symbol for an American progress which no longer seemed pertinent.<sup>80</sup> Sarah Burns has also posited that changes to society initiated by urbanization created an appetite for new subjects and styles which reflected contemporary human experiences.<sup>81</sup>

The critics of the 1868 exhibition generally agreed that it was time to look to the “younger artists” to revive the visual arts in America, but there was no consensus on who these new artists were or what they stood for. The *New York Mail* dismissed the older generation tersely:

[Frederic] Church and [Albert] Bierstadt and their fellow artists have done all for American art that they will do. Their genius has been felt [...] As to whether they die to-day or to-morrow, American art, as a profession has little interest. [...] It is to younger men, younger in artistic reputation, we mean, to whom we must look for future development and progress.<sup>82</sup>

Some of the artists mentioned amongst the “younger men” in 1868 were Samuel Colman, Aaron Draper Shattuck, Jervis McEntee, George Inness and Eastman Johnson. It is difficult to find explicit connections between these artists other than that they demonstrated openness to European style and technique in their work of the 1860s, or novel subjects, as was the case with Eastman Johnson. However, many of the artists should not really have been described as young in terms of years or reputation in 1868 (all the artists listed were born in the 1820s or early 1830s), and many had close connections with the establishment at the Academy.

The critics were impatient for change, and prone to celebrate false dawns.<sup>83</sup> The selections of the Academy in the early 1870s did not deliver

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<sup>80</sup> 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*, Tim Barringer and Andrew Wilton (London: University Tate Publishing, 2002), 38-65. Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., “School of War,” in *Winslow Homer*, Nicolai Cikovsky Jr., Franklin Kelly, Judith Walsh, and Charles Brock (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1995), 72.

<sup>81</sup> Sarah Burns, *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth Century American Art and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 6.

<sup>82</sup> “The National Academy. The Reception,” *New York Mail*, April 15, 1868, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Reviews of the annual with titles such as “The New Departure at the National Academy” (*New York Evening Mail*, April 9, 1874) were common through the mid-1870s.

the sweeping developments which had been anticipated by many. The Academy had to compete with private exhibitions, sales exhibitions and public displays of private collections, which encouraged them to lean upon established artists who had a greater chance of selling for good prices.<sup>84</sup> These newer events brought about further contact with contemporary European art, which only made the Academy's exhibitions appear all the more banal. The critics' frustration at the perceived lack of progress led to increasingly bitter criticism of the Academy. In the critics' view, American art's progress was being sacrificed by the Academy's conservative selection practices which were being maintained for the benefit of its members.

Having received some positive critical attention for its 1874 annual, the Academy was then further undermined in 1875. This was the Academy's fiftieth anniversary, an event which encouraged assessments

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<sup>84</sup> Discussing the Academy exhibition of 1872, Margaret C. Conrads has noted that in New York at the same time was an exhibition of European pictures in support of victims of the Great Chicago Fire, a sale of works owned by LeGrand Lockwood, patron to renowned landscape artists such as Bierstadt, Church, Durand and William Bradford, a private sale of European and American paintings from the Vanderlip Collection at the Somerville Art Gallery, as well as other sales by important dealers such as Samuel P. Avery (collection of paintings by foreign artists), John Snedecor and Geo A. Leavitt and Co. Conrads, "In the Midst," 95. A survey of the exhibition catalogues and lists of sales for this period from the American Libraries collection available through the Internet Archive gives a sense of the intense competition which had arisen in the New York art market. From mid-April to mid-May a well-heeled visitor to New York in 1872 could have seen (and purchased) thousands of works of art from Europe and America in all mediums. Conrads also notes that important landscape artists who were members of the academy such as Church, Bierstadt, William and James Hart, Samuel Colman and George Inness did not submit new work to the academy exhibition in 1872, preferring other opportunities for sales. The academy was therefore feeling squeezed by competition, and the sales from their annual exhibition were an important revenue stream which was under threat. For further discussion of the history of the art market in New York during the Gilded Age please see, John Ott, "How New York Stole the Art Market: Blockbuster Auctions and Bourgeois Identity in Gilded Age America," *Winterthur Portfolio* 42, no. 2–3 (2008): 133–58; Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort and Jeanne K. Welcher, "Some Views of Art Buying in New York in the 1870s and 1880s," *Oxford Art Journal* 5, no. 1 (Sept. 1982): 48–55; Sven Beckert, "Institution-Building and Class Formation: How the Nineteenth-Century Bourgeoisie Organized," in *The American Bourgeoisie: Distinction and Identity in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Sven Beckert and Julia Rosenbaum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 103–17; Madeleine Fidell-Beaufort, "Art Collecting in the United States after the Civil War: Civic Pride, Competition, and Personal Gains," in *Artwork through the Market: The Past and the Present*, ed. Jan Bakos (Bratislava: VEDA, 2004), 125–36; Leanne Zalewski, "Creating Cultural and Commercial Value in Late Nineteenth-Century New York Art Catalogues," in *Art Crossing Borders: The Internationalisation of the Art Market in the Age of Nation States, 1750-1914*, eds. Jan Dirk Baetens and Dries Lyna (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 99-126.

of its achievements and failings and a year which attracted mixed reviews for its annual exhibition.<sup>85</sup> A controversial new rule which stopped the inclusion of any previously displayed work was criticized when many of the Academy's most established artists decided to not submit their best to the exhibition.<sup>86</sup> The rule was designed to provide vitality to the annuals and help it compete with other art exhibitions in the city. However, Clarence Cook provided evidence that the rule was not being applied evenly by listing works at the exhibition which had previously been exhibited elsewhere by well-established academicians.<sup>87</sup> The Academy was being presented as compromised by mismanagement and corruption, in need of the revolution which Cook had promised. The wide-spread critical praise for the young, Munich-trained, artists such as William Merritt Chase and Frank Duveneck at the Academy show of 1875 signaled that genuine change was occurring.<sup>88</sup> The events surrounding the 1875 Academy exhibition were foundational to the eventual schism caused by the SAA in 1877.

### **The Society of American Artists 1875-78**

The organizational beginnings of the SAA can be traced to the establishment of the Art Students League in 1875. The National Academy of Design was in financial difficulty which caused the temporary curtailment of its teaching functions. The students reacted by forming their own organization to support and instruct professional artists. The

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<sup>85</sup> Conrads, "In the midst," 96. Positive reviews are found in "National Academy of Design. Opening of the Fiftieth Annual Exhibition," *New York Evening Post*, April 7, 1875; "The Academy Exhibition," *New York Daily Graphic*, April 10, 1875; Earl Shinn, "Fine Arts. Fiftieth Annual Exhibition of the Academy of Design. I," *Nation*, April 15, 1875, 264-65; "The National Academy of Design," *Art Journal*, May 1875, 155-58. The most generally negative review was published by the *New York Times*: "The Fine Arts Exhibition of the Academy of Design." *New York Times*, April 15, 1875.

<sup>86</sup> "Art Matters. Academy of Design-The Fiftieth Annual Exhibition," *New York Evening Express*, April 15, 1875; "Academy of Design. Opening of the Fiftieth Annual Exhibition," *New York Herald*, April 15, 1875; "The Fine Arts. The Exhibition at the Academy of Design. Second Notice," *New York Times*, April 17, 1875.

<sup>87</sup> Clarence Cook, "Fine Arts. The National Academy of Design-Fiftieth Annual Exhibition-Private View," *New York Tribune*, April 9, 1875; Clarence Cook, "The Academy and the Clubs," *New York Tribune*, April 10, 1875.

<sup>88</sup> Margaret C. Conrads, *Winslow Homer and the Critics: Forging a New National Art in the 1870s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 73.

education offered by the Academy in New York during the 1870s was already thought of as conservative and inferior due to the restricted opportunities for study from the live nude which was a cornerstone of art education in many of the finest European academies. Helena de Kay Gilder (1846-1916), the wife of Richard Watson Gilder, was one of the artists behind the establishment of the Art Students League. Her letters to her friend and fellow artist, Mary Hallock Foote, reveal the frustration that she encountered whilst studying at the National Academy of Design.

They have just refused me a second time for the life class [...] they have done just as little for me as they could, that is a fact, and done that little badly. Poor Mr. Wilmarth is good and means well but he is so cowed by the donkeys in power.<sup>89</sup>

The Art Students League was a youthful innovation which was led by many of the cosmopolitan artists who later became important figures in the SAA such as Kenyon Cox, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, Walter Shirlaw, Julian Alden Weir and William Merritt Chase. The Academy's failure to educate the next generation of American artists, one of the key aspects of its mission, permanently damaged its reputation in the eyes of many. The establishment of the Art Students League provided evidence that American artists did not necessarily need the Academy, and that there were other, ostensibly more democratic or meritocratic ways of organizing American art institutions.

The Academy's authority was further undermined by the critical coverage of that year's annual exhibition which introduced a number of younger artists who had returned from Europe, such as William Merritt Chase, David Neal, Toby Rosenthal, Frederick Bridgman, Wyatt Eaton, Frank Duveneck and Edgar Ward. To many the exhibition provided effective illustration of a generational shift occurring in American art. Clarence Cook, the perennial chronicler of the Academy's demise,

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<sup>89</sup> Helena de Kay Gilder, letter to Mary Hallock Foote, undated 1875. Quoted in: Jennifer Martin Bienenstock, "The Career of Helena de Kay Gilder 1874-1886," (unpublished MS, Spring 1979), 13. Box 15, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

declared in his review for the *New York Tribune* that, “We are in the midst of an era of revolution.”<sup>90</sup>

Many of these “younger artists” were angered by their rejection or perceived poor treatment in the display of the Academy exhibition of 1875 and this was decisive for many critics in confirming that the Academy was incapable of reform or of supporting a more modern, outward looking, trans-Atlantic attitude. Helena de Kay Gilder’s journal entry for the Academy’s 1875 spring exhibition complained that her “Sunflower is on the floor in the corridor. They (the Academy) have determined that the “new school” shall have no chance.”<sup>91</sup>

Given the current status of painters like Chase and Duveneck within the canon of American art history, it is tempting to side with the “new school” in this dispute. However, Saul Zalesch has provided a compelling rationale for the Academy’s rejection of so many of the “younger artists” in 1875. This was ironically due to the unreasonable actions of John La Farge (1835-1910), who was a mentor and teacher to many of them. La Farge was an artist from a well-connected family who propagated an aristocratic, foppish artist persona.<sup>92</sup> Closely linked with William Morris Hunt throughout his career, La Farge had also studied under the French artist Thomas Couture and had established himself as a cornerstone of the cultural life of Newport, Rhode Island, where an influential group of writers and artists was based during the summer

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<sup>90</sup> Clarence Cook, “Fine Arts. The National Academy of Design. Fiftieth Annual Exhibition. Third Notice,” *New York Tribune*, April 29, 1875, 7.

<sup>91</sup> Journal of Helena de Kay and Richard Watson Gilder, 1874-78. Quoted in: Bienenstock, “The Career of,” 13.

<sup>92</sup> Zalesch, drawing upon the opinions of fellow academicians and Clarence Cook, described La Farge as “critical, cold, reserved verging on haughty and obviously arrogant.” Whilst Zalesch could be accused of presenting a biased picture to conform to his class-based interpretation of the conflict with the academy (La Farge was described as “a son of a refined, French planter from the West Indies, ... possessed a remarkable erudition”), other writers have remarked similarly that La Farge was unpopular with many persons in the art world and had a habit of falling out with those he worked with. Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 106-107. For an illuminating account of La Farge’s personality, his tendency to bear grudges and strained working friendships see James L. Yarnall, “Brilliant but Stormy Collaborations: Masterworks of the American Renaissance by John La Farge, Charles Follen McKim, and Stanford White,” *American Art Journal* 33, no. 1/2 (2002): 34–80.



months, including William and Henry James, Mary Temple, and Helen Jackson.

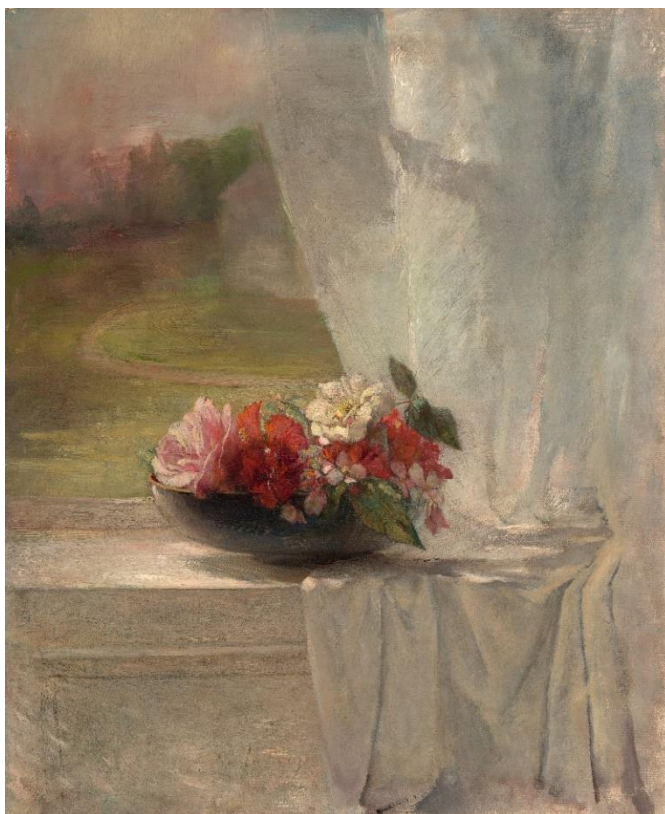


Figure 1.1. John La Farge, *Flowers on a Window Ledge*, c. 1861. Oil on canvas, 61 x 51 cm. The National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., Corcoran Collection.

The Academy had rejected La Farge's paintings for the 1874 exhibition and the artist had objected strongly. The Academy did not reject La Farge's works because they did not understand or care for his French influenced painterly style, (fig. 1.1). Rather, it was a decision born out of economic necessity, as the Academy was desperate for money. The Academy was therefore favoring works which had a higher chance of selling for good sums and La Farge's flower paintings and atmospheric landscapes did not appeal to the clientele that bought large, conventional landscapes at the Academy's shows.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "That year the academy faced financial ruin. It derived much of its revenues from the commissions it received upon sales from the annual spring exhibitions; sales had been disastrous during the early 1870s partly because American collectors increasingly favored French art and partly because academicians were increasingly selling their best new works privately to nouveau-riche collectors who refused to buy pictures previously exhibited in public. In 1874 the academy's outgoing president, John Quincy Adams Ward, sought to rouse academicians from their apathy toward the academy's well-being.

La Farge's insistence upon his entitlement as an academician to substantial space at the annual exhibition, in spite of its financial plight, led to the relegation and rejection of younger artists' works the following year. A protest exhibition was then organized by Helena de Kay Gilder at the offices of the decorating company, Cottier and Co., at 144 Fifth Avenue in April 1875 (a tellingly bourgeois venue for a protest exhibition, arranged through family connections). This event is largely forgotten in the biographies of those involved and was not well attended or covered in the press. It was mostly a collection of old works by William Morris Hunt and John La Farge accompanied by their pupils. This was not therefore an idealistic coup which was meant to topple the Academy, but really a practical solution being offered to artists who were at the start of their careers and wanted to display their works in a sympathetic setting.<sup>94</sup> However, this event was retrospectively significant in marking a further point in the separation of a new generation of artists away from the Academy in New York.

The critical reception of the National Academy's annual exhibition was muted in 1876 as the Centennial Exhibition at Fairmount Park in Philadelphia took center stage. This event was the first of its kind in America to command both national and international attention, with ten million visitors to the show (about a quarter of the population) during its six-month run.<sup>95</sup> The Centennial was arguably one of the most significant cultural markers in America's history, as it provided a national moment

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Ward persuaded academicians to implement several business reforms. Members voted to hire a full-time salesperson for the annual and also to exclude from the next annual works previously displayed in New York. The latter provision took direct aim at the growing practice of first exhibiting new paintings in New York's exclusive mens' clubs. In addition Ward wrote to all members stating that the academy was running a deficit and was in danger of dissolution unless they sent saleable works to the spring annual." Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict," 106-107.

<sup>94</sup> Jennifer Martin Bienenstock, "The Formation and Early Years of the Society of American Artists: 1877 -1884" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1983), 10-73. Saul Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict in the New York Art World," *Winterthur Portfolio* 29, no. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn 1994): 103-120.

<sup>95</sup> Kimberly Orcutt, "H. H. Moore's *Almeida* and the Politics of the Centennial Exhibition," *American Art* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 55.

of focus on cultural achievements after a volatile first century.<sup>96</sup> It was also an event which significantly enhanced the general public's standing in relation to the fine arts, particularly as the Centennial exhibition took place in a decade when public museums were being established in major cities including New York, Boston and Washington D.C.. Robert Underwood Johnson, Assistant Editor at *Scribner's Monthly*, was amongst the visitors who credited the 1876 Centennial with providing his "first bent toward the esthetic," claiming in his memoirs that "Progressive America may be said to date from that year, especially in interior decoration."<sup>97</sup>

The fine arts section was supposed to embody American art's development, progress and current standards, correcting some of the wrongs of Paris in 1867. However, the exhibition's organization was plagued by petty jealousies and political maneuvers, in part because of resentment that the Centennial was staged and organized in Philadelphia rather than New York. John Sartain, an experienced Philadelphian administrator and renowned engraver, was appointed chief of the art bureau, and set about constructing a canon which could offer a clear vision of an "American School". His task was made harder by the current turbulence around the National Academy in New York. He clashed regularly with Worthington Whittredge, the Academy president, on matters of selection and display. The centenary exhibition effectively restaged the conflict between competing conceptions of what American art could be and should become. The "Hudson River School" which dominated the National Academy of Design was well represented in numbers of works, but their placement in the Central Gallery West alongside the early American paintings by artists such as Copley and Morse was meant to imply that they were already part of American art history. The "new men" by contrast appeared in the more central Gallery

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<sup>96</sup> Kimberly Orcutt argues that the fine art exhibition at the Centennial was the most important event in the cultural history of the United States. Kimberly Orcutt, *Power & Posterity: American Art at Philadelphia's 1876 Centennial Exhibition* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2017).

<sup>97</sup> Robert Underwood Johnson, *Remembered Yesterdays* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1923), 589.

C of the Grand Salon. Sartain was a friend to some of the “new men” like Thomas Eakins and Harry Humphrey Moore, and was sympathetic to their aims to bring a more fashionable European accent to American art. Two of his children were connected with the modern cosmopolitan impetus in American art. His son William Sartain was an associate of Thomas Eakins who had worked in Paris, returning to America in 1875. Emily Sartain was a friend and colleague of Mary Cassatt with whom she had studied in Europe. However, association with European artistic trends did not guarantee favorable treatment, as demonstrated by the rejection of Moore’s orientalist tribute to his master Gérôme, *Almeh, A Dream of Alhambra* (destroyed in 1881).<sup>98</sup>

The generational animosities that were put aside for the centenary celebrations returned in 1877. The Academy had decided to display some of the “younger artists” works prominently, most notably works by William Merritt Chase and Frank Duveneck (figs. 1.2 and 1.3), which attracted much critical attention in the press. Some of the “rank and file” academicians were unhappy with this situation and so hastily called a meeting and enacted the “eight foot rule” for the following year, which was designed to guarantee them at least eight feet of space “on the line”, meaning the most advantageous position at eyeline. This rule was quickly overturned a month later at the Academy’s annual meeting by a two-thirds majority, but this attempted act of sabotage from certain members of the Academy’s establishment did lasting damage to its reputation.

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<sup>98</sup> Orcutt, “H. H. Moore's *Almeh*,” 50-73.



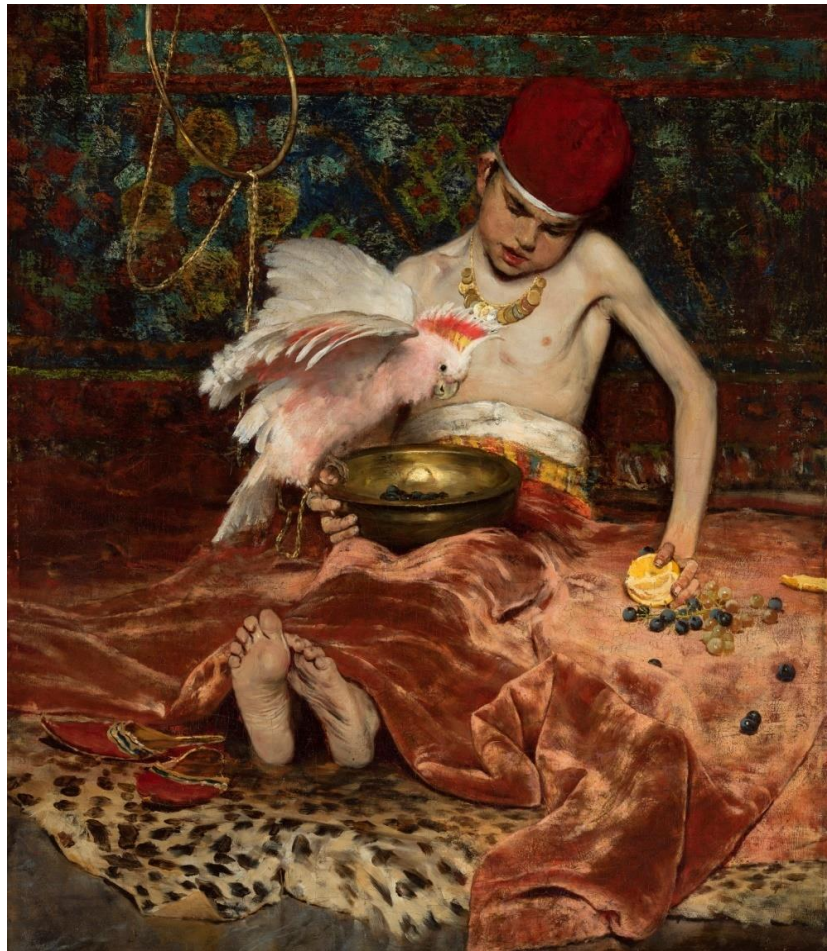


Figure 1.2. William Merritt Chase, *Unexpected Intrusion (The Turkish Page)*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 107 x 95 cm. Cincinnati Art Museum.



Figure 1.3. Frank Duveneck, *The Turkish Page*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 107 x 148 cm. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The final impetus to setting up an organization to rival the Academy appears to have been the rejection of one of Saint-Gaudens's "Roman sketches", a work in plaster of a "young girl lying on her face on a low couch dandling an infant in her arms."<sup>99</sup> Saint-Gaudens later acknowledged that it was understandable that the work had been rejected by the committee and Saul Zalesch has noted that sculpture generally received poor treatment at the Academy due to space restrictions.<sup>100</sup> Richard Watson Gilder however recalls Augustus Saint-Gaudens's "wrath" in a letter from 1907 to Homer Saint-Gaudens, the artist's son and editor.

the old Academicians were carrying things with a pretty high hand, so I spoke to a few of the younger men of our American "renaissance" about starting a new organization. When I mentioned it to your father he said that the time had not quite come. But one day, [...] he rang the bell at the iron gate at 103 East Fifteenth Street. [...] Your revered father was as mad as hops! He declared that they had just thrown out a piece of sculpture of his from the Academy exhibit, and that he was ready to go into a new movement. I told him to come around that very evening. We sent, in addition, for Walter Shirlaw and Wyatt Eaton, and the Society of American Artists was that night founded by Walter Shirlaw, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Wyatt Eaton, and Helena de Kay, your humble servant acting as secretary, though Wyatt Eaton was the nominal secretary. Clarence Cook, the critic, was present though not as a member.<sup>101</sup>

Saint-Gaudens's rejection, combined with the strife caused by the implementation of the eight-foot rule and the meanness of the academicians in approving new members that year brought the artists of the SAA together, but it is interesting to note that Richard Watson Gilder, no doubt encouraged by Helena de Kay Gilder, had himself been suggesting the "starting of a new organization" to his artist friends prior to Saint-Gaudens's rejection.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Homer Saint-Gaudens, *The Reminiscences of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (New York: The Century Co., 1913), 164.

<sup>100</sup> Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict," 110.

<sup>101</sup> Richard Watson Gilder and Rosamond Gilder (ed.), *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 81-82.

<sup>102</sup> Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict," 110 – 114.

The Society was set up on June 1, 1877 by Wyatt Eaton and Helena de Kay Gilder with fifteen initial members who included: Augustus Saint-Gaudens (vice-president), Walter Shirlaw (President of the Art Students League and first president of the Society), Olin S. Warner, Robert Swain Gifford, Frederick Dielman, Thomas Moran, Francis Lathrop, Homer Martin, Samuel Colman, John La Farge, Julian Alden Weir, William Sartain (son of John Sartain) and Louis Comfort Tiffany (treasurer). The inaugural meeting of the SAA took place in the “studio” at 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, the home address of Richard and Helena de Kay Gilder. Clarence Cook attended and was an unofficial member of the group, as did Richard Watson Gilder, who took the minutes for the group’s first meeting. The purpose of the Society was explicitly to offer an alternative rival institution to the Academy, with the long-term aim of forcing the Academy to change or decline into complete obscurity. A letter from Wyatt Eaton to Helena de Kay Gilder reveals the bitter animosity felt towards the Academy at the outset of the SAA.

I see the Academy as a great obstacle [sic] to art culture, growth & education. [...] it must die. [...] We can depend only upon men who have recently been to Europe who have breathed the larger artistic spirit, & have tasted the many advantages for the study of art abroad.<sup>103</sup>

This criticism was unnecessarily harsh towards the Academy, who had in truth shown openness to the art of younger artists, whilst remaining skeptical of its long-term value to America. The Academy was willing to display works by the new artists (to the detriment of relations with the existing membership), but it did not think that it should meekly step aside into the wake of artists with inferior sales records.

The members of the SAA were atypical examples of avant-garde “revolutionaries” in terms of social class. They generally came from affluent and politically privileged backgrounds, whilst the academicians

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<sup>103</sup> From a letter dated June 21, 1877 to Richard and Helena de Kay Gilder in the collection of the New York Public Library, reproduced in Sarah Burns and John Davis, eds., *American Art to 1900: A Documentary History* (London: University of California Press, 2009), 724.

themselves tended to come from the lower-middle class and had obtained cultural capital through the success (meaning popularity) of their work.<sup>104</sup> The academicians maintained a broad belief that progress should be achieved through a continual process of open competition decided by observable metrics such as consistent sales and exhibiting records.<sup>105</sup>

The SAA was an important institution for the American art world up to the early years of the twentieth century when it was eventually folded into the Academy. It courted controversy and received strong criticism on occasions, and experienced secessions, most notably from “The Ten” in 1898.<sup>106</sup> It played a significant role in offering the public

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<sup>104</sup> Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 106-107. The “typical” culturo-societal model for the avant-garde, whereby the avant-garde has cultural capital, but little socio-economic capital, whilst the establishment has the reverse, is described by Pierre Bourdieu, in Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>105</sup> A view of progress through open competition was receiving particular support in America during the 1870s thanks to the popularity of Darwinian ideas, and their publicization in America through the works of Herbert Spencer, a popular sociologist. Numerous treatises and lectures on art from the period quoted directly from Darwinian texts. Gilder himself wrote a short piece welcoming Spencer to America, writing that, “he has found a greater number of intelligent and sympathetic readers in this country than in England. This sympathy may be partly due to the strongly democratic character of Mr. Spencer’s political philosophy.” Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics of the Time: Herbert Spencer in America,” *Century Magazine*, September, 1882, 789. Zalesch has noted that the “patrician” artists of the SAA and their supporters favored a “Spencerian” interpretation of evolutionary conflict as opposed to the “blind and ruthless” Darwinian interpretation espoused by the Academicians in their insistence on open conflict between competing artistic styles. According to Zalesch the Spencerian approach entailed a “perpet-ual rise toward perfection made possible by the guidance of society’s inspired leaders. Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 119. For the influence of Darwinism on American art in the nineteenth century see: Linda Nochlin, ed., Michael Leja, Martha Lucy, ed., and Kathleen Pyne, “The Darwin Effect: Evolution and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture,” special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2003). Rachael Ziady DeLue, *George Inness and the Science of Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

<sup>106</sup> Criticisms of snobbery and cronyism within the SAA were so bad following the 1884 exhibition that the 1885 exhibition was cancelled whilst the Society regrouped. Criticisms of the SAA as an institution can be found in: “The American Artists,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1880. “Seventh Exhibition of the Society of American Artists,” *Art Interchange* 12, June 5, 1884, 136. “The Society of American Artists,” *New York Sun*, June 1, 1884. “The Society of American Artists,” *New York Times*, March 23, 1895; “Society of American Artists,” *New York Sun*, March 24, 1895. Charles de Kay, “Ninth Exhibition, Society of American Artists,” *Art Review*, April 1, 1887, 9.



modern American art that was informed and inspired by contemporary European styles, mediums and subjects. It also offered a supportive environment for many of the Gilded Age's most renowned artists to display some of their most challenging works, such as James Abbott McNeill Whistler, John Singer Sargent and Albert Pinkham Ryder.

***Scribner's Monthly* as a "MAGAZINE OF ART," Helena de Kay, Richard Watson Gilder and Their Home**

The role that popular magazines played in the squabbles between artists and institutions in America in the 1870s has received scant attention to date. This is strange considering the vital role that *Scribner's Monthly* in particular played by informing their readership of the conflicts and orienting the American public favorably towards the art of the "younger men". Strife between the National Academy of Design and disgruntled artists was not novel in 1877, but the participation and unwavering support of influential figures within the New York publishing establishment was decisive in raising the status of the SAA to that of a genuine rival to the Academy within the minds of the American public.

*Scribner's Monthly* had quickly established itself as a leader amongst American periodicals in terms of presentation and content, acting as the most significant rival to *Harper's Monthly* during this period. The magazine became noticeably more concerned with art and culture, and less religious and moralizing in tone, due to the softening of the editor, Dr. Holland's, puritan inclinations and the rise in influence of the young Assistant Editor, Richard Watson Gilder.<sup>107</sup> *Scribner's Monthly*, supported by successful publishers Scribner & Co., had realized that it could claim a commercial advantage against its rivals through the quality and generosity of its illustrations. Gilder was a key figure in leading the magazine in this regard, making significant appointments which led to the magazine being considered as a world leader in

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<sup>107</sup> Arthur John, *The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner's Monthly, and Century Magazine, 1870-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 84-85.

illustration and printing. *Harper's Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly* were the only publications with the means to compete. The illustrations in *Scribner's Monthly* possessed artistic qualities in and of themselves and many readers framed the images from the magazine to decorate their homes.<sup>108</sup> The accuracy of illustrative processes due to technological advancements pioneered by *Scribner's Monthly* also made reproductions of artworks after photographs a practical possibility for the magazine that Richard Watson Gilder would exploit with increasing regularity.<sup>109</sup> Reproductive engraving created opportunities for more detailed critique and had a direct bearing on the professionalization of art criticism in America. An advertisement for the magazine in the front material of the December 1878 issue described *Scribner's Monthly* as a magazine "for the people" that had "become in reality a MAGAZINE OF ART."<sup>110</sup>

Richard Watson Gilder's interest in the visual arts was developed through his marriage to Sarah Helena de Kay in 1874. De Kay was the sixth child of Commodore George Coleman de Kay and Janet Halleck Drake. Her maternal grandfather was Joseph Rodman Drake, a once distinguished American poet whose reputation had not survived criticism from Edgar Allan Poe in the 1830s and her great grandfather was Henry Eckford, a successful ship builder. Her father's family was one of the oldest in the city's history, tracing their lineage back to the establishment of New Amsterdam when her first American ancestor was treasurer to the city in 1641. Whilst it is not possible to know the family's financial situation in the 1870s with any certainty (Henry Eckford was certainly very wealthy during his career c. 1800-1832), the early death of her father in 1849 would surely have had a significant impact on the family's long-term financial outlook. The family eventually moved to Dresden where Helena received a thoroughly cosmopolitan education in manners, languages, literature and the arts. The cultural sophistication of Dresden

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<sup>108</sup> Judy Larson, *American Illustration. 1890-1925* (Calgary: Glenbow Museum, 1986), 33.

<sup>109</sup> This is discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

<sup>110</sup> *Scribner's Monthly*, December, 1878, Advertising section (p.16).

in the 1850s had a profound effect on Helena and was a period of her life that she continually looked back on with great fondness. Her diary, kept in her final year whilst in Dresden (1861), contains tintypes of Dresden landmarks and closes with a theatrical declaration that:

I must say goodbye to all the lovely times at Dresden and  
to my little book that has kept by me through all my fun  
and flirting. [...] this is the last of such a happy, happy  
year and I say goodbye with the prospect of being caged in  
a boarding school and never able to do  
or say anything. Alas, such is life!<sup>111</sup>

The boarding school in question was in Middletown, Connecticut, and provided a culture shock for Helena, who was an unresponsive pupil when removed from the stimulation of a cultural center like Dresden. She started producing her first known paintings of still-lives and flowers in the manner of Martin Johnson Heade whilst still at school in Middletown. She went on to enroll at the Cooper Union School of Design in 1866 in search of a formal art education and it was here that she made significant social connections with Charles Melville Dewey, Daniel Chester French, Abbott H. Thayer, Maria Oakey Dewing, Mary Hallock Foote, Olivia Ward and Katie Bloede. Helena supplemented her training with lessons at the Ladies Art Association in 1869 and started sharing a studio on Broadway with Maria Oakey Dewing, in spite of her mother's disapproval.<sup>112</sup> Helena and Maria were among the first women allowed to enroll in life drawing classes at the National Academy of Design in 1871, where she was taught by Lemuel Wilmarth, a pupil of Gérôme.<sup>113</sup> Helena held Wilmarth in poor artistic esteem on account of his highly finished academic execution, preferring a more painterly approach that had been encouraged by her mentor John La Farge. She had taken private lessons with La Farge since the late 1860s whenever visiting her sister, Katherine de Kay Bronson at her home in Newport, Rhode Island.

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<sup>111</sup> Diary of Helena de Kay, Box 20, *The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984*, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

<sup>112</sup> Bienenstock, "The Career of Helena de Kay Gilder," 3-5.

<sup>113</sup> At this time life drawing for women at the Academy was restricted to drawing from the draped nude.

It was whilst visiting Newport that Helena became closely acquainted with the cultural elite of the town, including Henry and William James and Helen Hunt Jackson, the writer and activist who would introduce Helena to Richard Watson Gilder at the *Scribner's Monthly* offices in 1872.

Helena had been the subject of romantic interest from Winslow Homer, who she probably met through her brother, the critic Charles de Kay who inhabited Homer's New York University Building studio in 1867 whilst the artist was in France.<sup>114</sup> Helena modelled for Homer on at least one occasion, (*Portrait of Helena de Kay*, 1872-74, fig. 1.6), but Sarah Burns has argued that Helena was also the model for several of the unidentified women in Homer's art between 1869 and 1874. The personal correspondence of the two during this period certainly shows Homer to be orchestrating meetings with Helena, sometimes on the proviso of offering her art instruction, although it is uncertain the extent to which Helena took him up on this offer and it seems likely that she did not encourage his advances.<sup>115</sup> The portrait of Helena, now in Madrid, was given as a wedding gift at the time of her marriage and is consequently dated by Homer as June 3, 1874. It is heavy with symbolism of loss and unrequited love, communicated via her tight hair arrangement and black dress, (an uncharacteristic color for her to be wearing in this period), contemplative, melancholy pose, and the discarded rose, Helena's favorite flower and a surrogate for Homer's love. Awkwardly, Homer has pictured her as a widow instead of a bride.

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<sup>114</sup> Sarah Burns, "The Courtship of Winslow Homer," *The Magazine ANTIQUES*, February, 2002, 69.

<sup>115</sup> Burns, "The Courtship," 68-75.



Figure 1.4. Winslow Homer, *Portrait of Helena de Kay*, c. 1872-1874. Oil on canvas, 31 x 47 cm, Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Helena's marriage to Richard was seemingly a very happy one. She had desired to join her sister Katherine de Kay Bronson in Paris and enroll at an atelier in 1875 but was prevented by her mother's poor health. Her ambitions were further complicated when she gave birth to their first child, Marion, on December 12, 1875, though the child died in July 1876. She still managed to obtain a European artistic training by proxy through her close association with La Farge. Her expressive brushwork, delicate palette and flower subjects for which she was known in the 1870s show the extent of La Farge's influence on her technique and aesthetic (figs. 1.5 and 1.6). Her works showed early promise and her painting of sunflowers received praise from critics at the tempestuous Academy show of 1875.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> "The National Academy of Design," *New York Times*, April 26, 1875, 7.



Figure 1.5. Helena de Kay Gilder, *Undated oil sketch*, Box 19, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.





Figure 1.6. Helena de Kay, *undated sketch of flowers*, Box 20, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Helena de Kay Gilder also undertook illustration work, specializing again in floral imagery. She designed illustrations and cover art for all of Richard Watson Gilder's collections of poems, starting with *The New Day* (1875), a collection of love poems to Helena from 1873 (fig. 1.7). She took leading roles in the Art Students' League and Society of American Artists and exhibited at the Society's shows, as well as the National Academy of Design, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, The American Watercolor Society, and the Boston Museum of the Fine Arts. She gave up her aspirations of a successful art career around 1886, following the birth of her fifth child, George. She did however remain keenly interested in all aspects of the fine arts and continued to paint and draw for pleasure as well as for unrealized travel book plans (fig. 1.8). Her drawings show her to have been a capable student, and her illustrations also show great proficiency, although her finished works are difficult to locate now (fig. 1.9). This may in part account for her low profile in the current histories of the period, despite her significant roles

as member, organizer and promoter of the new generation of artists that came to the fore at the end of the 1870s.

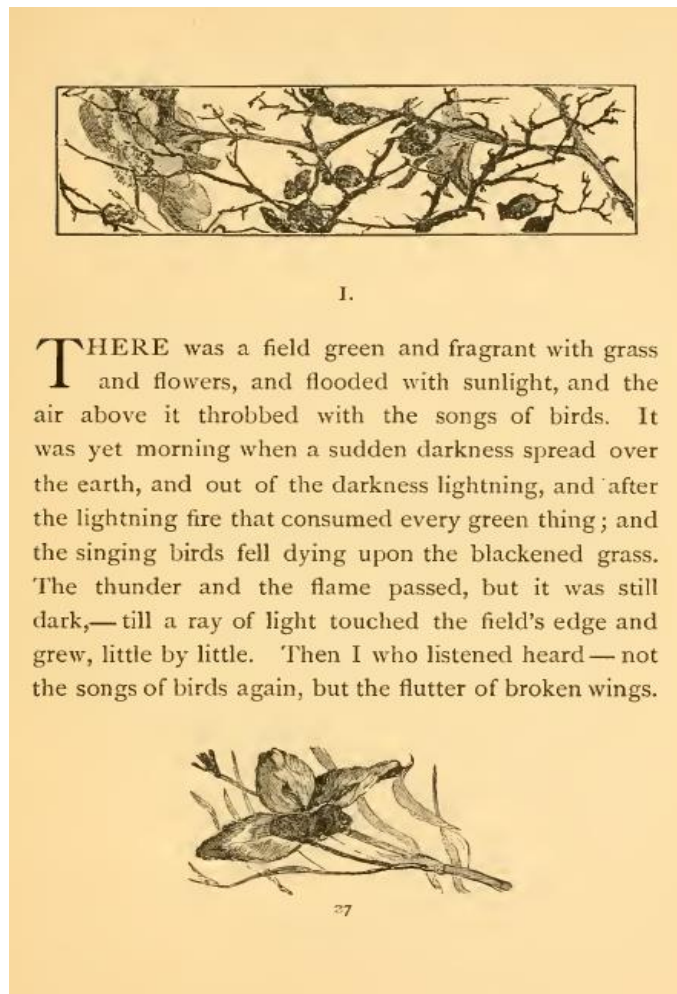


Figure 1.7. Illustrations by Helena de Kay Gilder for Richard Watson Gilder, *The New Day* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong and Company, 1876), 27.

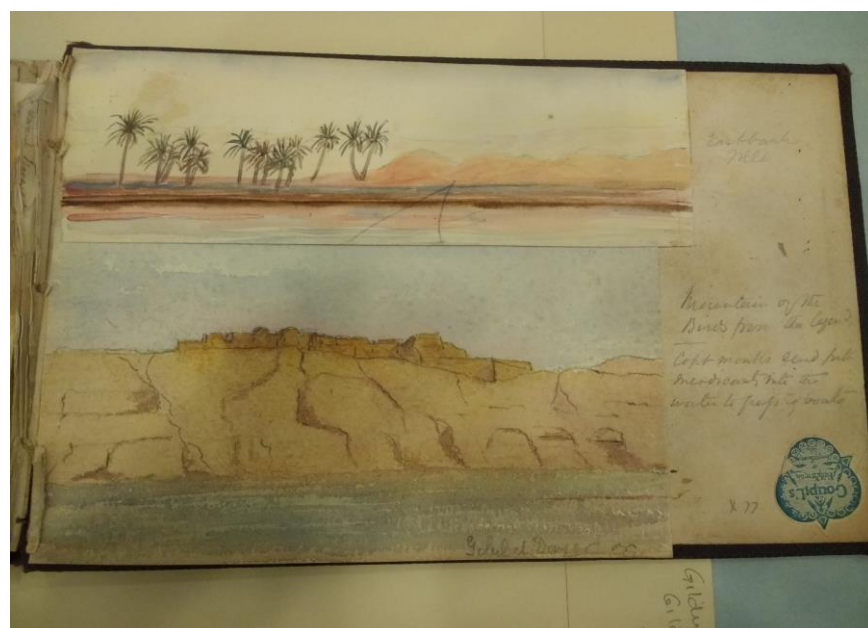


Figure 1.8. Helena de Kay, watercolor sketch made in Egypt, 1896, Box 20, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



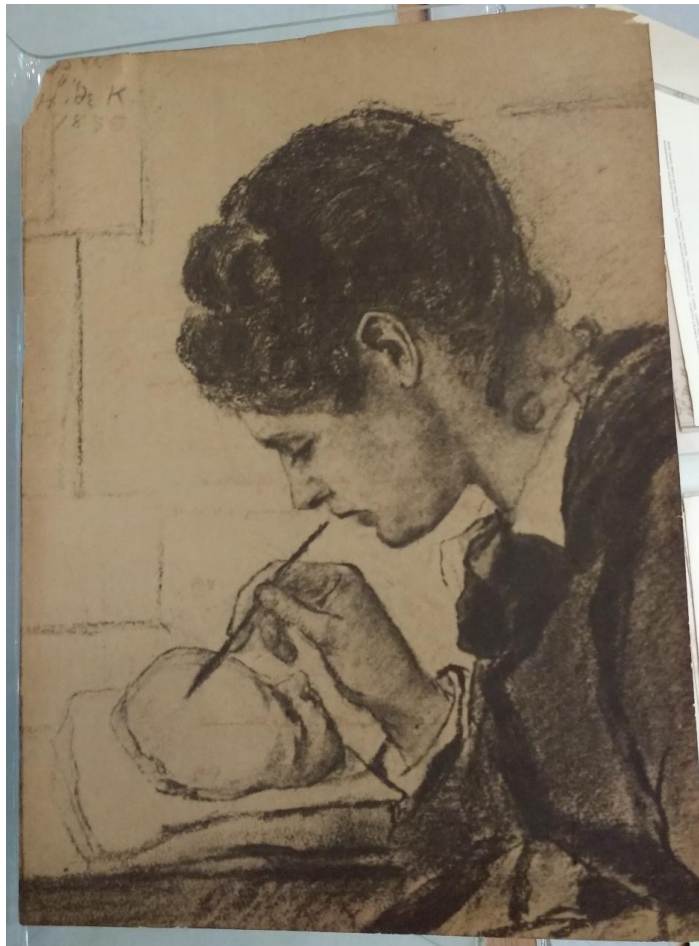


Figure 1.9. Inscription on reverse: "Drawing by Helena de Kay Gilder of Olivia Sullivan Ward probably about 1876 or 7 – finishing a cast." Box 31, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Her influence on American art was amplified by her marriage to Richard Watson Gilder. Richard had an artistically sensitive temperament but did not have the experience or close social connections with American art until his marriage to Helena. Gilder came from a respectable New Jersey family, the son of a Methodist Minister and schoolteacher who had died when Gilder was twenty from small pox, whilst ministering to Union army troops during the Civil War.<sup>117</sup> Gilder was described as a happy and "precociously" gifted child who created two amateur newspapers, *St. Thomas Register* and *The Leaflet* whilst still a

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<sup>117</sup> Gilder himself received permission from his mother to enlist in the Union army in spite of his age and his *Letters* edited by his daughter Rosamond relays an extended account of the brief incident of conflict that he experienced as a member of the Philadelphia Artillery, a militia organization in 1863. Gilder's enthusiasm in the recounting of this event tells of the deep sense of patriotism and public service that was instilled in him from an early age and never left him (this is referred to in subsequent chapters as a guiding principle of his character which helps explain his later work and attitudes). Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 21-34.

young teenager, no doubt emulating his father who edited religious journals in his spare time.<sup>118</sup> Gilder was educated in Hebrew and Greek and was very taken with a religious revival that took place in Flushing, Long Island in 1858 (the family had moved to Flushing from Bordentown whilst Gilder was a young child). His diary recorded him attending prayer meetings of Methodists, Episcopal, Dutch Reformed and Catholic denominations. Gilder maintained an interest in spirituality throughout his life, though he struggled with the idea of personal religion and was an agnostic by the time of his death. He had ambitions of attending university and studying the law, but these were cruelly thwarted by the death of his father, as the financial responsibilities for his family were passed on to him. He found work initially as a paymaster on the Camden and Amboy Railroad, before moving on to become a reporter for the *Newark Advertiser*, and then co-founding a new newspaper, the *Newark Morning Register*, in 1869. This was a bold step for a twenty-five-year-old with limited experience in the newspaper business and no real capital behind him. This venture paid no salary and ultimately ended in financial failure which saddled Gilder with debts. In order to make ends meet during his time with the *Morning Register* Gilder took up additional editorial work for Charles Scribner and Company's magazine, *Hours at Home*, which was a modest publication founded to act as advertising for the books. Within a year Gilder was made editor-in-chief but shortly after this promotion *Hours at Home* was folded into the publisher's new venture *Scribner's Monthly* and Gilder found himself working directly under its first editor-in-chief, Dr. Holland. This prompted his relocation to New York City, his meeting with Helena de Kay at the *Scribner's* offices, and ultimately his rise to be one of the most respected and influential figures within American publishing during the Gilded Age.

Gilder's literary and thoroughly middle class, more provincial upbringing was a step or two below Helena de Kay's cultured New York

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<sup>118</sup> Herbert F. Smith, *Richard Watson Gilder*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970), 14-15.

patrician social status. Their marriage therefore may be an indication of the diminishing financial means of the de Kay family, or of the rebellious nature that had led to Helena pursuing her personal dreams of becoming an artist in the early 1870s. Whilst Gilder was always interested in literature as a child, and was able to realize ambitions of becoming a published poet, there is no mention of other forms of art in his upbringing, and so it is fairly certain that his “education” in this respect was provided by his wife.

An entry in Gilder’s journal from 1878 regarding his regular column “The Old Cabinet” is worth quoting at length to illustrate how his confidence and conviction on matters of the fine arts had developed since his marriage to Helena, and the growing frustration he felt at Dr. Holland’s limited expectations for *Scribner’s Monthly*:

Summer of 1878.

I talked with Dr. Holland about my “Old Cabinet” writings the other day. He liked what I wrote about engravers, but thinks I am in danger of being limited. I tried to make him understand that I was interested in plastic art as a part of life, a part of all art and a part of my own general culture. [...] I wrote about art in the “Old Cabinet” because by hard thinking, observation, and study I had cracked the shell and was beginning to get at the kernel of it, and therefore could write more intelligently about it than could most people in the country—[...] that so far as the magazine was concerned I stand for the art side especially in his mind, merely because I am “in the movement.” Of course I could not explain that I was also interested in the literary side and that most of our good writers had come to the magazine through me, as well as nearly all the artists. Nor did I care to boast that I had suggested “Home and Society” and a hundred other practical or public things — being sometimes met with the reply that the public did not care for these questions — and that this was a magazine chiefly for women.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Richard Watson Gilder and Rosamond Gilder, ed., *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 64-65.

Gilder possessed the personal qualities and professional attachments to form close friendships with artists and this would no doubt have developed organically, particularly through his close contact with the magazine's illustration department. However, "the movement," as he referred to it, of young European influenced artists that Gilder found himself associated with through Helena was decisive in the formation of his own artistic standards. Helena's nostalgia for the European culture in which she had immersed herself whilst part of the Dresden expatriate community no doubt helped fuel a desire to see it replicated in America. This combined with Gilder's own sense that art should transcend reality and represent a kind of beauty that could act as a surrogate for truth and provide spiritual revelation. This mixture of cosmopolitanism, social elitism and Romantic idealism matured to help inform the development of the Aesthetic Movement in America, which took root in the late 1870s.<sup>120</sup>

Gilder was able to give voice to his personal convictions through his editorial work, and he regularly took the opportunity to provide platforms to those he knew personally and admired artistically. He possessed a "sympathetic understanding" which served him well in his dealings with colleagues, writers, politicians and artists on behalf of *Scribner's Monthly* and later *Century Magazine*.<sup>121</sup> He built a personal reputation for fairness, sage judgement, patriotism, industriousness, generosity and thoughtfulness. Through the power of his personality, he became the significant force within *Scribner's Monthly* as Dr. Holland's health began to falter towards the end of the 1870s. His sensitivity as an editor meant that he was able to balance popularity with bourgeois tastes.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> The Romantic spiritualism of Gilder's personal ideas on art and his relationship with Aesthetic Movement ideals are discussed in the third chapter.

<sup>121</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 65.

<sup>122</sup> Edward E. Chielens, ed., *American Literary Magazines: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Westport: Greenwood Press, Inc, 1986), 366.

The Gilders' home and *Scribner's Monthly* have been described as "opposite ends of the same cultural axis."<sup>123</sup> They hosted weekly gatherings for distinguished guests involved in the arts on each Friday from when they moved into their first shared home at 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, close to Union Square in New York in August 1874.<sup>124</sup> This informal "salon" provided artists such as Will H. Low, who had returned in 1877 from a period of study with Gérôme and Carolus-Duran in Paris with "an oasis in the first few years after the return to our desert home."<sup>125</sup>

The relatively modest house had previously been a stable and was remodeled for the Gilders by their architect friend Stanford White. The ground floor was renovated into a single spacious room called "The Studio", where the Friday social gatherings took place. Unfortunately, the building no longer exists, but some illustrations, photographs (figs. 1.10-1.15) and descriptions of The Studio provide a sense of the eclecticism of the décor: a bohemian mixture of objects native and foreign, selected for their aesthetic qualities, combined in a picturesque display with artworks given by their artist friends. Helena de Kay Gilder described The Studio in an entry of the shared journal she kept with Richard shortly after they had moved in:

The Studio itself is a beautiful one, with great shelves for casts and books, and nails for everything. R[ichard].s two pictures hang in the place of honor near the head of Dante by Giotto. Mr. [Thomas] Moran sent R. a hammock, and it hangs across one corner of the room with a beautiful leopard skin below it (fig. 1.18), and by the sofa is a smaller rug. Edith's china and Mr. Stedman's glass are all upstairs until my china closet is ready, and in the middle of the handsome mahogany table stands a bowl Mrs. Holland sent me. Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald gave me a queer and very pretty old silver chatelaine with a silver locket containing the hairs of

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<sup>123</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 1-3.

<sup>124</sup> "The Old Cabinet," *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1874, 116-117. Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 63.

<sup>125</sup> Will H. Low, *A Chronicle of Friendships 1873-1900* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1908), 239.

all 13! and in the patch-box a silver snake — a ring for  
R[ichard]. W[atson]. G[ilder].<sup>126</sup>

According to the couple's letters and journals they led a frugal lifestyle in their first years of marriage. Helena wrote to her life-long friend, Mary Hallock Foote, about the furnishing of the house with "old fashioned" and "second hand" furniture. The couple were responsible for the financial support of Richard's mother, and only took a modest marriage vacation in September of 1874 to visit Foote in Milton-on-the-Hudson.<sup>127</sup> Still, their financial constraints were relative, and reading between the lines one gets a sense that Helena in particular enjoyed romanticizing the struggles of their early marriage.

Despite the modesty of their early circumstances, they were able to fill their home with art including Helena's own works and gifts from their friendship circle: John La Farge, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Will H. Low and Stanford White. Saint-Gaudens was a particularly close friend, whose bas-relief of the Gilders with Rodman, their second child, was installed above the fireplace in *The Studio* (fig. 1.17), and terracotta portraits of other Gilder children decorated the front of the house, now lost (visible in figs. 1.10 and 1.11). The Gilders were, from the moment of their marriage, a social hub within the New York art world. Their home acted as both a shelter and headquarters for young artists with the highest of ambitions. It was therefore a natural headquarters for the SAA at its inauguration.

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<sup>126</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 62.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.



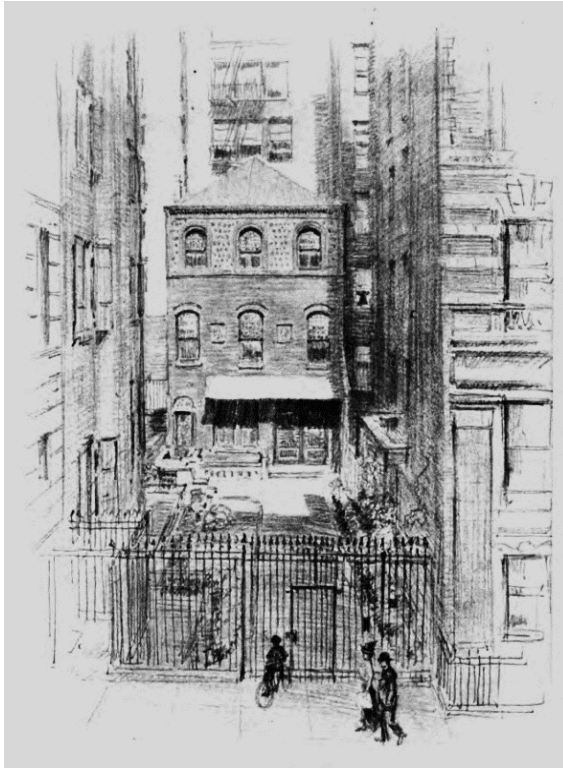


Figure 1.10. (Left), The House at 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City (Stanford White), Drawn by Vernon Howe Bailey, from Maria Horner Lansdale, "Life-Work and Homes of Richard Watson Gilder, *Century Magazine*, March, 1911, 722

Figure 1.11. (Right), Undated photograph of the front of 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



Figure 1.12. Photograph of Helena and Rodman de Kay Gilder in "The Studio" at No. 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street with Saint-Gaudens's bas relief above the fireplace. Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



Figure 1.13. Undated photograph of the “studio” at 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



Figure 1.14. Undated photograph of Richard Watson and Helena de Kay Gilder at 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.





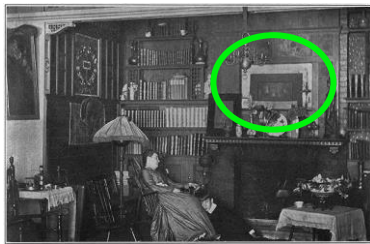
Figure 1.15. Undated photograph of interior of 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



Figure 1.16. Undated photograph of Helena de Kay Gilder and Richard Watson Gilder in "The Studio" at No. 103 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Box 25, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.



Figure 1.17. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Helena de Kay Gilder, Rodman de Kay Gilder and Richard Watson Gilder*. Modelled 1879, cast 1883, Bronze, 21.9 x 42.9 cm, Private Collection. Location above the mantle in The Studio shown below.



The circumstances of Richard Watson Gilder, Helena de Kay, *Scribner's Monthly* and their friends who made up the SAA may appear confusing on first glance as they resist readymade perceptions of heroic individuals battling against alienation and neglect from the establishment and society more broadly. As Saul Zalesch emphasized in his history of the SAA, the members were, with the odd exception such as Albert Pinkham Ryder, “patricians” from families “accustomed to establishing standards of culture, [who] felt themselves both destined and better equipped to guide the progress of American art and to help educate tastes than [middle-class] academicians who had laboriously earned their qualifications for leadership.”<sup>128</sup> *Scribner's Monthly* was a publication aimed squarely at a middle-class readership, initially interested in the

<sup>128</sup> Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 109-110.

promotion of a native literary culture. In short, the type of readership that presumably felt more at home with academician's American landscapes than European inspired figure "studies". The class snobbery that Zalesch attributed to the SAA and their defenders in the press (figures such as Gilder, Clarence Cook and William Crary Brownell), may be exaggerated from his interpretations of a few instances concerning select individuals, but there is still substance in these claims with regards to figures such as La Farge, Helena de Kay and Augustus Saint-Gaudens. How could these artists and critics consider themselves disadvantaged in relation to their (mostly) older colleagues at the academy, and why was the readership of *Scribner's Monthly* deemed to be a receptive audience for their claims to neglect and cultural superiority? Indeed, why were the squabbles of the New York art world considered interesting to a magazine that aimed itself towards a national, albeit predominantly East Coast readership? A sociological view which looks more deeply into the class-based analysis that Zalesch proposed, informed by the influential ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, may offer the interpretive tools to contextualize this situation and the cultural changes which subsequently occurred.<sup>129</sup>

Bourdieu's explanation of cultural change comes out of Sociological "field theory". "Social fields" are environments populated by individuals interacting within different hierarchies (social, economic and cultural) in accordance with their own internal laws or logic. Field theory proposes to explain societies and their changes as a result of the competition which exists between individuals and groups within a given social field. Bourdieu's conception of this competition proceeds from his appreciation

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<sup>129</sup> Andrew King's study of *The London Journal* in the 1840s makes use of Bourdieu's ideas for mapping cultural consumption in order to help explain the cultural status of the nineteenth-century mass market and titles which inhabited it such as *The London Journal*. Periodicals, particularly those with large circulations, are interesting works to consider in light of Bourdieu's theories relating to culture. In what follows I propose a different use of Bourdieu to King, suggesting how magazines like *Scribner's Monthly* held an important liminal position within culture which made them effective instruments for affecting cultural change at the societal level. Andrew King, "Periodical Discourse: Periodical questions; Periodical titles; or, 'The London Journal' as a signifier," in *The London Journal, 1845-83: Periodicals, Production and Gender* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2004), chap. 1, Kindle.

of Karl Marx's ideas on class conflict for power by the accumulation and control of economic capital. In his analysis of French nineteenth-century literature, Bourdieu embellishes the Marxian class paradigm by identifying other forms of capital: educational and cultural, which were the subject of competition amongst individuals and groups.<sup>130</sup>

Incorporating an understanding of the competition for other forms of capital better explains complex social systems and historical change which resist more simplistic Marxian models which directly or indirectly rely on economic competition as the basis for all.

Bourdieu conceptualizes the cultural realm as a market in which agents compete for status and honor, taken from the ideas of Max Weber.<sup>131</sup> Scholarship which developed an understanding of the cultural field as acting like a market place driven by supply and demand identified the number of producers and the state of competition between them as significant influencers on the diversity of cultural production and the rate of change.<sup>132</sup> Markets which have few producers and/ or a lack of competition amongst producers will result in stable situations with slow change, as the producers seek to deliver products that please the majority whilst offending the least number of people. This could be used to describe the magazine field in New York up until the 1870s, when relatively few magazines of the *Harper's Monthly* type prospered. Key external changes which impacted this were increases in population and technological changes: paper and printing technologies became more readily available and cheaper, which encouraged the "mania" of magazine starting of the 1870s.<sup>133</sup>

Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital develops the marketplace model further by considering the demands of individuals acting within a cultural field as important catalysts for cultural change. Bourdieu's interpretation of the cultural field reformulated previous conceptions of

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<sup>130</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

<sup>131</sup> Max Webber, *Economy and Society*, (New York: Bedminster, 1968), 932-938.

<sup>132</sup> Richard Peterson, "Culture Studies through the Production Perspective," in *The Sociology of Culture*, ed. Diana Crane (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 163-189.

<sup>133</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 5.



the cultural realm as independent from other fields such as economics and politics, by explaining how cultural production can be influenced by other social fields external to the structures and logic that determine the marketplace of cultural capital.<sup>134</sup> Therefore Bourdieu is able to suggest a nuanced understanding of cultural change that incorporates supply and demand for the products of culture, social class, economics, politics, religion and numerous other social fields, each with their own hierarchical structures and terms of competition, who interact with the cultural field.

The “products” of the cultural field which are accumulated and competed for extend beyond the material goods that are typically associated with culture such as paintings and sculptures, and include practices, ideas, beliefs and positions which are exclusive to the majority of society and therefore provide the selected participants with an aura of superiority. Writing about the nineteenth-century European context, Bourdieu maintained that the competition amongst actors for cultural capital was securely connected to the Marxian competition for the material products of an economy which resulted in the stratification of society into three broadly defined social classes: lower class or proletariat, middle class or the “bourgeoisie” and the upper class or aristocracy. The Cultural Field is therefore a part of a larger “field of power”, which in turn is part of the still larger “field of class relations”.<sup>135</sup> Bourdieu argues that an individual’s economic circumstances instill within them a series of dispositions and propensities, or “habitus” which determine how they act within society.<sup>136</sup> Their “habitus” generates their cultural tastes. Their actions which proceed from these tastes, such as choices of what to wear, what businesses to patronize or how to decorate their homes, simultaneously confer a sense of group belonging and distinguish the individual amongst their peers, justifying their economic circumstances,

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<sup>134</sup> David Gartman, “Bourdieu’s Theory of Cultural Change: Explication, Application, Critique,” *Sociological Theory* 20, no. 2, (July 2002): 255-277.

<sup>135</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” in *The Field of Cultural Production*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 37-38.

<sup>136</sup> Bourdieu, “The Field of Cultural Production,” 4-6.

creating a feedback loop which acts to maintain overall social structures. Bourdieu attributes a society's hierarchies and organization to the intersection of the economic and cultural fields. Each social class has its own balance of different levels of cultural and economic capital.<sup>137</sup>

Whilst the Marxian tri-partite class division is nothing new, the value in Bourdieu's conception of society in this manner is in identifying and describing different factions within these broadly defined social classes with nuance. The cultural field is sub-divided into competition for small scale, restricted production (referred to by Bourdieu as autonomous as the hierarchy exists independent of monetary value) and large scale, mass production (referred to as heteronomous).<sup>138</sup> The products of the latter cater to an economic bourgeoisie and a petty bourgeoisie or working class, whose economic capital is greater than their cultural capital or education. This subfield is further divided into two fields, producing bourgeois and commercial or "kitsch" cultural products (the latter being produced to cater to the petty bourgeoisie). By contrast the small scale, restricted field caters to a cultural bourgeoisie, a dominated faction of the dominant class, whose cultural and educational capital outweighs their economic capital. This field is the realm of high art. The products of this field that are the subject of competition are not material objects (in and of themselves) but symbolic and metaphysical. This subfield of restricted production is also further subdivided by Bourdieu into those who have successfully produced or accumulated symbolic capital, labeled the consecrated avant-garde, and those who have not yet done so; the culturally successful and the unsuccessful. Those who are successful, such as an artist who has achieved acclaim for their art amongst the cultural bourgeoisie (an academician like Frederic Church for example), tend to exchange some of their accumulated cultural capital for economic capital when selling their work for high prices. This causes the unsuccessful artists, labeled the bohemian avant-garde to reject the

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<sup>137</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 169-175.

<sup>138</sup> Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 38-39.

previously accepted art of the consecrated avant-garde, which is now tainted by an association with money, which is exchanged with members of the economic bourgeoisie who are keen to acquire cultural capital as a means of justifying their economic and political wealth (industrialist patrons of artists like Church such as William Henry Osborn).<sup>139</sup>

Bohemian is a word which can be employed loosely to mean romantic or counter cultural but Bourdieu's use of Bohemian is historically specific. He contextualizes the appearance of Bohemianism in France in the mid-nineteenth century as a response to anxieties amongst the cultural elite caused by centralized and regulated artistic activities in the metropolis, changes to social demographics caused by urbanization and the creation of a "proletoid intelligentsia" who came to the city in search of professional opportunity and advancement, threatening the balance of cultural, political and economic power. Such circumstances were certainly relevant to New York in the 1870s and so the (self)identification of patrician figures such as Helena de Kay as members of a bohemian avant-garde within their historical social context appears accurate.<sup>140</sup>

Bourdieu's paradigm for the social field which combines competition for economic and cultural status manages to account for the avant-garde and suggests how changes in artistic tastes at various societal levels and social mobility may occur. Bourdieu's identification of taste with "habitus" associated with economic circumstances also helps in determining the types of cultural production favored by competing groups. The cultural bourgeoisie, culture and education rich but economically dominated, tend to prefer high art which is cerebral and symbolic and exclusive in the level of education and accrued cultural capital required to understand and appreciate it (artworks whose meaning is not readily apparent or whose appreciation relies upon prior

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 29-73. Bourdieu identifies this tension between the perceived cultural value and economic value of a work of art or an individual as "loser wins" in his analysis of nineteenth century French literary field. Providing the example of Emile Zola, Bourdieu claims that the author's relationship with his avant-garde society was compromised through the commercial success of his works. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 114-116. Pierre Bourdieu, "The Field of Cultural Production," 39.

<sup>140</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 54-58.

knowledge of the history of art in other places). Overt association with economic value or wealth is looked down upon, as an understanding of this kind of value is available to all. By contrast the economic bourgeoisie tend to prefer products which are luxurious and display their economic hegemony. Their tastes are socially conservative and act to legitimize their economic status. Of course, competition between individuals constantly exists and so producers who cater to the economic bourgeoisie in the cultural subfield of mass-production take the products of the consecrated avant-garde and distribute them, hoping to accrue some of its cultural distinction through association. These products gradually lose their symbolic power amongst the cultural bourgeoisie through this association with the economic bourgeoisie and so they seek out new distinct products amongst the bohemian avant-garde who become the new consecrated avant-garde and so the cycles of change in artistic tastes perpetuate. The petty bourgeoisie in turn emulates the dominant economic bourgeoisie and so bourgeois tastes are reproduced and distributed as products of commercial art, and so lose their symbolic value to the economic bourgeoisie, who in turn look to the cultural bourgeoisie for renewed symbols of distinction. Bourdieu identifies this class imitation: the economic bourgeoisie emulating the cultural bourgeoisie; the petty bourgeoisie emulating the economic bourgeoisie, as the engine of changes in tastes within the cultural field at a societal level.<sup>141</sup>

These changes in taste occur cyclically and with general stability, except when larger social changes exert pressure on the dynamics. A significant change in this regard occurs with the increase in an educated population. This increases the number of producers and consumers for products of high culture (small scale, restricted cultural field). As previously described, in a capitalist society, increased competition amongst consumers and producers creates more dramatic and faster rates of change. This is encouraged due to class mobility caused by education.

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<sup>141</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, 233, 251-252. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 121-161, 253-256.



Education provides opportunities for a wider class base to participate as cultural producers and consumers. These bring with them their own “habitus” and therefore introduce new perspectives and innovations in their products. They also find support amongst members of the bohemian avant-garde who find fraternity in the shared experience of being dominated in the economic and cultural fields by competing groups/classes (the economic bourgeoisie and the consecrated avant-garde respectively).<sup>142</sup>

New York in the 1870s was witnessing dramatic changes in the social and economic fields, and therefore was ripe for cultural changes. Increases in population through immigration and urbanization had created populations eager to improve their economic, cultural and educational capital.<sup>143</sup> Magazines such as *Scribner's Monthly* can be seen as instruments of popular education as well as entertainment being offered to the swelling numbers of American bourgeoisie throughout its urban centers.

The relative positions of Gilder, Helena de Kay, their artist friends and the academicians can be plotted within the social matrix described above, with a healthy degree of caution when placing complex individuals within simplified systems. Nevertheless, the conflict between the SAA and the academy can be seen as one between a consecrated avant-garde many of whom had risen from petty bourgeois backgrounds, supported by an economic bourgeoisie, and a bohemian avant-garde populated by the likes of Gilder, Helena de Kay, Clarence Cook etc.. Viewed in this light the romanticization of their struggles, what William Crary Brownell described as their “proto-martyrdom,” in the face of their perceived economic and cultural domination by a conspiring consecrated avant-garde supported by the dominant economic-bourgeoisie makes better sense.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, 71-86.

<sup>143</sup> Sven Beckert, “The Monied Metropolis: New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896,” in *Class: The Anthology*, eds. Stanley Aronowitz and Michael J. Roberts, (Chicester: Wiley Blackwell, 2018), 393-412.

<sup>144</sup> William Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part I,” *Scribner's Monthly*, May, 1880, 8. Saul Zalesch similarly mentions Helena de Kay as having “absorbed the

This self-perception as members of a bohemian avant-garde struggling for recognition is however further complicated when we consider the relationship of Gilder to *Scribner's Monthly*. Magazines of this type are particularly interesting because they resist the neat bifurcation of the different modes of cultural production: restricted and mass (autonomous and heteronomous in Bourdieu's terminology). Literary illustrated magazines were objects of mass production, made to be sold. They offered various forms of culture, often high-brow culture by way of poetry, literature and criticism, remediated into a format in part defined by its ephemerality and accessibility, in contrast to the autonomous products of "high art".<sup>145</sup> In frank Bourdieuan terms, Gilder was trading his cultural and educational capital, accrued in part through his personal friendships and marriage, for economic capital with the aim of establishing himself and his magazine as the cultural voice of the consecrated avant-garde. James Mussell has described periodicals as physically occupying a liminal cultural space, as objects which were intended as both provisional and enduring.<sup>146</sup> Individual issues were sold by booksellers and through subscriptions, but also collected and bound into volumes and kept safely as objects of record (the form in which they are most commonly preserved today). This is most clearly the case with illustrated monthly magazines of the *Scribner's Monthly* type, as opposed to newspapers and weekly news magazines which were designed to be passed "from the present into the past [...] deemed out of date because of the existence of the new current number."<sup>147</sup> In terms of content and form the illustrated monthly magazine proposed to occupy the gap between past and present, offering informed reflection on the present with one eye on how its pages will retain their value as they move into the past. The dynamic tension created by the competing interests at the heart of the

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philosophy of the French avant-garde" and equating her experience with the academy to that of the Impressionists in Paris. Zalesch, "Competition and Conflict," 109.

<sup>145</sup> The troublesome connection between culture and commerce embodied by literary popular magazines only grew stronger as advertising became an increasing source of funding. *Scribner's Monthly/Century* were, perhaps ironically, pioneers in this regard amongst the so called "genteel" magazines.

<sup>146</sup> James Mussell, "The Passing of Print," *Media History* 18, no. 1: 77-78.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

magazine and its editor, as purveyors of high culture and education to a mass, socially heterogeneous audience, is arguably what gave them their cultural relevancy during the decades of change between c. 1870 and 1890. Interestingly, it was when Gilder and his friends had risen to a position of cultural and economic hegemony that the fortunes of his magazine started to wane in the 1890s.<sup>148</sup>

A final aspect to discuss is the role of the readership. In order for *Scribner's Monthly* to be commercially viable it required an audience that was receptive to its claims for cultural superiority and offerings of education on such matters. John Ott has drawn attention to the need for social art histories which renew focus on the ways in which the consumers of culture helped to define both content and form, and how artworks can carry significances to multiple constituencies.<sup>149</sup> Whilst it is challenging to offer analysis of mass audiences for products of aggregation in locations as complex as New York in the 1870s, Bourdieu's conception of class emulation may help to explain why the art disputes at the National Academy of Design in New York might be seen as appropriate subject matter for the *Scribner's Monthly* readership. Some of the audience would have been aware of the debates about American art taking place, and would have therefore appreciated the magazine's coverage for its symbolic value; as a reassurance of shared social status. A larger portion of the audience would have only been vaguely aware of the issues, most likely from the annual lively accounts in the press. To these readers the magazine offered a hand into the inner circle of high cultural production and promised to increase their cultural capital through understanding and a feeling of proximity to the issue and the personalities involved. This tactic may be behind the magazine's publishing of articles depicting the SAA artists as a fraternity to the fore during this period.<sup>150</sup> Page Knox has identified different forms of "art

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<sup>148</sup> This is discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis.

<sup>149</sup> John Ott, "Patrons, Collectors and Markets," in *A Companion to American Art*, eds. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, Jason D. LaFountain (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 529-537.

<sup>150</sup> William Crary Brownell, "The Art-Schools of New York," *Scribner's Monthly*, October, 1878, 761-781; William Crary Brownell, "The Art Schools of Philadelphia,"

literature” championed by Gilder at *Scribner’s Monthly* as a means to attract the attention of readers with a broad cross section of interest, knowledge and experience of the fine arts.<sup>151</sup> Amongst the categories which she identifies the “polemical text” and “chronicle and anecdote” were forms of art writing well suited to the magazine format which spoke most clearly to a mass bourgeois audience who had little to no personal connection or experience with the latest trends in contemporary American art. The image of the bohemian artist was also already established within the realm of literature, since the 1850s and the publication of Henri Murger’s *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* (1851) and grew in popularity amongst the middle-classes as a modern mythological figure who resisted the seismic changes to society being enacted around them through industrialization, mechanized production, labor division. As middle-class anxieties grew during the proceeding decades image of the bohemian artist gained potency, so that when George du Maurier’s novel *Trilby* was serialized in *Harper’s Monthly* in 1894 it caused a sensation in Britain and America, selling more than 200,000 copies by February the following year and inspiring numerous parodies, adaptations, social gatherings and trends.<sup>152</sup>

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*Scribner’s Monthly*, September, 1879, 737-50; William Bishop, “Young Artists’ Life in New York. Illustrated by the Salmagundi Club,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, January, 1880, 355-368; William Mackay Laffan, “The Tile Club at Work,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, January, 1879, 401-409; William Mackay Laffan and Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], “The Tile Club at Play,” *Scribner’s Monthly* February, 1879, 457-478; William Mackay Laffan and Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn], “The Tile Club Afloat,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, March, 1880, 641-671.

<sup>151</sup> Page Knox, “*Scribner’s Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), 184-255. *Scribner’s Monthly* was exceptional amongst magazines of its type in this regard, and so the keen interest paid to the debates of contemporary American art can be attributed to the personal convictions of Gilder.

<sup>152</sup> Lisa Tickner has provided an analysis of Bohemianism exemplified through the novels *Trilby* and *Tarr* (1918) in relation to Bourdieu’s concept of the cultural field, which advances a social reading of bohemianism that incorporates aspects of gender and sexuality. Her analysis is insightful with regards to individual works of art, but she omits analysis of the publishing context from which these novels arose. An understanding of the American illustrated magazine field during this period helps explain the creation and selling of *Trilby* to a mass audience primed, by the likes of Gilder at *Century Magazine*, to appreciate it. Lisa Tickner, “Bohemianism and the Cultural Field: *Trilby* and *Tarr*,” *Art History* 34, no. 5 (November 2011): 979-1011.

### ***Scribner's Monthly's* Support for the “New Men” and the Founding of the Society of American Artists**

The press in general were very supportive of the “younger artists” but Gilder, with *Scribner's Monthly*, was their greatest champion amongst the periodicals. The regular column, “Culture and Progress” reported on issues concerning the visual arts and offered some of the strongest criticism of the Academy and praise for the Society of American Artists published in general interest magazines. The column was unsigned, but each month the author would have come from a hand-full of contributors who regularly had pieces on the visual arts published in the magazine: Clarence Cook, Russell Sturgis, Charles de Kay, William Crary Brownell or most probably Richard Watson Gilder.<sup>153</sup>

“Culture and Progress” in the June issue of 1875 offered its yearly review of the Academy exhibition and clearly set the terms of criticism which would be repeated with greater frequency and force in the proceeding years. The review praised some of the “young promisers” who were attracting attention in the press that year, alongside a careful selection of established artists whose styles resonated with the artistic philosophy of the “new men”: La Farge, George Inness and Winslow Homer. Considerable space was reserved for criticism of the Academy's selection committee.

The traditional or obsolescent methods of Bierstadt, Casilear, James Hart, Morgan, Cropsey, J. G. Brown, Henry Peters Gray,

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<sup>153</sup> Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 109. Russell Sturgis was a close associate of Clarence Cook, with whom he had founded the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art in 1863 which had aspired to be an American chapter of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. For a history of the society and its publication, *The New Path*, see, Linda Ferber, William H. Gerdts, Kathleen A. Foster, and Susan P. Casteras, *The New Path: Ruskin and the American Pre-Raphaelites* (New York: The Brooklyn Museum, 1985). More recent scholarship on the American Pre-Raphaelite movement was published in a series of commentaries titled “What's in a name: The American Pre-Raphaelites,” in *American Art*. The essay by Sophie Lynford describes the spirit of social dissention that united the members whilst that of Kenneth John Myers identifies ironic continuities between the artistic approach of the American Pre-Raphaelites and the landscape artists now known as the “Hudson River School”. Sophie Lynford, “A Dissenting Realism: Style, Ideology, and the American Pre-Raphaelite Movement,” *American Art* 35, no. 3 (Fall, 2021): 45-51. Kenneth John Myers, “Radically Anti-Modern: The “Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art” in Historical Context,” *American Art* 35, no. 3 (Fall, 2021): 52-57. Brownell was a friend of La Farge and the critic at the *New York World*, as well as *The Nation* between 1879 and 1881, and is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

and Huntington, and others similar to them, receive a very full showing; but we question whether the hanging-committee has given due weight to tendencies of a very different kind now generally asserting themselves among certain younger painters.<sup>154</sup>

The reviewer demanded greater “aesthetic hygiene” at next year’s annual exhibition.<sup>155</sup> Such a comment relates the depth of the antipathy against the “Hudson River School,” that its mere presence threatened to infect American aesthetics and reveals a fundamental difference of opinion with the Academy with regards to its function. In the eyes of the reviewer the Academy was there to direct and nurture aesthetics by encouraging certain schools and omitting others. In the eyes of the academicians their role was to serve American art and the public in their entirety, by hosting an annual competition of competing styles which reflected the breadth of different approaches and philosophies. The *Scribner’s* reviewer claimed that “there is a class above this, in which we come at once to real feeling, and a consequent introduction of technical methods which have something of originality and appropriateness about them.”<sup>156</sup> This general description of criteria for “higher” art was given fuller expression in Brownell’s popular essay for *Scribner’s Monthly*, “The Younger Painters of America” in which he explained that the “younger artists” had equipped themselves with superior European technique and put this skill to the service of art which aimed higher than the imitation of nature.

[The Academy] shuns ideality as something profane, substituting therefor what is known in conservative American art circles as “truth”; in the second place, for real truth - the essential, spiritual, vital force of nature, however manifested it substitutes what is known as “fidelity”.<sup>157</sup>

The critics at *Scribner’s Monthly* attacked the Academy for both its art and its organization. Aesthetically they were opposed to the unimaginative, overly literal art of the so-called “Hudson River school”.

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<sup>154</sup> “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, June, 1875, 251.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, May, 1880, 1.

Politically they were opposed to the Academy on the basis that it promoted contrasting aesthetic views and did not recognize their aesthetic vision as inherently superior, despite its European heritage. For this reason the coverage of the visual arts tended to give equal weight to undermining the Academy as an institution, criticizing members of the art establishment on aesthetic grounds and promoting the work of painters, young and old, with whom they shared a sense of mission and usually personal friendship. The 1875 review's brief descriptions of a selection of the art works on display at the Academy exhibition demonstrate the close connections between the individuals. Wyatt Eaton, William Merritt Chase and Jervis McEntee were amongst the "younger artists" *Scribner's* praised in particular, whilst the most lavish acclaim was reserved for John La Farge's *Cupid and Psyche* (fig. 1.18), described by the reviewer as:

The only work in the entire Academy which reaches the high imaginative plane. [...] The attitude of Psyche is rare and graceful, and the whole is saved by the solemn chord of color, which strikes upon our sensibilities much as might a strain of music from Gluck's "Orpheus and Eurydice;" stealing across from the dim, mystical blue of the left side, through the curiously interwoven specks of conflicting yet harmonious color in the two figures, and then passing off in a deep purplish tinge at the right, which fairly seems to vibrate with melody.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 251-2.



Figure 1.18. John La Farge, *Psyche*, 1873. Oil on panel, 41 x 22 cm, Ruth Chandler Williamson Gallery, Scripps College, Claremont, CA.

*Scribner's Monthly* was one of only two popular periodicals to cover the protest exhibition organized by Helena de Kay Gilder at Cottier and Co. in April 1875.<sup>159</sup> The exhibition displayed mostly female artists who were pupils of La Farge or William Morris Hunt, and therefore the exhibition was ignored by many critics as an amateur event.<sup>160</sup> The *Scribner's* reviewer (probably Clarence Cook or Richard Watson Gilder) was eager to emphasize an aesthetic fraternity and continuity with members of the older generation, who were “misunderstood” or disregarded by the Academy.<sup>161</sup> In effect it was concerned to give a sense

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<sup>159</sup> *Appleton's* was the other. George William Sheldon was probably the author of the *Appleton's* review.

<sup>160</sup> Zalesch, “Competition and Conflict,” 109.

<sup>161</sup> Helena de Kay Gilder, writing of her dismay at the treatment she and her friends received from the Academy in 1875, explained, “‘It was so wholesale- [Francis] Lathrop,



of historical cultural pedigree to this apparently “new” and revolutionary American art that shunned direct reproductive truth in favor of artistic feeling and bold technique. This review was in essence a defense of John La Farge.

it was designedly made up in such a way as to represent only a certain style, or several kindred styles, of painting (especially those with which the Academy has little sympathy); and the circumstance suggests that it would be interesting to have frequent exhibitions on some such plan, in order to keep fully before our eyes what is going on in different directions among the artists.<sup>162</sup>

The two most noteworthy canvases on display, according to the reviewer, were “Girl at the Fountain,” by William Morris Hunt (fig. 1.19), a painting which clearly owes a lot in style and subject matter to the Barbizon school, and “The Lady of Shalott,” “a serene and solemn picture-poem” that combines Barbizon School plein-air technique with a romantic, Pre-Raphaelite subject by La Farge (fig. 1.20). These paintings, which were already familiar pieces, having been painted in c. 1852 and 1862 respectively, were unabashedly European in subject and style.<sup>163</sup> The reviewer’s praise for these two well-known paintings was therefore a signpost for the cultured reader pointing towards the qualities in art that the magazine was supporting.

Despite this partisanship, the review of the Cottier and Co. protest exhibition in the June 1875 issue of *Scribner’s* was comparatively short next to a much more detailed write up of the Academy’s exhibition. Helena de Kay Gilder’s involvement or art was not mentioned and the author focused on the work of the male painters despite the exhibition being mostly composed of works by female artists. In addition to La Farge and Hunt, Albert Pinkham Ryder, Francis Lathrop, Abbott H. Thayer

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[Albert Pinkham] Ryder, Mrs. [Susan] Carter, MRO [Maria Oakey Dewing] and me. So we are conspiring! Cottier, through F. Lathrop, has offered his room. Mr. La Farge who was very angry, will countenance and admit. Lathrop will execute. R [Richard Watson Gilder] will send the press.” Journal of Richard Watson and Helena de Kay Gilder, Archives of American Art, reel 285, frames 507, 506.

<sup>162</sup> “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, June, 1875, 253.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

and John W. Bolles are all mentioned by name, whilst Elizabeth Bigelow Greene and Maria Oakey Dewing are the only female artists to receive specific praise, and in the case of Oakey Dewing, that was as a “beginner”.<sup>164</sup>



Figure 1.19. William Morris Hunt, *Girl at the Fountain*, 1852-54. Oil on canvas, 117 x 90 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1.20. John La Farge, *The Lady of Shalott*, c. 1862. Oil on canvas, 20 x 36 cm, The New Britain Museum of American Art.

The following year *Scribner's* followed the majority of periodicals in focusing upon the centenary exhibition at Philadelphia. This display of American art past and present provided the reviewer with the opportunity to cast judgement on the state of American art, and to justify its importance to the readership, and society more generally.<sup>165</sup> Art was always a contested cultural space of competing interests, but the 1876 Centennial provided a window into this for the public, who attended with “universal devotion” at this point of potential fundamental change. The review of the fine art section at the Centennial, published in November’s issue of *Scribner's Monthly*, provides a neat summation of the popularity of art amongst the public and the disappointing state of American art through the eyes of those like Gilder, who saw themselves as part of the new generation.

It is the universal testimony, also, that this part of the exhibition is not in any way what could be desired [...] respectable mediocrity is the rule [...] Still, it is here, among the pictures and statuary, that the great masses of visitors find their highest satisfactions, and the return for their fees of admission.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>165</sup> This review was probably written by Richard Watson Gilder himself, who only managed to visit the exhibition in September.

<sup>166</sup> “Topics of the Time: American Art,” *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1876, 126.

The review notes that the display of public interest in art at the exhibition “mean(s) a great deal with relation to the future of art in this country.”<sup>167</sup> But Gilder clearly wanted to do more than host polite discussions on the merits and detractions of the latest exhibitions. Rather, one gets the sense in this review that the editorship had set themselves apart from the masses, in a position of judgement privileged by experience and knowledge.

To those who have spent many days in the London National Gallery, in the galleries of the Louvre, in the halls of Dresden, in the palaces of Florence, and among the exhaustless art-treasures of Rome, the exhibition at Philadelphia can have only a subordinate interest. The poverty and the contrast must seem great, and, to an extent, painful; but to the majority of visitors, the present exhibition is [...] a superlative light, - a revelation of achievements, the possibility of which they had never conceived.<sup>168</sup>

Richard Watson Gilder had not visited Europe when this review was published, and so we may identify the voice of Helena de Kay Gilder behind this attitude. Her frustrating experience at the National Academy of Design and the educational opportunities offered could have also informed the review’s criticism of American art’s management:

Our art has been desultory, patchy and partial. The absence of life-schools has driven our artists all to landscape, or sent them abroad and kept them there [...] So this is one of the good results for which we confidently look:- a general development of art throughout the country, and the establishment of art schools of real excellence in all the American cities.<sup>169</sup>

The 1876 Centennial exhibition, although mediocre in aesthetic quality according to *Scribner’s Monthly*, had provided evidence of the “innate love of art” that could be cultivated and harvested to positive effect. However, this “art feeling” was uninformed and required direction, which was lacking from institutions like the Academy of Design in New York (here the magazine is clearly considering the economic bourgeois

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

element of its readership, with the inclination but not the knowledge to appreciate high culture). *Scribner's Monthly*, ideally placed through Gilder in close relation to the new generation of American artists, saw the opportunity to assume the abdicated position of cultural authority, and take a pro-active approach in its arts coverage. The review confidently declared that it was looking forward to “the only general movement in art that our young country has ever known, [...] stimulus and direction have come just when we needed it.”<sup>170</sup>

Approximately half of the review's discussion of American art was taken up defending the importance of art to the nation from an economic perspective. Citing the example of The Great Exhibition of 1851, it argued that great advantages would be derived from improvements to design in American manufacturing, that would be a biproduct of the general population's elevation in taste from experience of good art. In this line of argument, the knowing reader may perceive elements of a broader “aesthetic” philosophy that put its faith in the holistic benefits offered to all of society through the pursuit of beauty in all things. Art needed to be a national concern, worthy of serious contemplation from the highest authorities, in order for the nation to progress in a healthy manner. As Gilder himself put it, “Universal art cultivation is the soil from which will naturally and inevitably spring a thousand interests and industries that will minister to American prosperity, comfort, luxury, and refinement.”<sup>171</sup> Of course Gilder perceived the value of art in its more metaphysical qualities but his willingness to justify its value to the nation in materialistic terms that the economic bourgeoisie could readily appreciate is an indication firstly of the class constituency of a significant proportion of the readership, and secondly of his patriotic interest for American society as a whole.

“Art and Progress” in the June 1877 issue provided a familiarly negative review of the Academy's annual exhibition. The author, probably Richard Watson Gilder, used less space attacking the Academy or the

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 127.

older artists, instead choosing to defend the “younger artists”. Gilder emphasized their status as students and their promise in place of their accomplishments. The article started hyperbolically:

This year the new men have fairly carried the exhibition and the world by storm [...] these baby artists have yet to prove that they can stand alone. Methods and technicalities are one thing, and art is another. They have learned how to talk, hereafter it will appear whether they have anything to say. But certainly we do not see any reason in the condemnation which has been lavished upon these cunning youths.<sup>172</sup>

This review joined the general trend of praising the work of Duveneck and Chase, particularly their paintings of the emaciated Turkish page boy, which had been prominently hung by the Academy and created great publicity that year (figs. 1.2 and 1.3).

Chase’s canvas was referred to in the review as “a clever study”. This description has more to it than may initially meet the eye, for the notion and status of a “study”, as opposed to the sketch or a finished painting had a specific implication in the context of America in 1877. Critics of looser painting styles that were exhibited by painters replicating European trends often attacked artists for being too lazy or timid to finish their pictures properly. A common rebuttal against such attacks was to claim that a work of art was intended as a “study”, in which the artist was treating the subject fancifully to test aspects of composition, technique, style, and above all to demonstrate his art “feeling” at the current time.<sup>173</sup> This description of *Unexpected Intrusion (The Turkish Page)* was therefore a defense based upon a claim to an understanding of its motives; to a kinship with the artist himself. This was repeated more confidently in the review’s description of Duveneck’s painting (fig. 1.3):

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<sup>172</sup> “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, June 1877, 263.

<sup>173</sup> William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, July, 1880, 333. For a prolonged discussion of the implications of the study vs painting debate in American critical discourse see, Karen Georgi, “Defining Landscape Painting in Nineteenth-Century American Critical Discourse. Or, Should Art “Deal in Wares the Age Has Need of”?,” *Oxford Art Journal* 29, no. 2 (2006): 229-245.

[a] gorgeous painting of still-life, of which the attenuated Turkish Page is a mere accessory, [...] a brutal picture. [...] The colors are piled on with savagery. For all that, it is a glowing and splendid canvas, painted with delight, and with an artist's love for color, if not with an artist's love for human nature. As a studio study it is full of promise.<sup>174</sup>

The qualified nature of this praise, and similar descriptions of the works of others suggests that the younger artists did not receive the universal acclaim at the exhibition of 1877 that some of the newspaper reviews implied, and that the criticisms were clearly felt by the artists' supporters. The assessment of a painting by Will H. Low who was based in France and became a member of the SAA in 1878 anticipates criticism of the "younger painters" for simply imitating the styles of their European masters: "We can barely mention Low, who has a very clever Revery in the Carolus Duran manner, a manner which he will do well to forsake as soon as possible."<sup>175</sup>

Still, key members of the Art Students League, and what would crystalize as the Society of America Artists shortly after the 1877 Academy exhibition received fulsome praise. Abbott H. Thayer's work was described as,

strong as it is gentle and refined; he shows not only taste but brains. We wish we could be as confident of the future of these showy Munich boys as we are of his.<sup>176</sup>

Wyatt Eaton's *Harvesters at Rest* (fig. 1.21) was described confidently as a picture, rather than a study or sketch, and praised specifically for a perceived lack of foreign influence in his style, whilst simultaneously giving credibility to his work through an association with Jean Francois Millet.

His *Harvesters at Rest* has a solidity and reality of drawing and a seriousness of purpose which make it a picture, and not a mere bit of decoration. Whether or not it augurs well for him, Eaton has certainly avoided acquiring the mannerisms of his European masters. Gerome was his teacher, but there is nothing of Gerome's

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<sup>174</sup> "Culture and Progress," *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1877, 263.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

personality in Eaton's work; he had the advantage of Millet's friendship and influence, yet the *Harvesters at Rest* is utterly unlike Millet both in spirit and in method.<sup>177</sup>

Millet was an artist who had received mixed reactions in America, generally owing to class distinctions, and affinity with French culture (he was best received in Boston). The association of the "newer artists" with the likes of Millet in France was therefore a very deliberate choice meant to underline their cultural superiority.<sup>178</sup> Millet was an artist that *Scribner's* (and *Century Magazine* after 1881) referred to frequently. Millet's early biography, written by Alfred Sensier, was translated by Helena de Kay and serialized between the September 1880 and January 1881 issues of *Scribner's Monthly*, before being published as a book by the Boston publishers James R. Osgood.<sup>179</sup>



Figure 1.21. Wyatt Eaton, *Harvesters at Rest*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 115 x 147 cm, Smith College Museum of Art.

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Laura L. Meixner, "Popular Criticism of Jean-François Millet in Nineteenth-Century America," *The Art Bulletin* 65, no. 1 (March 1983): 94-105. Laura L. Meixner, "Jean-François Millet's *Angelus* in America," *American Art Journal* 12, no. 4 (Autumn 1980): 78-84.

<sup>179</sup> Other notable articles on Millet published by Gilder include: "Recollections of Jean François Millet" by Wyatt Eaton (*Century*, May 1889); "The Story of Jean François Millet's Younger Life" by Pierre Millet (*Century*, January 1893); "Jean François Millet's Life at Barbizon" by Pierre Millet (*Century*, April 1894); "A Notable Masterpiece by Millet" by Frederick Keppel (*Century*, July 1901).



Following the fallout of 1877 and the subsequent establishment of the SAA, the group's inaugural exhibition at the Kurtz Gallery, Madison Square, New York in March 1878 received predictably generous praise from "The Old Cabinet".<sup>180</sup> The review began by stating that,

EVERY one interested in the progress of art in America must have been gratified with the formation of "The Society of American Artists," with the dignified manner in which it has been conducted, and with the splendid artistic success of its first exhibition. [...] there was never before made a representative exhibition of paintings by Americans of such a high grade of excellence,—with so insignificant a proportion of downright poor work.<sup>181</sup>

The review did not single out specific works or artists for praise but rather sought to assure the readership that "far from being a "foreign" thing," the new movement was in actuality "a most gratifying augury of the true sort of nationality in our art, [...] recognized as such by the most intelligent part of the public and the press."<sup>182</sup> Gilder's defensiveness was caused by criticism from some of the newspapers of paintings in the exhibition for being too strange and inaccessible in their alien subject matter and lack of finish (fig. 1.22). Gilder went on to defend the artists who had sought training in Europe because of the desire for "comradeship [...], mutual criticism, and the indefinable and indispensable "art atmosphere"".<sup>183</sup> The establishment of the SAA was evidence for Gilder that such an atmosphere was growing in the cultural centers of the United States and that *Scribner's Monthly* could play a significant role in supporting its development.

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<sup>180</sup> "The Old Cabinet," *Scribner's Monthly*, May 1878, 147.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1.22. "The Society of American Artists," back page to *Puck*, March 27, 1878.

The 1878 SAA exhibition review was appropriately positioned after an "Old Cabinet" piece on philistinism which warned that experience does not equate to taste.<sup>184</sup> Public taste and the role of artists and critics was also the topic of discussion in "The Old Cabinet" for the following month's issue.

strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a difference in taste. The difference is in the presence of taste, or the absence of it. [...] But it should be borne in mind that there is such a thing as a growth in taste, and that in the early stages of growth mistakes will always be made.<sup>185</sup>

For Gilder and his associates art was spiritual and required the interpretation of special individuals ordained by society to act as its guide

<sup>184</sup> This discussion of philistinism is an indication on the influence of Matthew Arnold on Gilder, discussed in the third chapter.

<sup>185</sup> "The Old Cabinet," *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1878, 289.

through the “early stages of growth” that the nation was currently experiencing. The good critic, according to Gilder,

can tell whether a given work of art has a deep and abiding charm, or a superficial prettiness; whether it is imitative in a good way, or in a bad way; whether it is the product of a strong nature or a weak nature: For it becomes more and more apparent, [...] (that) the question becomes one of individuality, of power in the artist himself. It is this that makes authors and artists so sensitive to criticism of their work; for they know that it is not the work that is being criticised so much as their own breeding, their own immortal souls.<sup>186</sup>

Until this moment the criticisms in *Scribner's* had been limited to the Academy and select members of the art establishment. On this occasion Gilder went further by criticizing the art opinions of “literary men”:

literary men, as a rule, are very uncertain judges of painting and sculpture. [...] An artist can say nothing more scornful of an opinion given on his own work, [...] than that it is a literary opinion.<sup>187</sup>

Here Gilder was taking aim at the genteel literary tradition which had dominated art criticism up until the 1860s (members of the consecrated avant-garde within the Cultural bourgeoisie). It was these writers that had insisted that the American literary and artistic schools should be considered “kindred spirits” who defined themselves by relation to the American landscape. The relationship between literature and art was never as equal as Asher B. Durand’s famous painting suggested, with many “literary men” assuming a position of authority as art critics on the basis of knowledge of American literature and landscape rather than art. Such attitudes displayed an assertion that aesthetic imagination and sentiment should be thought of as secondary to narrative and the representation of natural reality. For Gilder, the successful painters of the American landscape that these genteel critics understood and championed, like Bierstadt and Church, knew much about the nation’s

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

geography and the minutiae of nature, but nothing about art. The “younger men” distinguished themselves through their art “feeling” and required critics who were blessed with the same sensitivity and sense of vocation; who came from the same “habitus”.

It is reasonable to assume that Gilder’s swipe at the genteel tradition of art criticism was a poorly veiled disparagement of *Scribner’s* great rival, *Harper’s Monthly*, where George William Curtis (1824 – 1892), a personal friend to many of the “Hudson River School” artists such as John Frederick Kensett, held the editorial sway in aspects of culture and the arts.<sup>188</sup> *Harper’s* did cover the SAA’s 1878 exhibition in an article titled, “A New Departure in American Art,” written by George William Sheldon, who was the critic from the *New York Post*. Just a year older than Gilder, Sheldon was generally sympathetic to the aims and ideals of the “younger artists” associated with the SAA, but his piece for *Harper’s* was careful in its neutrality on the issue. This was in keeping with the magazine’s general approach to avoid risk of causing offence at all costs. Sheldon’s article explained the separation from the Academy as a natural evolution rather than a rupture which threatened to gut the senior institution of fresh blood and cultural authority. He conscientiously communicated the facts of how the SAA was formed and the roles of all its members, without offering analysis or speculation of the implications. He was careful to stress the continuities between the Academy and the SAA by pointing out that three of the founding members were academicians, two were associate academicians, and that all had retained these positions at the Academy. He also claimed that the SAA did not see itself as a direct rival or threat to the Academy, in contradiction of the letters exchanged between founding members Helena de Kay Gilder and Wyatt Eaton.<sup>189</sup> The stark contrast between the tone of coverage on the SAA offered by *Scribner’s Monthly* and its older, great rival *Harper’s Monthly* puts the personal character of Gilder’s

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<sup>188</sup> Samuel Stillman Conant, “George William Curtis,” *Century Magazine*, September 1882, 578-579.

<sup>189</sup> George William Sheldon, “A New Departure in American Art,” *Harper’s Monthly*, April 1878, 765.

contributions into even greater relief. Gilder was shaping the magazine he worked for in his own image, evolving the blueprint for an illustrated monthly magazine in America from a genteel reflection of conservative attitudes to a platform for ideas meant to challenge the cultural aspirations of its readers.

The sense of artistic elitism espoused in “The Old Cabinet” articles from 1878 was stated still more plainly in the review of the Society’s exhibition in June 1879. The SAA was “supposed to appeal to artists, amateurs, and connoisseurs rather than to the wider public.”<sup>190</sup> This review was enthusiastic about the works of Chase, Eaton, La Farge and Shirlaw, but also revealed a softening of tone towards the Academy, whose exhibition that year had “left a good impression.”<sup>191</sup> However, credit for the improvements at the Academy, according to the *Scribner’s* reviewer, belonged to the leadership shown by the SAA.

More attention is being devoted to technique, and the impulse of the young malcontents who founded the Art Students League and the Society of American Artists has been most healthy. We seldom see, nowadays, the panoramic leviathans that used to block the walls of the Academy.<sup>192</sup>

The review concluded with an optimistic summary of the state of the arts in America in 1879. The reason for the success of recent years was due to the “foundation [...] of a good technique.”<sup>193</sup> This is perhaps a surprisingly practical insistence on the part of the author, rather than something more abstract and high-minded such as “poetry” or “spirit”. However, the evocation of technique is not as straightforward as it may at first appear. Its true meaning for the critics at *Scribner’s* was more nuanced than the ability to imitate visual reality in paint – after all this was their consistent criticism of the likes of Bierstadt and Church. What was really meant was sufficient technical ability to paint like an artist, to create paintings that possessed a discernably individual style and looked like art

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<sup>190</sup> “Culture and Progress,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, June 1879, 311.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 312.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

rather than nature. And by art, Gilder and his colleagues meant European painting.

### **“The Younger Painters of America”**

William Crary Brownell’s essay, “The Younger Painters of America”, which the magazine published in three parts: May 1880, July 1880 and July 1881, offered the most comprehensive consideration of the “new movement” amongst the popular periodicals or the press. Brownell similarly identified technique obtained through tutelage abroad as a defining feature of the new movement:

One of the most distinctive things that strike one in looking at the works of nearly all of the new men [...] is, perhaps, the strength of their technique. [...] Mr. Duveneck, Mr. Shirlaw, Mr. Chase, Mr. Eaton, Mr. Weir, and their fellows, had spent years of careful and diligent work under such masters as Diez, Piloty, Gérôme and Lindenschmidt; they were fresh from studios where real painting was done and its principles were understood; to say – as was so often said – that they painted in the Munich manner or the Paris manner was, [...] merely to say that they painted as good painters paint”<sup>194</sup>

The American art establishment was criticized for its “provinciality” by Brownell, who explained that in order for American art to progress the American school (meaning the “Hudson River School”) had to end.<sup>195</sup> The essay’s opening paragraph is tinged with a sense of cool pride when stating that,

the American school of painting seems almost to have disappeared – or has, at the least calculation, lost the distinctive characterlessness which won for it its name and recognition. We are beginning to paint as other people paint. [...] the destruction of our old canons and standards was necessary.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part I,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, May, 1880, 4.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 1.

Brownell offered little conciliatory prose, and it is clear that he still considered there to be an ongoing conflict between the generations of artists, despite the fact that the Academy had displayed works by the “younger artists” prominently in their annual exhibitions every year since the drama of 1877, a point acknowledged by Brownell later in the same essay.

The American School of painting was wholly opposed to their spirit and methods; It was represented in portraiture, not by Page, but by Huntington; in *genre*, not by La Farge, but by Eastman Johnson; in landscape, not by Inness or Martin, but by — what a galaxy of names occurs to one here, from Church and Kensett to Bierstadt, and William Hart!<sup>197</sup>

“The Younger Painters of America” provided the most fully formed statement regarding the aims, values and attitudes of the Society of American Artists. Brownell defined these succinctly, stating that the Society had “hostility to everything mechanical, enthusiasm for everything genuinely artistic.”<sup>198</sup> He identified an additional characteristic to superior technique that all of the “younger men” shared, which implied their mystical and superior attitude in relation to artistic genius. He explained that the artists he had mentioned in his first article, namely Duveneck, Eakins, Chase, Eaton, Shirlaw, Ryder, Currier and Sargent possessed a:

genuine impulse to paint, [...]. This is at bottom the test one applies to a painter, or indeed to an artist of any sort, of course. Was he born, “cut out,” as they, say in New England, for a painter? or is it rather the retail dry-goods business, say, to which he was naturally adapted but which some perverse fate prevented him from adopting?<sup>199</sup>

This snobbish remark was a jibe at the senior academicians, many of whom came from middle and working-class backgrounds, and were criticized by patrician critics for importing a mercantile philosophy to

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 6.

their management of the Academy.<sup>200</sup> It is plausible that Brownell's interpretation of the friction between the SAA and the Academy in terms of social class came from, or was meant to appeal to, Richard and Helena Gilder.

Brownell attempted to explain for the readership how this "artistic impulse" manifested itself in the art of the new movement through imaginative and romantic ideals:

Nature is to them a material rather than a model; they lean toward feeling rather than toward logic; toward beauty, or at least artistic impressiveness, rather than toward literalness; toward illusion rather than toward representation.<sup>201</sup>

This explanation, however general, provided the readership with a sincere explanation of the motives of the new movement, as Brownell understood them. His essay was not merely intended to celebrate or defend the new movement, but also explain it to a public that the editors of *Scribner's* saw as fertile ground to cultivate the "art atmosphere" that was lacking and that they believed was necessary for American civilization to develop to a position of equals on the global stage. This provides evidence that the magazine's management saw themselves as culturally apart from substantial parts of their audience, and perhaps more importantly that this "under-cultured" segment of the readership was receptive to possibilities of advancement through knowledge and experience, even if vicariously via the pages of an illustrated magazine, of high culture.

"The Younger Painters of America" was not wholly positive in relation to the new movement and did offer some constructive criticism, particularly with regards to a perceived affectation of style. Again, Brownell was at pains to try and explain the terms of his criticism to his readers. "It is not quite the grammar, but perhaps better the rhetoric of art; [...] it is at least the product of cultivation, and the only danger of it is that it may

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<sup>200</sup> Charles de Kay, "Art or Business?," *New York Times*, May 6, 1877, 6.

Clarence Cook, "Academy Criticism," *New York Tribune*, June 9, 1877, 4.

<sup>201</sup> Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part I," 8.



thwart or even stifle original force.” However, Brownell was sure to diminish his criticism and instead drew focus upon the public and the art establishment’s ability to appreciate such art. “In the absence of any rigorous public opinion, and in the presence of a professional opinion whose provinciality and lifelessness are only too strong, it could not well be that they should betray any hampering deference to style.”<sup>202</sup> Few opportunities to criticize the older generation of artists were missed by Brownell in his first essay.

Brownell also reported some of the common criticisms of the younger artists, specifically that their journey from “proto-martyrs - a position they probably contemplated with a good deal of satisfaction” to leading figures in American art had made them “a trifle “cocky.””<sup>203</sup> Ironically, the essay’s first instalment was similarly described by one critic, who Brownell chose to take issue with at great length at the start of his second essay. The reviewer had described the article as “vicious and petty” and took aim at Brownell, insisting that “a writer who commiserates the state of American art at a time when *the* Church and Kensett represented it, has little claim to respect for his opinion.”<sup>204</sup> Brownell was so hurt by this criticism that he quoted it verbatim twice in his response. He reacted with a long dismissal of the American landscape school, which is useful in revealing that the antipathy for an imagined conspiracy against the “younger men” was still strong for Brownell writing in 1880.

There can be no doubt that *the* Church and Kensett still have a large following [...] there does exist, among conservative people whose familiarity with pictures is out of all proportion to their susceptibility to art, a considerable number who may be called the *clientelle* of Church and Kensett. [...] (Brownell’s critic) does not speak for himself simply; the temper of what he says betrays his

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 3-4. Brownell’s description of “proto-martyrs” could be used to describe numerous members who had reacted dramatically to perceived slights from the Academy in recent years, including Helena de Kay Gilder, John La Farge or Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

<sup>204</sup> William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part II,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, July, 1880, 321-322.

consciousness of weighty and, perhaps, somewhat impervious backing.<sup>205</sup>

Brownell goes no further in describing the particulars of this “impervious backing” but it is very likely that he had the Academy’s management in mind and that for all the posturing and self-satisfaction, the fact that the “younger men” were still not running American art was a source of frustration. Brownell’s negative reference to “conservative people” may also strike the reader as slightly strange given that these same conservative people would ordinarily have been front and center of the target market for a literary illustrated magazine in the mold of *Harper’s Monthly*. Brownell’s rhetoric therefore provides us with further evidence that the group of artists and writers centered around the Gilders saw themselves as part of a cultural, if not political avant-garde.

*The Church and Bierstadt* were repeated victims in this exchange between authors, singled out by Brownell for particular personal criticism.

Mr. Church's vogue [...] has never been of service to the best interests of American art; [...] The essence of his art is theatricality; [...] The difference between Mr. Church's report of nature and Mr. Bierstadt's is plainly one of degree; and if the fame of Mr. Bierstadt is more evidently in decadence than Mr. Church's, it is because the former has, one is tempted to say, carried the joke too far.<sup>206</sup>

After two pages Brownell’s diatribe on the shortcomings of Church and Bierstadt eventually gave way in the second paper to discussion of the relative merits of other artists represented at the SAA exhibitions of 1878 and 1879. George Fuller was, like George Inness and John La Farge, an artist from the older generation that Brownell identified as laying the groundwork for the new movement with his “expression of emotion in the presence of nature”.<sup>207</sup> Brownell identified the same poetic treatment of nature in the work of one of the youngest artists, Abbott H. Thayer, and

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 322-323.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 324.

much of the second part of “The Younger Painters of America” was taken up with a combined critique of Fuller and Thayer and in particular their paintings *The Romany Girl* (fig. 1.23) and *Autumn Afternoon in Berkshire* (fig. 1.24). Brownell also gave a generous amount of space to descriptions of the watercolors of Henry Muhrman. For the most part his observations revolved around the merits of watercolor as a medium in the hands of an artist sufficiently sensitive as Muhrman to wield them and were used as occasions for Brownell to praise the SAA for their open mindedness in displaying watercolors alongside oil paintings and sculptures. Most interestingly however, Brownell used Muhrman’s *The Bather* (fig. 1.25) as a point of comparison with Duveneck’s *The Coming Man* (fig. 1.26) in order to illustrate a more general criticism of the younger artists on the basis of composition and a tendency to hide this limitation behind the expectation of informality conferred by the moniker “study”.

“The Coming Man” is scarcely more of a *picture* than “The Bather”; it is quite as lacking in that important element of a large work of art which we call structural composition. [...] A “study,” for example, may have great distinction of style, but it is naturally quite without value as a composition. And in the work of the new men studies abound. Many of them seem to have avoided any effort for excellence in composition out of a wholesome dread of formality. [...] Here, indeed, there is no structure whatever; it is simply impossible to make a “picture” out of a baby and a background.<sup>208</sup>

Brownell’s criticism of the younger men in this regard was soft and provided plenty of extenuating circumstances, but the point was clearly made that the “younger painters of America” still had much to learn. The issue of “the study” and the criticism that it was overused as an apology by critics on behalf of the younger artists was clearly an important angle of legitimate criticism to Brownell, as he dedicated the remainder of the second essay to the distinctions between what should rightfully be termed “studies” or “pictures”. Wyatt Eaton’s *Reverie* (fig. 1.27) was, in contrast to Duveneck’s “study”, a “gracefully and felicitously composed painting”.

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 330-332.

The correctness of its composition was, according to Brownell, due to the fact that it had been conceived of from the outset as a complete picture, rather than an occasion to be used to demonstrate an aspect of technique such as coloring or brushwork, or record the impression of a subject. According to Brownell, this was “the secret of what is called “picture-making,””<sup>209</sup>

## SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY.

VOL. XX.

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No. 3.

THE YOUNGER PAINTERS OF AMERICA.

SECOND PAPER.



THE ROMANY GIRL. (GEORGE FULLER.) OWNED BY L. T. WILLIAMS, ESQ.

SUCH a series of papers as this carries its aim upon its face; and as this is explanatory, descriptive and, so far as may be in a general way, critical, nothing that savors of

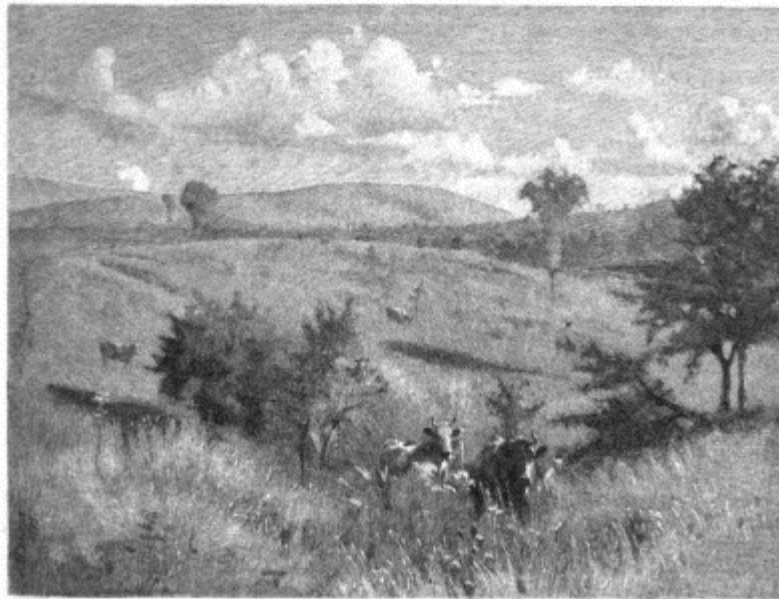
the controversial spirit need be suspected if a few words are here quoted from a critic who objected to the predecessor of this article as “vicious and petty.” A criticism upon a

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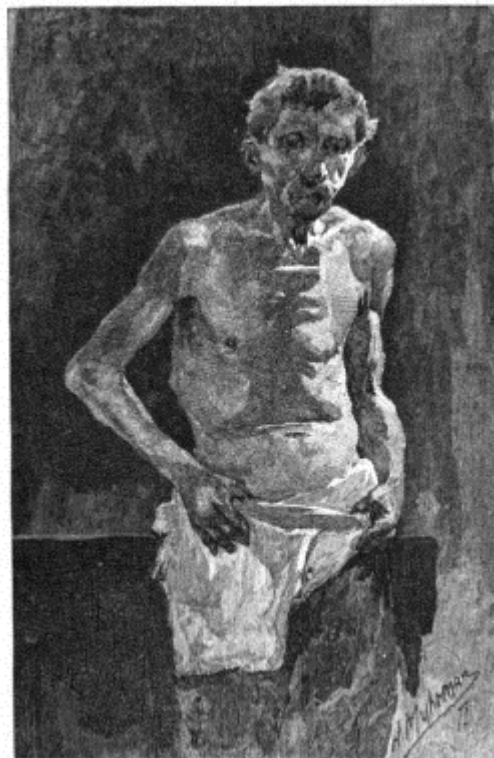
Figure 1.23. William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part II,” *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880, 321., Displaying engraving of George Fuller, *The Romany Girl*, (now lost).

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 333.



AUTUMN AFTERNOON IN BERKSHIRE. (ABBOTT H. THAYER.)

Figure 1.24. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part II," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880, 325., displaying engraving of Abbott H. Thayer, *Autumn Afternoon in Berkshire*, 1879, (now lost).



THE BATHER. (HENRY MUHRMAN.)

Figure 1.25. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part II," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880, 327., displaying engraving of Henry Muhrmann, *The Bather*.



THE COMING MAN. (FRANK DUENECK.)

Figure 1.26. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part II," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880, 328., displaying engraving of Frank Duveneck, *The Coming Man*.



REVERIE. (WYATT EATON.)

Figure 1.27. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part II," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1880, 329., displaying engraving of Wyatt Eaton, *Reverie*.

The third part of “The Younger Painter’s of America,” which appeared in the July 1881 issue of *Scribner’s Monthly* was more pedestrian in content. It is possible that Brownell’s initial impetus to promote and defend the SAA had waned in the year that elapsed between the publishing of his second and third articles. The SAA had completed its third annual exhibition to generally favorable reviews. Judging by the number of artists who were now associated with the “new movement” according to critics, Brownell must have been feeling more confident that the progress achieved would not be rowed back by a resurgent Academy and was therefore much less defensive.<sup>210</sup>

The article discussed at length the comparative merits of some of the newer and lesser-known artists associated with the SAA’s exhibitions: William Gedney Bunce, Douglas Volk, George W. Maynard, Louis C. Tiffany and Francis Lathrop. The most interesting aspect of this essay though was the inclusion of a discussion on the female artists associated with the movement. Brownell was clearly uncomfortable in discussing artists that he knew little about. He introduced the subject with reference to the female art classes of Boston, America’s most “chivalric” metropolis, which served as a pretext for a drawn-out description of the recently deceased William Morris Hunt’s art teaching. The works of Elizabeth Howard Bartol, Sarah Wyman Whitman (misidentified by Brownell as L. W. Whitman) and Helen Mary Knowlton were used as representative examples of the “successful women-painters of Boston.”<sup>211</sup> Brownell’s self-

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<sup>210</sup> On a personal professional level Brownell was also working as a staff writer for *The Nation* magazine during this period (1879-1881). *The Nation* was a self-styled weekly magazine aimed at an American urban intellectual elite based in New York – a rival to *Harper’s Weekly* that aimed to impart some of the cultural superiority of Boston’s *North American Review*; Charles Eliot Norton was arts editor at *The Nation* during this period. *The Nation* was edited by E. L. Godkin and aimed to provide criticism of culture and current affairs that avoided party political partisanship and newspaper sensationalism. In order to achieve this Godkin hired expert specialist writers in a variety of subjects including the likes of Brownell and Russell Sturgis. Godkin and Gilder exchanged writers fairly regularly. It is plausible that Brownell’s more reserved style in the third instalment of “The Younger Painters” was a product of his less overtly partisan work for *The Nation*, although Brownell remained close friends with many of the members of the SAA throughout his distinguished career as an arts and literature critic and editor.

<sup>211</sup> William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part III,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, July, 1881, 329-330.

confessed ignorance regarding the majority of their work suggests that these artists were selected out of expediency, probably due to the accessibility of their paintings for the purposes of making engravings. Brownell patronized and offered them faint praise, but the images of their works (figs. 1.28 - 1.30) and their inclusion in a serious essay, ostensibly as equals alongside the works by established male artists such as John Singer Sargent represented qualified progress. Mary Cassatt and Maria Oakey Dewing were the other two female artists discussed by Brownell in “The Younger Painters of America”. Cassatt’s *At the Opera* (fig. 1.31) was admired as a “good example of the better sort of “impressionism,”” one that was informed by a solid grasp of the fundamentals of painting as taught in the French Academy system.<sup>212</sup> Maria Oakey Dewing, one of Helena de Kay Gilder’s closest friends, was compared negatively to Cassatt, with reference to her *Portrait* (fig. 1.32), but Brownell offered sincere praise and acknowledgement that she was “in spirit and intention, one of the very few who can be termed the pioneers of the movement in painting which only yesterday every one was calling “ the new movement,”.”<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid., 333.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 334.





PORTRAIT. (MRS. L. W. WHITMAN.) OWNED BY CHARLES G. WHITE, ESQ.

Figure 1.28. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part III," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1881, 330., displaying engraving of Sarah Wyman Whitman, *Portrait*.



PORTRAIT OF A BOY. (ELIZABETH H. BARTOL.) OWNED BY MRS. T. L. LOTHROP.

Figure 1.29. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part III," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1881, 331., displaying engraving of Elizabeth Howard Bartol, *Portrait of a boy*.



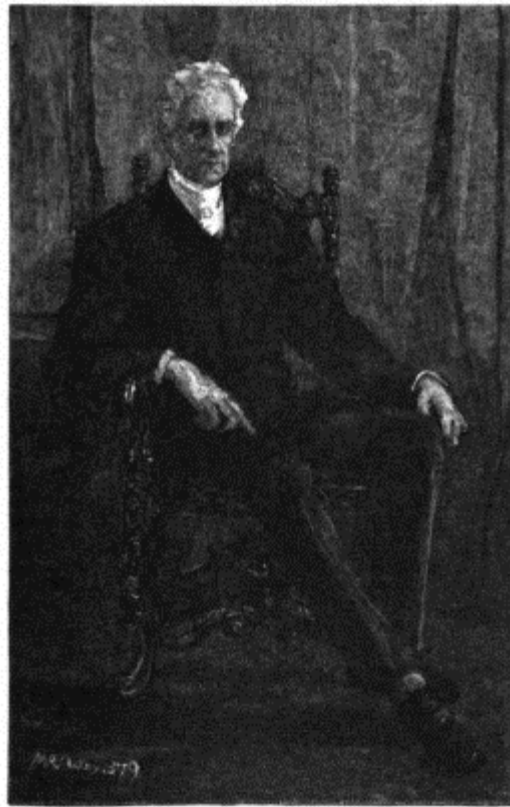
HEAD OF ITALIAN BOY. (HELEN M. KNOWLTON.)

Figure 1.30. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part III," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1881, 332., displaying engraving of Helen Mary Knowlton, *Head of Italian Boy*.



AT THE OPERA. (MARY S. CASSATT.) OWNED BY I. G. CASSATT, ESQ.

Figure 1.31. William Crary Brownell, "The Younger Painters of America, Part III," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1881, 333., displaying engraving of Mary Cassatt, *At The Opera*.



PORTRAIT. (MARIA R. OAKEY.)

Figure 1.32. William Crary Brownell, “The Younger Painters of America, Part III,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, July, 1881, 329., displaying engraving of Maria R. Oakey, *Portrait*.

“The Younger Painters of America” was the first detailed contact that many of the magazine’s readers would have knowingly had with the “new movement”. Many of the artists had submitted illustrations to *Scribner’s Monthly* but this was the first time their art was treated with the seriousness that established artists enjoyed in the pages of a major, internationally read periodical. The articles were lavishly produced with an abundance of engravings to animate the points of the author for the reader. The three articles were positioned on the opening page of each issue in which they appeared, a place normally reserved for popular articles on history, literature or major serialized novels. The prominence (and expenditure) given to this project is sound evidence of Richard Watson Gilder’s ascendancy to the position of Editor in Chief in all but title by this point in the magazine’s history.

This chapter has focused on the magazine’s reviews and coverage of the events that led up to and surrounded the founding of the SAA in 1877 and its immediate successful exhibitions in 1878 and 1879. *Scribner’s Monthly* was closer to these than any other periodical of its

class and took it upon itself to act as the new movement's unofficial spokesperson. The appraisals of the "younger painters of America" and their foils at the Academy of Design in New York should be read in the knowledge that they present a highly partisan account. However, *Scribner's Monthly*, under the editorial leadership provided by Richard Watson Gilder, did not restrict itself to these opinion pieces and articles on the dramatic events taking place in New York between 1875 and 1878. Since its inception in 1870 the magazine had gradually transformed itself into a "magazine of art" through the publishing of increasingly numerous and ambitious articles on a variety of subjects connected to the visual arts in America and abroad. Description and analysis of these articles form the basis for the following chapters.

## 2. Promoting American art: Patriotic and Democratic influences through the pages of *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*.

*Scribner's Monthly* steadily became an extension of Richard Watson Gilder's personality. Viewing the content and quality of the periodical between 1875, when his influence was steadily rising, and 1909 when he died, it is possible to draw lines of connection between various articles, contributors and the life of its editor. This is apparent with regards to the contents related to the visual arts, particularly contemporary American art, of which there was a great deal. The personal networks that existed between Richard Watson Gilder and his team at the magazine, and many of the most prominent American artists of the period has been a topic of interest to scholars and is one of the themes of the third chapter of this thesis.<sup>214</sup> Gilder's friendships and personal tastes come through much of the artistic substance of the magazine, but other material is not so readily accounted for. This includes articles about the technicalities of wood-engraving and printing processes, arguments over the trajectory of illustration, interventions into debates on tax policy as it related to the arts, public campaigns for better arts education and funding of public museums, pleas for better and increased patronage from the economic elite, demands for the beautification of cities and towns, and educational essays and series on the history of art. Scholarship on *Scribner's Monthly*/*Century Magazine* has discussed some of these topics, but I propose to present a purposefully diverse selection of material and explain how their inclusion in a popular literary magazine can be explained when the personality and aims of its editor are taken into account.

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<sup>214</sup> Jayme Alyson Yahr, "The Art of *The Century*: Richard Watson Gilder, the Gilder Circle, and the Rise of American Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012). Page Knox, "Publishing and Promoting a New York City Art World: Scribner's Illustrated Monthly, 1870–1881," in *New York, Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster, Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge, 2019), 90–105. Thayer Tolles, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens, his critics, and the new school of American Sculpture, 1875–1893" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2003).

It is important to consider this substantial tranche of material, because its inclusion in the magazine over such protracted periods of time cannot be dismissed as products of expediency. Art, in all its forms, whether it was illustrations or coverage of artistic masterpieces, trends and debates from around the world was usually very expensive, time consuming and logistically challenging. From the treatment of its front cover, to the patronage of the most popular artists, to the technical standards of its printing, the magazine went above and beyond its competitors and changed readers' expectations of what "literary" magazines should be. It is not unusual that the contents and character of a magazine should reflect the personality, as well as the tastes and interests of its editor, so what impulses inspired such rich and varied artistic matter in a magazine that started out primarily as a vehicle for serialized popular fiction from a successful publisher? This second chapter argues that this material should be considered in light of Richard Watson Gilder's patriotism, idealistic belief in American democracy, and sense of civic duty, in addition to his interests in securing his own position within the rapidly changing Gilded Age society discussed in the previous chapter.

A unifying theme amongst the biographies of Gilder is his unwavering patriotism.<sup>215</sup> The period in which Gilder grew up and rose to public prominence was highly significant to the formation of an American national identity, encompassing the period of reconstruction, the settlement of the West and the Gilded Age. This era saw the establishment of new cities and states, technological and economic development, the growth of American business and the so-called "robber

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<sup>215</sup> Arthur John, *The Best Years of the Century: Richard Watson Gilder, Scribner's Monthly, and Century Magazine, 1870-1909* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981). Herbert F. Smith, *Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1970). Gilder's early experiences helped to shape his patriotism. His father died of illness whilst serving as a minister to Union troops during the Civil War, and Gilder himself was proud of his own brief military service. He had enlisted, although underage with the consent of his mother, to the First Philadelphian Artillery on June 24, 1863, having previously been a member of a cadet militia company whilst growing up in New Jersey. Richard Watson Gilder and Rosamond Gilder (ed.), *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 22

barons” and the rise of America as an international financial and military power. It was also a period of political struggle and corruption, and Gilder’s sense of patriotism mediated through civic duty must be contextualized with this in mind.<sup>216</sup> As Gilder himself described, he advocated for “reasoning patriotism”; he was an idealist who managed to maintain a practical and critical view of the nation.<sup>217</sup> Writing in the magazine about Gilder’s public activities shortly after his death, Henry van Dyke described his editor as, “an American by physical and spiritual heredity, full of spontaneous and inevitable patriotism; but his Americanism was capable of self-examination, and he held his patriotic feelings as well as his political actions to a strict moral account.”<sup>218</sup> Gilder never publicly aligned the magazine with any particular political party, but was a staunch critic of American politics in general when it failed to deliver for the people, either through corruption or incompetence.<sup>219</sup> He found his sense of patriotic mission reflected in the circumstances of the magazine that he worked for. The magazine’s

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<sup>216</sup> Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 552-588.

<sup>217</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: What is Patriotism?,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1892, 630.

<sup>218</sup> Henry van Dyke, “Mr Gilder’s Public Activities: II. As A Moral Force In Politics,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1910, 627.

<sup>219</sup> Gilder’s personal attitude towards American politics is summed up in his reflections on Seth Low’s unsuccessful campaign to become mayor of New York in 1897, an election in which Gilder supported Low as the candidate for municipal reform in opposition to his opponents supported by business. “Whether we shall win or not I do not know. I have never concerned myself much about that, being willing to go along with the best crowd I know of, and, with much anxiety, pain, and trouble, contribute what little I can to the betterment of public affairs.” Richard Watson Gilder to G. E. Woodberry, September 16, 1897. Quotation taken from, Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 326. The magazine regularly assured readers of its political neutrality, for example: Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Some Stupidities Of The Tariff: The Duties On Art, Books, And Lumber,” *Century Magazine*, February 1905, 635.

The importance that Gilder placed on idealism and citizenship above party politics, and the effects of culture were stated in a letter to the chancellor of Vanderbilt University, discussing his planned address to the student body: “I would plead for the highest ideal of citizenship, [...] it would not be anything different from the position taken in the editorial department of the “Century,” where partisan politics are debarred advocacy. Of course the uses of culture and of institutions like Vanderbilt University would be part of my plea.” Richard Watson Gilder to James Hampton Kirkland, undated, 1894. Quotation taken from, Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 251.

patriotic accent was part of its history, as it was a spiritual successor to *Putnam's Monthly* which had been set up with the ethos to provide a platform for American writers who suffered from the competition of free imports from Britain.<sup>220</sup> The magazine's original tag-line on the front cover announced that it was "An Illustrated Magazine For The People" (fig. 2.1).

Gilder perceived himself and his magazine as a force that could influence the development of the nation, towards good government and a healthy civic society.<sup>221</sup> Writing in 1897, he expressed his belief that "true leaders...like Lowell, Curtis, Schurz, Potter, and Eliot are the creators of that nobler public opinion which finally reacts upon the entire machinery of government and the entire life of the community, to their gradual cleansing and bettering."<sup>222</sup> It is interesting that he specifically mentions the figureheads of *Century Magazine's* great rivals during the Gilded Age, James Russell Lowell of *Atlantic Monthly*, and George William Curtis of *Harper's Monthly*, both of them, like Gilder, poets turned proselytizers. Modesty prevented Gilder from listing himself amongst

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<sup>220</sup> This situation was due to the lack of an international copyright law. *Harper's Monthly* in particular exploited this to publish some of the most popular British authors of the time. Many people considered this editorial policy to be at the expense of American literature. *Putnam's Monthly* was therefore established to patriotically publish only American authors. However, it was never commercially successful, and the magazine was sold in December 1870 to Scribner & Co., who used its staff, contacts and subscription list to help establish their new magazine venture, *Scribner's Monthly*. Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 157-158. On the history of *Putnam's Monthly* and criticism of *Harper's Monthly's* reliance on foreign authors see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume II: 1850-1865* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 383-406, and 419-432.

<sup>221</sup> Gilder used *Century Magazine's* regular department, "Topics Of The Time" to discuss such topics as The Free-Library Movement, The Kindergarten Movement, The Tammany Hall scandals of the 1890s, campaigns for the creation of civic and national parks, international copyright law, regulation of work relations and tenement reform, amongst others. These were all causes to which he devoted much time and effort.

<sup>222</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Leaders of American Thought," *Century Magazine*, October, 1897, 951. The other names listed were Carl Schurz, Republican Politician, Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard and Bishop Henry C. Potter of New York.



these “leaders”, but he clearly believed in the cultural power of popular magazines as tools for progress.<sup>223</sup>

Gilder’s conception of patriotism was closely tied to ideas of civic duty and citizenship. In Gilder’s own words, patriotism was

an appeal to the imagination; and it should be the part of the pulpit, the school, and the press to intensify that appeal so that it may bear perpetual fruit in the sentiment and practice of a noble citizenship.<sup>224</sup>

His magazine often chastised powerful individuals and institutions for lacking such “noble citizenship” when failing to act in the best interests of their fellow countrymen. His frustrations in this regard were often particularly palpable when writing about American art. As Gilder perceived, art needed to be fostered and guided in America as its value was not always materially obvious. As early as 1874 Gilder wrote a plea for art museums for New York.

If New York is to be worthily great, she must be something more than a commercial, city. [...] Where are our artists? They are scattered all over Europe. Their homes are in Paris, Munich, Florence, Dresden and Rome. [...] (a public art museum) would elevate rich and poor alike. It would stimulate and develop genius. It would greatly change for the better the tone of society, and powerfully modify the civilization of the country. It would build up in America a school of art, that would be worthy of the republic, and command the respect of the world. It would cultivate a taste

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<sup>223</sup> Carl Schurz is another interesting figure mentioned by Gilder in this regard. Schurz had a distinguished career in newspapers and magazines as well as his military and political careers. He was editor of the *New York Evening Post* and *The Nation* in the early 1880s and succeeded George William Curtis as editor of *Harper’s Weekly* in 1892. In the same year he also succeeded Curtis as President of National Civil Service Reform League, of which Gilder was a prominent member. The 1890s was a period that saw Gilder become increasingly involved in matters of political and social reform. He was also prominent within The People’s Municipal League, an organization with similar aims to the National Civil Service Reform League, but with an eye on the corruption in the local politics of New York City. Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 219. Another significant fact is that of the five names mentioned by Gilder as influencers of public opinion, the cultural leaders- Curtis, Lowell and Norton, were all closely associated with the cultural brahmin elites of Boston. The connections between the aesthetic philosophy of Gilder, New York and Boston are discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>224</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Patriotism and Imagination,” *Century Magazine*, January, 1898, 476.

for pictures that would keep our artists busy and prosperous. The good it would do New York and the country cannot be measured.<sup>225</sup>

Gilder's belief in the wholistic benefit that culture could provide to the nation relates to his democratic ideals and faith in the good of the people. He wholeheartedly believed in the American experiment and celebrated its expansion and development but saw that the populace needed direction and persuasion to avoid the pitfalls of the "materializing tendencies of the age".<sup>226</sup> Art acted as both a measure and a catalyst of morality in Gilder's mind and public morality held direct bearing on the political health of the nation. Art should therefore have been a serious concern to all patriotically minded Americans.

The notion of democracy and American patriotism posed a paradox with regards to progress in the visual arts. The European blueprints for artistic excellence were overwhelmingly undemocratic, fostered by aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage for much of their histories. Gilder's challenge was to simultaneously promote the best art, as he saw it, which was usually heavily influenced by European standards, whilst guiding public taste towards this art, and convincing them of its superior benefits to the whole nation. The popular art of the American landscape school of the previous decades had not faced the same challenge. Its relevancy to the nation was self-evident in the combination of recognizable American scenery with established narratives from (usually protestant) Christianity and national myths. This type of art became successful amongst the middle-classes in part because of its legibility and through the publicity caused by the theatrical exhibition culture practiced by the likes of Church and Bierstadt and the popularity of the American art unions and the print culture they helped stimulate.<sup>227</sup> By the 1870s

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<sup>225</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: New York," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1874, 366-367.

<sup>226</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: The New Political Era," *Century Magazine*, March, 1883, 787. Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: The Services Of Art To The Public," *Century Magazine*, September, 1896, 791.

<sup>227</sup> David Scobey, "Looking West From The Empire City: National Landscape and Visual Culture in Gilded Age New York," in *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded*

popular literary magazines were now cultural forces, aided significantly by their ability to capture attention through illustrations and reach increasing readerships nationwide. Richard Watson Gilder was amongst the first editors to have both a strong sense of mission with regards to art and the means to exert significant influence on the general direction of public taste.<sup>228</sup>

Gilder capitalized on the potential of the popular magazine to speak to a culturally influential bourgeois cross section of American society and affect the trajectory of artistic development.<sup>229</sup> The mass produced, popular periodical as a medium was an agent for democratization by its very nature.<sup>230</sup> *Century Magazine's* cultural power was to a large extent bound to its success in the expanding magazine buying market. Writing in the regular column, "Topics Of The Time" in an essay titled "A Broad View of Art," Gilder explained the magazine's motivations with regards to its arts coverage:

The prime necessity is that we should go earnestly and systematically to work to inspire, to develop, to guide and clarify the taste. [...] Great art, monumental art, public art, can flourish only in response to a concerted public call. There are already men who could produce it for us, we believe, and their list would grow with astonishing rapidity if only a high grade of work were wanted; and that it may be wanted we must educate ourselves in appreciative power, and in that which is the obverse quality — in critical power. We must learn to know the good when we see it and the bad when we see it; [...] If, then, we care for the future of our art, we must educate ourselves as well as and (for the moment) more diligently than our artists. And if, on the other hand, we care for ourselves, for the American people, for that greatest good of the greatest number which is the final test of all things in a republic

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*Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge Research in Art History, 2019), Kindle Edition.

<sup>228</sup> Rachel N. Klein, "Paintings in Public Life: The Rise of the American Art-Union," in *Art Wars: The Politics of Taste in Nineteenth-Century New York*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 16-63.

<sup>229</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 138.

<sup>230</sup> Richard Ohmann has provided a detailed and vital analysis of the ways in which magazines played a key role in the creation of "mass culture". Ohmann explains this through drawing connections with the apparatuses of nineteenth-century capitalism, as understood by Marxist theory. Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class At The Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996).

worthy of the name, how imperatively we are called to the same task!<sup>231</sup>

An understanding of Gilder's ideas on patriotism, democracy, civic duty and art offers a renewed view of the above statement and assists in analyzing the motivations that underlie a large amount of the magazine's visual arts content. This chapter will therefore examine an assortment of topics in a focused manner, selected to illustrate the varied and interlocking applications of Gilder's idea of patriotism as it related to the visual arts in the Gilded Age. These are, the magazine's presentation, its direct involvement with American art via its illustrations and employment of wood-engravers, its series on the European art historical canon and its public campaigns for the abolition of the art tariff.

### **The Magazine as Popular Art**

During his 1882 tour of America as a caricature of the aesthetic movement, Oscar Wilde was supposedly asked a question by the press on why America was such a violent country. To which his characteristically provocative reply was, "because your wallpaper is so ugly." The truth of this exchange is hard to establish, but it serves the purpose of neatly illustrating the belief amongst cultural elites of the period in the connection between art and the moral fabric of a society. *Century Magazine* was a publication made by people that sympathized with this view, particularly Richard Watson Gilder. Aesthetics were therefore not simply a question of personal taste but a matter of significance to the progress of the nation. The care and attention paid to the visual and physical properties of Gilder's magazine show that he thought of it as an object that had potential to carry ideological impact through its aesthetic qualities.<sup>232</sup> The aestheticization of a mass-market literary magazine was

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<sup>231</sup> "Topics Of The Time: A Broad View of Art," *Century Magazine*, January 1886, 474-475.

<sup>232</sup> Scholars have previously considered artists journals as fulfilling a similar function, as artistic objects in and of themselves. For example, Emily Hage, "The Magazine as Readymade: New York Dada and the Transgression of Genre and Gender Boundaries," *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 3, no. 2 (2012): 175-197. Rebecca

innovative for the period and should be considered as part of a broader strategy to develop artistic taste amongst the American public, many of whom were more likely to read a magazine than visit an art exhibition.

Evidence of this can be found in the treatment of the front cover, a topic which has hitherto been largely neglected within the scholarship, perhaps because today we experience periodicals of this period as bound volumes.<sup>233</sup> The exteriors of magazines at the time were visually underwhelming, as publishers knew that the majority of purchasers would have the covers removed when combining the individual issues into volumes. In spite of this, Richard Watson Gilder commissioned his architect friend, Stanford White, to transform the magazine's cover into a work of art on tan paper in 1880, a decision that is a clear indicator that he was, to all intents and purposes, in charge of all aspects of the magazine's operation by this point.<sup>234</sup> The magazine later admitted that this cover was ridiculed at first for its bold departure (fig. 2.1), but was eventually imitated by its competitors, and claimed to have "revolutionized the periodical covers of the time."<sup>235</sup> This cover was replaced with the change of name for an even more aesthetically elaborate design by Stanford White and Elihu Vedder, another artist associated with the "younger painters" and a personal friend of Gilder (fig. 2.2).<sup>236</sup>

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Zurier, Elise K. Kenney, Earl. Davis, *Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911-1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

<sup>233</sup> Ted Spiker, "The Magazine Cover: The Craft of Identity and Impact," in *The Routledge Handbook of Magazine Research: The Future of the Magazine Form*, eds. David Abrahamson, Marcia R. Prior-Miller, Bill Emmott, (New York: Routledge, 2015), 377-391.

<sup>234</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 90.

<sup>235</sup> "Topics of the Time: The Saint-Gaudens Coins," *Century Magazine*, March 1908, 799.

<sup>236</sup> Brander Matthews, "Notes of a Book Lover: Books in Paper Covers," *Century Magazine*, July, 1895, 360. Vedder returned to New York from Europe in 1879 and quickly ingratiated himself in the social and professional circles of the bohemian art world there. He became a member of the Tile Club, a club for aesthetic movement types including most of the SAA, whose exploits were covered by a series of three articles, "The Tile Club at Work" (January 1879), "The Tile Club at Play" (February 1879), "The Tile Club Afloat" (March 1880). Whilst at the Tile Club Vedder was introduced to Alexander Wilson Drake and Robert Underwood Johnson, the *Scribner's Monthly* art superintendent and Gilder's right hand assistant editor respectively. Johnson discussed the article that would appear in the magazine on Vedder's art (November 1880,

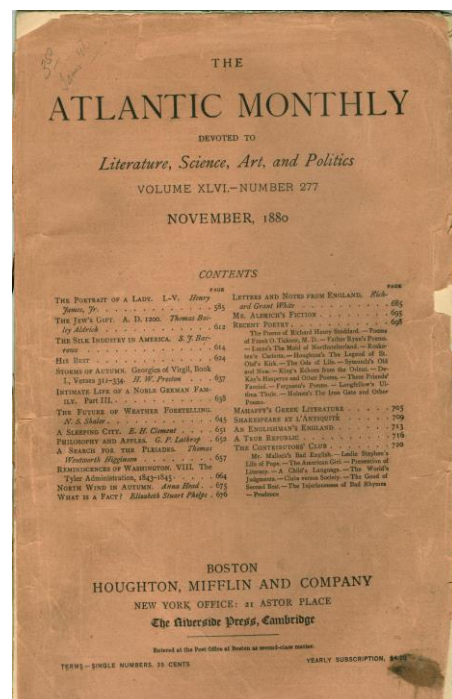
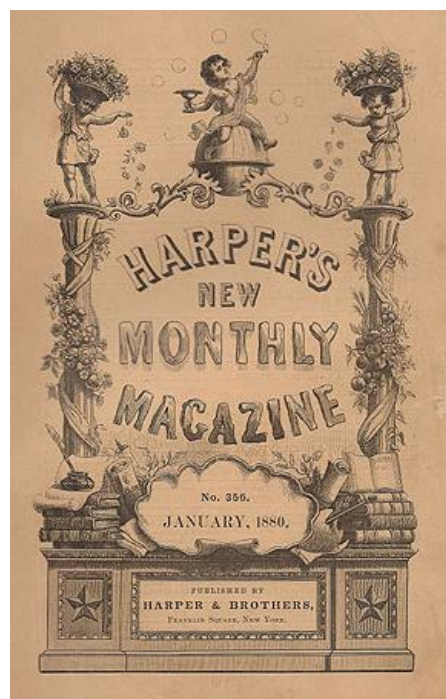
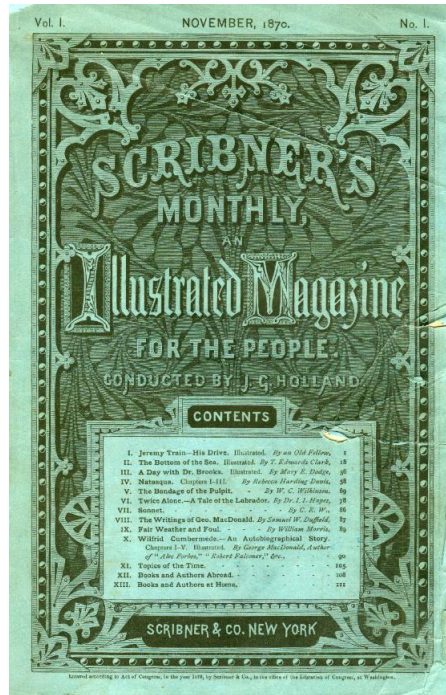


Figure 2.1. Magazine front covers: Top left, the original cover for *Scribner's Monthly* (November 1870). Top right, Stanford White's new cover (here shown on the January 1881 issue), Bottom left, *Harper's Monthly's* cover for January 1880. Bottom right, even more spartan, the front cover of *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1880.

discussed in the following chapter). The friendship with Drake and Johnson at the Tile Club led to Vedder's involvement in the cover design for the new *Century Magazine*. Knox, "*Scribner's Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World", 338.



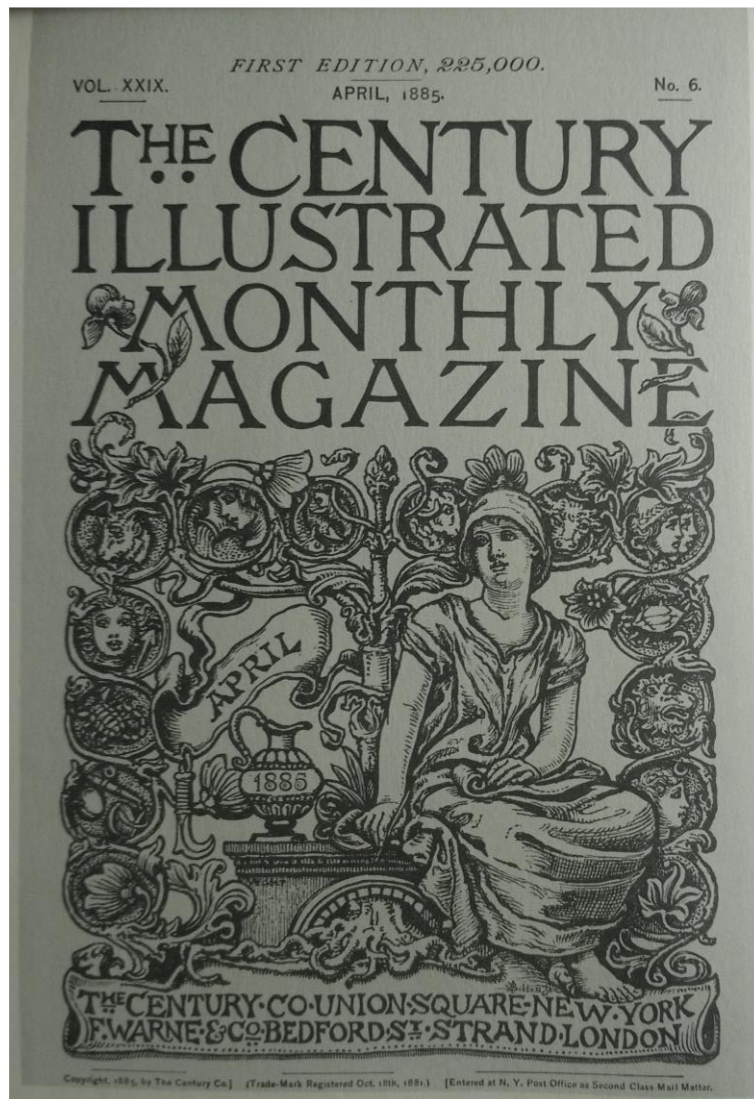


Figure 2.2. Front cover of Century Magazine, April 1885., showing design by Stanford White and Elihu Vedder.

The cover of the magazine was intended to introduce the values of the publication as a proposition in its entirety, rather than advertise the contents of a particular issue. In the case of *Scribner's Monthly*, Stanford White's hand drawn, sketchy design of meandering foliage encasing the Scribner & Co. symbol of the open book within a sun, gives the impression of a manually crafted object from an art press, rather than a mass-produced product. Stanford White and Elihu Vedder's co-design is a hybrid of White's earlier whimsical interpretation and an elaborate engraved image that recalls book plate designs of the period. An overall sense of balance and geometric form is maintained by the regularity of the interweaving vines which frame the image of the neo-classical woman sitting on a small, rustic classical plinth at the foot of the tree with a

pitcher beside her. She holds a pen in her hand, an attribute which identifies her with the arts. She is surrounded by medallion images of the zodiac in reference to the magazine's monthly publication. Vedder had studied in Italy from the late 1850s, before returning to America and working as an illustrator during the Civil War. He was known for his combination of neo-classical subjects with a Pre-Raphaelite inspired style in his paintings and illustrations of mythological deities, muses and allegories (fig. 2.3). He was also associated with the cultural elites of Boston and his involvement in the aesthetic treatment of a popular magazine cover signifies the transportation and amplification of cultural attitudes from the cultural elite of that city to New York and beyond via *Scribner's Monthly* and Richard Watson Gilder. White and Vedder's cover for *Century* places the magazine self-consciously within a broader tradition of cultural refinement that traced its roots back to the Hellenic world that had guided much of subsequent European civilization.<sup>237</sup> It acted as a signifier of the editors' values, and the cultural authority to which they deferred, as well as a guarantee of the artistic value of the magazine's contents. White's design was meant to appear hand drawn, whereas the visible use of hatching to mold the form of the woman in White and Vedder's cover is a clear sign that the image is an engraving and is perhaps an indication that the magazine was at this point confident in its conception of wood-engraving as an artistic medium in its own right, befitting of a little arts magazine, rather than a quasi-mechanical process. The expense and attention paid to the front covers is evidence that the magazine's management were eager to use art as part of their messaging.

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<sup>237</sup> This is discussed in greater detail later in the context of educational, art historical series.





Figure 2.3. Elihu Vedder, *Corrupt Legislation*, 1896. Oil on canvas. Mural for the lobby to the main reading room, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

Whilst the eventual editorship of Richard Watson Gilder provided encouragement and direction in aesthetic matters, *Scribner's Monthly* had, from the outset, distinguished itself through its expenditure on art. J. Henry Harper recalled the immediate sense of rivalry between the publishing houses of Harper and Scribner when the latter launched its illustrated monthly magazine.

This rivalry caused the staff of engravers in our establishment to pull down their visors, place a lance in rest, and take notice, for they had at last met a rival worthy of their steel. The competition between the magazines became so keen that at times we paid as high as five hundred dollars for engraving one page of our magazine.<sup>238</sup>

The early standards and ambition with regards to art and illustration in the magazine were set by Alexander Wilson Drake (1843 – 1916), the art director, and Theodore Low De Vinne (1828-1914), the printer.<sup>239</sup> Alexander Wilson Drake was an artist trained in wood engraving, employed by the magazine at the outset as the art superintendent, a position he held for over forty years. Drake had developed a new technique which he taught to the artists and engravers at *Scribner's*

<sup>238</sup> J. Henry Harper, *The House of Harper: A Century of Publishing in Franklin Square* (New York: Harper and Brothers 1912), 202.

<sup>239</sup> De Vinne owned the company Theodore L. De Vinne & Co.. Scribners and then The Century Company were his main clients from the 1870s onwards.

*Monthly*. This involved preparing the surface of the wood block with a photo-sensitive covering which allowed it to be used like a photographic plate. This facilitated far greater accuracy and subtlety when transferring the drawing of the artist to the block for engraving.

Drake and De Vinne were both prominent figures within their respective industries, and collaborated to make the improvements and subsequent revolution in illustration possible due to their technical knowledge and experience. De Vinne was an authority on all things printing, from its technology and materials to its history and had built a reputation since the 1850s for producing first rate prints of wood engravings.<sup>240</sup> He had developed a technique of introducing paper overlays to increase the tonal range of prints from the electrotpe.<sup>241</sup> Having trained as an engraver and illustrator, Drake knew the processes and their challenges, both technical and artistic, for mass producing woodblock illustrations for magazines. He therefore was able to refine and innovate standard working practices within the field. He was responsible for maintaining the highest visual standards for the magazine and dismissed three previous printing firms before finding the correct match in De Vinne.<sup>242</sup> Drake was also the figure responsible for attracting talented engravers such as Timothy Cole, Henry Wolf, Frederick Juengling and Gustav Kruell to work for the magazine. When William Lewis Fraser was employed as the magazine's art manager in the early 1880s, Drake was able to dedicate himself to supervising the production of the magazine. Fraser had strong knowledge of

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<sup>240</sup> De Vinne published several books on printing and its history such as *The Invention of Printing* (1876), *Historic Printing Types* (1886) and *Notable Printers of Italy During the Fifteenth Century* (1910). He collaborated with the architectural firm Babb, Cook and Willard to design a purpose-built printing office on Lafayette Street in a Romanesque style, which has since been designated as a New York landmark in 1966. He was also the co-designer, with Linn Boyd Benton, of the Century Roman typeface, used for Century publications, and still used today, including for this thesis. See Irene Tichenor, *No Art Without Craft: The Life of Theodore Low De Vinne, Printer* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2005). For a trade perspective see "A Master of Arts," *Printer's Ink: A Journal for Advertisers*, Vol. 1 (July 15, 1888- July 1, 1889): 24-25.

<sup>241</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 80-81.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

contemporary art and often toured galleries alongside Drake and Gilder in search of promising talent.<sup>243</sup>

The craftsmanship involved in the printing of the magazine was clearly a source of great pride to its management and was something that they made sure to emphasize to the readership. They published articles from some of the craftspeople involved which reflected upon and explained the creative efforts and processes that the magazine's production entailed. In one sense this was part of a marketing ploy to emphasize the quality of the enterprise, but it also diminished the truth of the magazine's dependency on industrial processes. It was important for the magazine's aestheticizing message that the readers thought of it as a crafted object, rather than a product of mass-manufacture.<sup>244</sup>

*Scribner's*, and *Century* after it, did go further than needed by contextualizing the magazine within the histories of its constituent arts and crafts, in order to educate the readership sufficiently so that they could fully appreciate the efforts being expended. Theodore Low De Vinne wrote an essay in two parts for the magazine on "The Growth of Wood-Cut Engraving" that started with the period 1450-1850, before explaining the modern process using mechanical presses.<sup>245</sup> De Vinne's article describes in detail the apparatuses used and methods of overlaying that he had perfected with his work for *Scribner's Monthly* (figs. 2.4 – 2.6). He was at pains to emphasize the judicious interventions of human experience, even when hailing the technological advances that made print runs of over one-hundred-thousand copies of an illustrated magazine possible. He reassured his readers that,

machines have not debased the quality of engraving [...] The last half year's volume of SCRIBNER'S contains more meritorious illustrations [...] than could be found in any book printed before the

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<sup>243</sup> Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885*, 181.

<sup>244</sup> Or to recall Bourdieu's terms, as a product of the restricted cultural field aimed at a cultural bourgeoisie rather than from a cultural field of mass production aimed at the economic and petty bourgeoisie.

<sup>245</sup> Theodore Low De Vinne, "The Growth of Wood-Cut Printing," *Scribner's Monthly*, April 1880, 860-874., and May 1880, 34-44.

invention of the cylinder [...] The old prejudice against engraving on wood as a low form of art has been effectually broken.”<sup>246</sup>

De Vinne wrote other articles on the technicalities of the magazine’s production.<sup>247</sup> The sustained involvement of such a prominent figure within his field was a source of pride to the magazine that it was sure to communicate to the readership.<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>247</sup> Theodore Low De Vinne, “The Printing of “The Century,”” *Century Magazine*, November 1890, 87-99.

Theodore Low De Vinne, “The Century’s Printer on “The Century’s” Type,” *Century Magazine*, March 1896, 794-795.

<sup>248</sup> “it is mainly to Mr. De Vinne that credit is due for the high reputation of American printing of wood-cuts. The refinement to which wood-engraving has been carried in America would have come to naught if the printing of the wood-cuts — the rapid steam-printing required by the periodicals—had not kept pace with the advance in wood-engraving.” Richard Watson Golder, “Topics Of The Time: Our Printers,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1883, 790.

making an overlay for the following wood-cut.



A FLAT PRINT WITHOUT OVERLAY.

The pressman begins the work by printing a dozen flat proofs of the cut on different thicknesses of fine paper. These proofs

are called flat because the impression that prints them is perfectly flat,—as firm on the sky-tint as on the darkest shadows. The object is to show the engraver's work on the block more clearly than it appears in the artist's proof—to show it without attempt to make any part blacker or grayer than it is in the wood. The overlay-cutter compares these flat proofs with the artist's proof. He notes the superior blackness and greater delicacy of the latter, and then determines how many of its best effects can be imitated, and how many thicknesses of paper will be needed for the overlay. He decides that this cut will need five overlays to bring out the five



SECOND OVERLAY.

distinct tints of pale gray, dark gray, middle tint, dull black, deep black, which are clearly shown in the proof.

Selecting one of the proofs, he carefully cuts out of it all of the palest gray tints, and all thin exposed lines, pencil scabble and the ends of thin lines near the high lights. The proof treated in this way is put aside as the first overlay.

For the second overlay he takes another proof out of which he cuts everything but the deep blacks. He then half cuts or picks up the prints of deep black in a manner which cannot be shown in the illustration, so that the impression will give increased blackness. This second overlay is fastened upon the first with great precision.

The third overlay is cut out of another proof with intent to bring out or intensify



FIRST OVERLAY.

Figure 2.4. Theodore Low De Vinne, "The Growth of Wood-Cut Printing," *Scribner's Monthly*, May 1880, 40.





THIRD OVERLAY.

the dull blacks of the cut. It is a skeleton of all the blacks and of some of the middle tint. This third overlay is, in like manner, fastened on the second.

The fourth overlay is made up of the darker grays in combination with the blacks and middle tint. It should be noticed that in this, as in all previous overlays, except the first, the paler grays are carefully cut out.

The fifth and last overlay shows the dark gray in combination with middle tint and blacks.

When the fourth and fifth overlays have been placed in order over the others, there will be in the combined piece five thicknesses over the deep blacks, four over the dull blacks, three over the middle tint, two over the dark gray, and one thickness over the pale gray. Properly combined, these overlays make in one piece a low relief in paper of the engraving on the wood. The hollows made by cutting out the tints near the high lights and the projection made by the deep blacks are clearly noticeable. Each thickness of paper in the combined overlay makes, or is intended to make, a difference in impression. Under the pressure of the five thicknesses the deep black of the cut will be forced not only on, but in the paper, while the single thickness over the lines that represent pale gray will merely touch the surface of the sheet.

This is a simple cut, in which the tints are clearly marked; but interior views, cut in fac-simile of brush-work, and all work of like nature in which high lights, pale grays and deep blacks are avoided, and the subject is developed by nice graduations of middle



FOURTH OVERLAY.

tints, are not so easily overlaid. Some cuts need but three, and some call for more than six overlays; some want little ink and much impression, and others much ink and little



FIFTH OVERLAY.

impression. In every form containing discordant cuts, the method of cutting and combining overlays has to be varied to suit its peculiarities. Every overlay-cutter and

Figure 2.5. Theodore Low De Vinne, "The Growth of Wood-Cut Printing," *Scribner's Monthly*, May 1880, 41.

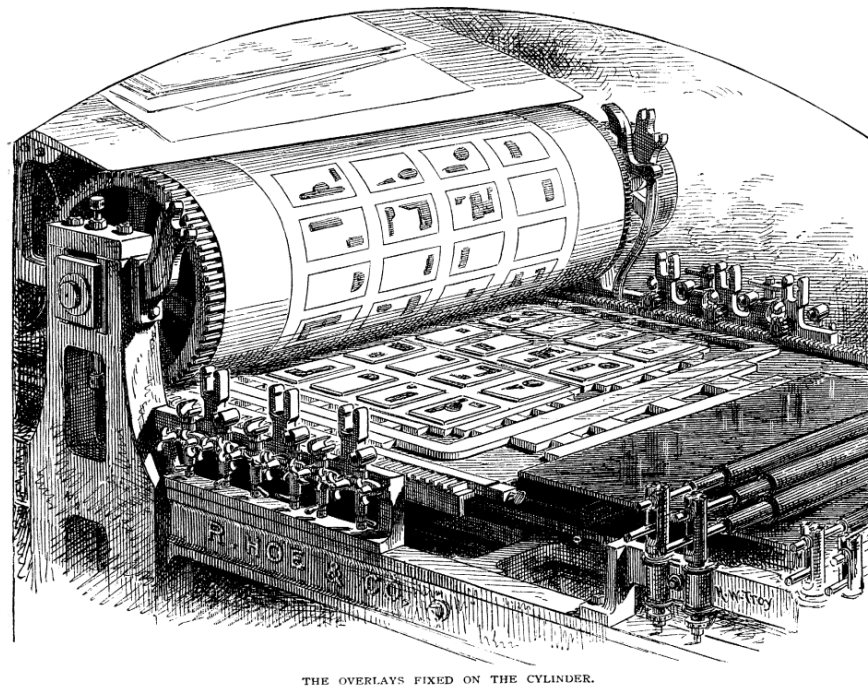


Figure 2.6. Detail from Theodore Low De Vinne, "The Growth of Wood-Cut Printing," *Scribner's Monthly*, May 1880, 42.

### Illustration and Art in *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*

Printing processes and materials were an important reason for the visual quality of the magazine, but they were in service to the illustrations which were the main attraction for most readers. Through their pioneering methods and standards, *Scribner's Monthly* was able to attract the work of some of the best artists at home and abroad. The "younger artists" returning from Europe in the 1870s and settling in New York city in search of support struggled for patrons. The American economic elite tended to buy works from Europe directly and the older generation of collectors still favored the "Hudson River School". Artists were therefore drawn towards illustration work for secure income.<sup>249</sup> Ambitious artists had previously shunned illustration work, but by the late 1870s *Scribner's Monthly* was able to publish illustrations by Will H. Low, Walter Shirlaw, Charles S. Reinhart, John La Farge, James Edward Kelly, Roger Riordan, Louis C. Tiffany, Thomas Eakins, William Merritt

<sup>249</sup> Samuel Isham, *The History of American Painting* (New York, 1936), 359-374.

Chase, Douglas Volk, A. B. Frost, Edwin Austin Abbey, F. S. Church, Francis Lathrop, Joseph Pennell and Robert Blum.

From the 1877-78 volumes onwards, *Scribner's Monthly* started listing the illustrators and engravers in the index pages. Dr. Holland boasted in 1878 that, "Within the past twelve months, some of the best artists in this country have been more than willing to furnish their exquisite work for the *Monthly*, and it will soon be impossible for any but the best artists to get magazine work to do."<sup>250</sup> In the same editorial he identified the work of the art department as the leading reason for the magazine's great commercial success.<sup>251</sup> This all came at considerable expense though. *Scribner's Monthly* published approximately two thousand seven hundred woodcut engravings between 1870 and 1875, at an estimated cost of \$100,000. Dr. Holland claimed that *Scribner's* was "buying invention and good composition constantly [...] the two volumes which contain in any year the issues of *Scribner's Monthly*, can show more of both than any single exhibition of our National Academy."<sup>252</sup> Shortly before his death Dr. Holland publicly attributed the magazine's success to its visual appeal, and the leadership in this regard of Gilder and Drake.

I suppose that if any one were asked what, more than anything else, had contributed to the success of the magazine, he would answer: Its superb engravings, and the era it introduced of improved illustrative art. This feature of our work is attributable to Mr. R. W. Gilder and to Mr. A. W. Drake, —the former the office editor, and the latter the superintendent of the illustrative department.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Editorial, *Scribner's Monthly*, Nov. 1878.

<sup>251</sup> Editorial, *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1878, front matter. *Scribner's* capitalized on the popularity of their illustrations by repackaging them in various ways, including the release of portfolios of proof-impressions from *Scribner's Monthly* and *St. Nicholas*, their child's magazine. Launched in 1879, these proved popular enough that they were exported and sold in Europe as well as America.

<sup>252</sup> Index to *Scribner's Monthly, Volumes I to X* (New York, 1876), preface. Editorial, *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1878, front matter.

<sup>253</sup> J. G. Holland, "Topics Of The Time: 'Scribner's Monthly.'- Historical," *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1881, 303.



The visual appeal of the magazine was key to the commercial strategy of the magazine, but the particulars of its visual qualities provide a window onto the artistic tastes of its editors and management. Gilder was able to use the technical resources of the magazine's art department to attract readers and patronize the artists he wished to encourage with original illustrations. The refinement of photo-enhanced processes also offered the magazine the opportunity to take a leading role in reproductive engraving, engravings after works of art in other media, to provide eye-catching educational material on historical as well as contemporary fine art. The public commitment to patronizing artists and craftsmen, and its explanations of its technical processes to the readership show that the magazine conceived of itself as occupying a significant position in the broader network of American art and encouraged its readers to develop knowledge and experience of wood-engravings and illustrations made for magazines. Readers were encouraged to consider the magazine in visual aesthetic, not just literary terms.

*Scribner's Monthly* produced both original illustrations commissioned directly from artists and reproductive engravings, which came to prominence after 1875.<sup>254</sup> Prior to this, popular early articles on the arts such as D. O' C. Townley's "Living American Artists" were simply illustrated with engraved portraits of the people discussed.<sup>255</sup> In a wide variety of other subjects however the magazine presented articles with original illustrations, signed by both the artist and engravers. Artists were always commissioned, but engravers were full-time employees of the publishers. The use of different engravers within a single article may have been a practical decision, but the inclusion of discernably different styles of engraving, even when illustrating the work of a single artist,

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<sup>254</sup> The rise of reproductive engraving came through the appointment of Timothy Cole and the refinement of Alexander Wilson Drake's experiments in transferring photographic images to the woodblock, discussed later in this chapter.

<sup>255</sup> D. O'C. Townley, "Living American Artists," *Scribner's Monthly*, May, 1871, 40-48.  
D. O'C. Townley, "Living American Artists," *Scribner's Monthly*, August, 1871, 401-408.  
D. O'C. Townley, "Living American Artists," *Scribner's Monthly*, March, 1872, 599-608.

would have been a point of interest and education to the discerning reader who could start to identify the work of different craftsmen. This further reinforced the early conceptions of *Scribner's Monthly* as an artistic object in its own right. This variety in the aesthetic qualities of its engravings was exemplified in an essay on Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, which was the leading article in the January 1871 issue of *Scribner's Monthly*. It is richly illustrated with original drawings by Thomas Moran, engraved and signed by four engravers with visibly different techniques: Alexander Wilson Drake, J. G. Smithwick, Edward Bookhout and an unknown engraver who signed his name J.M.V. (figs. 2.7-2.10).

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Figure 2.7. Detail of Newton Crane, "Fairmount Park," *Scribner's Monthly*, January, 1871, 225., displaying engraving by Edward Bookhout of an original illustration by Thomas Moran.



BRIDGE OVER THE WISSAHICKON AT VALLEY GREEN.

Figure 2.8. Detail from Newton Crane, "Fairmount Park," *Scribner's Monthly*, January, 1871, 234., displaying engraving by J. G. Smithwick of "Bridge Over The Wissahickon AT Valley Green" by Thomas Moran.

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FAIRMOUNT PARK.



A GLIMPSE OF THE WISSAHICKON.

Figure 2.9. Detail from Newton Crane, "Fairmount Park," *Scribner's Monthly*, January, 1871, 236., displaying engraving by J. M. W. of "A Glimpse Of The Wissahickon" by Thomas Moran.



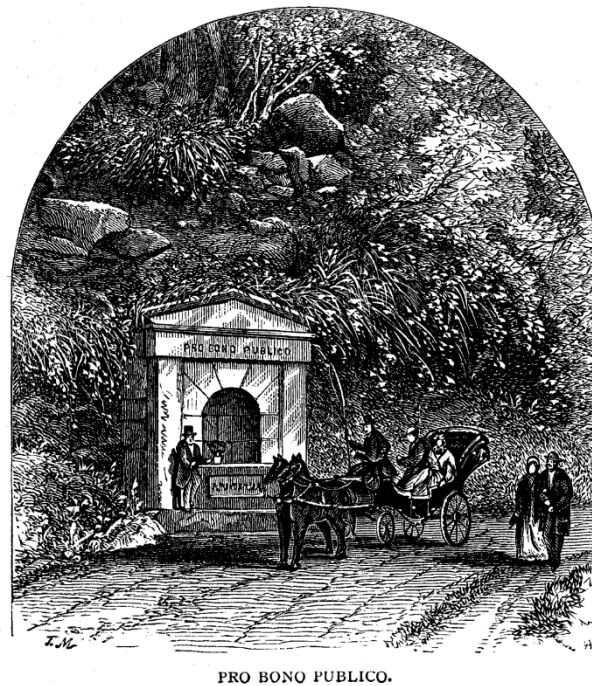


Figure 2.10. Detail from Newton Crane, “Fairmount Park,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, January, 1871, 237., displaying engraving by Alexander Wilson Drake of “Pro Bono Publico” by Thomas Moran.

The art status of wood engraving was an important concern of the magazine, as so much of its proposition to the reader to act as an aesthetic exemplar relied upon perceptions of artistic value. Engraving also provided the magazine with its initial connection to the American art world and was to a large degree a source of credibility for the magazine in artistic matters amongst both artists and the readership. In acting as the champion for engraving, particularly the new engraving techniques and processes, *Scribner’s Monthly* was able to assume a position within the cultural field parallel to the “younger painters” that they supported in their supposed rivalry with the New York artistic establishment. Engravers were therefore credited alongside the artists of many illustrations in the early issue of the 1870s. This convention ceased as processes changed and the names of illustrators became more significant, to the extent that artists were given equal billing in the contents pages alongside authors. However, the magazine’s most prized engravers, such as Timothy Cole and Elbridge Kingsley, still signed their names on their prints throughout their careers and were known by the readership and celebrated for their association with the periodical. Such was the demand for skilled engravers that *Scribner’s Monthly* sponsored an annual

competition to identify new talent, to be judged by Timothy Cole, Theodore Low De Vinne and Alexander Wilson Drake, announced in the April 1880 issue.<sup>256</sup> Writing about the prizes, the magazine informed readers that they valued “1. Originality of style. 2. Individuality and variety of style [and] 3. Faithfulness in the reproduction of a wide range of subjects by diverse methods.”<sup>257</sup> Whilst there is the potential to see contradiction between these, the emphasis placed on originality and style places engraving much closer to being a graphic rather than mechanical art, and recalls their critiques of the “younger painters” discussed in the previous chapter, as possessing superior technique and most significantly style. The craftsman’s personality, as expressed through style, was according to the author, “what gives greatness to all art, all work above the mechanical”.<sup>258</sup>

To support engraving’s claims to the status of art, the magazine regularly published articles by and about engravers and their works. William J. Linton, a well-known British American engraver, wrote a robust defense of engraving for the magazine in June 1878, titled, “The Engraver, His Function and Status”. He was writing in response to the common claim, quoted from the *New York Evening Post*, that “WOOD-ENGRAVERS, properly speaking, are not artists, nor do artists, as a rule, recognize them as such.”<sup>259</sup> Linton’s defense of engraving claimed that the artistic value lay in the “exercise of something like independent judgment, and with the opportunity consequently for taste”.<sup>260</sup> He then proceeded to state a case, laced with sarcastic deference, that artists throughout history followed the same processes as the engraver – of

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<sup>256</sup> Elsewhere the magazine erroneously referred to the competition as starting in March 1880.

<sup>257</sup> “Wood-Engraving and the “Scribner” Prizes,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, April 1881, 938.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 939.

<sup>259</sup> This quotation actually came from a letter to *The Post* from George Inness, an artist much admired by the Society of American Artists group that Richard Watson Gilder and *Scribner’s Monthly* championed. Their admiration for Inness may have been a reason why the origin of the quote was not acknowledged in Linton’s article. George Inness, “Artists and Engravers,” Letter to the Editor, *New York Evening Post*, March 16, 1878.

<sup>260</sup> William J. Linton, “The Engraver: His Function and Status,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, June, 1878, 237-238.

judicious mimesis, whether it be from nature or another's work of art.

Linton also highlighted a number of celebrated artists, such as Dürer and Holbein, who had executed great works in the wood-engraving medium. Interestingly he also drew connections with other artistic printed media, particularly etching.

Etching was a medium which involved chemical processes, that combined the freeness associated with drawing in crayon, through the use of a needle as a surrogate, with the potential for mechanical reproduction offered by printing. Since the seventeenth century many artists had taken particular interest in the creative possibilities of etching, such as Edwin Landseer, who Linton mentions by name in this regard. Although the connection to wood-engraving as practiced by craftsmen at *Scribner's Monthly* is not as apparent as other printed media (copper plate as an example), it was advantageous to the artistic claims of wood-engraving's practitioners and patrons to be associated with a printing medium that had obtained the status of art, as Michael Leja has described.<sup>261</sup> *Scribner's* and *Century* therefore published articles during their early years on etching as a further buttress to their claims on behalf of the engravings that they patronized, encouraging the concept of the "painter-engraver".<sup>262</sup> By publishing articles that explained and celebrated the processes of printing and wood-engraving, and their histories, the magazine equipped the readership with the technical knowledge sufficient to appreciate the aesthetic achievements of the illustrations of the magazine, developing a level of "print connoisseurship".<sup>263</sup>

The magazine also claimed that engraving should be a patriotic concern, as illustration and printing were areas of the arts in which

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<sup>261</sup> Michael Leja, "The Illustrated Magazines and Print Connoisseurship in the Late 19th Century," *Block Points* 1 (1993): 54-73.

<sup>262</sup> For example: Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "American Etchers," *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 483-498. On "Painter-Engravers" see W. B. Closson, "Painter-Engraving," *Century Magazine*, August, 1889, 583-586. F. Weitenkampf, *American Graphic Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 138-152.

<sup>263</sup> Leja, "The Illustrated Magazines," 54-73.

America was currently excelling on the world stage.<sup>264</sup> The magazine's efforts were, according to the editor, made with the conviction that "we should discover an interest in the subject not merely mercenary, but inspired with a genuine devotion to the art."<sup>265</sup> The magazine's attitudes towards the status of engraving had already altered by this time as reproductive engraving was increasingly valued. All of the prizes offered for the third and final wood-engraving competition in 1882 were for engravings made after photographs of paintings (figs. 1.11 and 1.12).

Richard Watson Gilder was particularly invested in this aspect of his magazine, as he saw the potential to create a national audience for good art, as he saw it, through the popularity of reproductive engravings in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In the first issue of *Century*, with Gilder officially in the role of Editor in Chief, he stated the magazine's mission.

In a country like ours, where galleries are few and worthy paintings rarely to be seen by people of culture out of the great cities, the educational service to be rendered by such art-work as that of Scribner's ... is incalculable. "<sup>266</sup>

Magazine illustration brought an interest and taste for art amongst the population that had previously been skeptical of its value to the nation at large.<sup>267</sup> The geographic and economic conditions for many in America meant that the rarefied gallery spaces of fine art in major cities were as distant a reality as life on a California gold mine was to those living in the bustle of New York. Yet the magazine was able to bring these disparate experiences together in its pages, allowing the

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<sup>264</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Wood Engraving and the Century Prizes," *Century Magazine*, June, 1882, 230.

<sup>265</sup> "Culture and Progress: A Second Offer of Prizes for Wood-Engraving," *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1881, 954.

<sup>266</sup> "The Rise and Work of a Magazine," *Century Magazine*, November, 1881, supplement/ front matter. Quoted in: John, *The Best Years Of The Century*, 309.

<sup>267</sup> William A. Coffin, "American Illustration Today," *Scribner's Magazine*, January 1892, 108. Mott, *A History of American Magazines Volume III: 1865-1885*, 181-182.

public to vicariously experience, share, and in a fashion own and curate for themselves, visual art via its illustrations.<sup>268</sup>

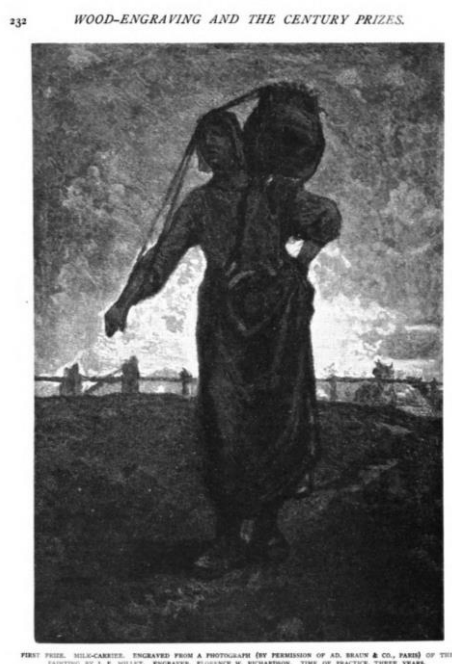


Figure 2.11. Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Wood Engraving and the Century Prizes, *Century Magazine*, June, 1882, 232., displaying engraving by Florence W. Richardson after a photograph of J. F. Millet's *Milk-Carrier* (multiple versions, possibly the same as that at The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, titled *A Milkmaid*).



Figure 2.12. Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Wood Engraving and the Century Prizes, *Century Magazine*, June, 1882, 233., displaying engraving by John S. Marquand after a photograph of Julius Mařák's *The Morning Song*, Location unknown.

<sup>268</sup> Carol T. Christ and John Jordan, ed., *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).



### The “New School of Engraving” Debates (1881-1890)

The change in focus, from artistic to mimetic engraving initiated by *Scribner's Monthly* was a significant development which facilitated the magazine's mutation from an illustrated literary magazine to a “magazine of art”. This change enabled the magazine to appeal to the best artists for original illustrations, and reproduce, before photographs, works of art in the finest detail yet achieved in mass-produced formats. It was the mechanical means by which the magazine was able to transport its artistic message. The new school of engraving was established at *Scribner's Monthly* because of the artistic ambitions of its management, to bring fine art, past and present, to the people, and maintain a level of control in the developing tastes of the middle-classes.

Woodcut engravings had become the standard within book and magazine illustration in America in the 1860s, replacing steel and copper plate, due to the introduction of stereotyping and then electrotyping.<sup>269</sup> Illustrations were drawn onto the block of wood, which was then engraved by the engraver using a burin or graver to cut away material so as to leave only the lines of the original drawing (fig. 2.13). The great advantage of woodcut over other printing mediums was that it was a relief print process, the same as the type.<sup>270</sup> They could therefore be

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<sup>269</sup> Woodcut engravings were finer than steel plate, but less durable and not suited to long print runs on mechanical steam presses. Stereotyping involved taking plaster molds and then casting metal copies of the original woodblock that could then be set alongside type on the cylinder press. A description of the process is provided in Edward A. Gokey, “The New School of Wood Engraving,” *The Courier* 25, no. 1 (1990): 58. A detailed account of the history of wood engraved illustration in America is provided in Jo Ann Early Levin, “The Golden Age Of Illustration: Popular Art In American Magazines, 1850-1925” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 15-41. A technical account of the printing of *Scribner's Monthly/The Century* was provided by its printer in Theodore Low De Vinne, “The Growth of Wood-Cut Printing,” *Century Magazine*, May, 1880, 39-45.

<sup>270</sup> Other print media such as engraving into metal were intaglio processes or were incompatible with the presses used to print type. This would mean that either the images would have to be printed on a separate press and pasted onto the sheets with text, or the intaglio engraving would have to be printed separately on the same press but recalibrated to adjust for the height difference. Woodblocks were cut to the same depth as the type, and so could be printed alongside the type without any adjustments to the press.

placed alongside type when composing the page. Engravers were able to employ a variety of techniques such as stippling, cross hatching, curved and jagged lines incised at different depths to create increasingly refined effects (figs. 2.14 - 2.16).

During the 1860s magazines such as *Harper's Weekly* and *Harper's Monthly* were able to employ the services of many accomplished artists as illustrators, perhaps most notably Winslow Homer, but there was considerable sources of friction between artists, concerned for their status when working in popular mass-market mediums, and engravers working expediently for popular illustrated magazines. The process was restrictive to artists, who needed to draw directly onto the block, dictated by its dimensions, or rely on another draughtsman to transpose their original drawing to the block on their behalf. They were also restricted to a large extent in medium and style, as certain visual effects- such as washes, or sketchy, expressive styles would not translate well into lines on a woodblock cut with a burin. *Scribner's* regular department, "Culture and Progress", stated that in 1880 they would not consider artists who could not draw on the woodblock (a policy that would quickly change), identifying the transposition of the original by middlemen as a source of mediocrity amongst the competition.<sup>271</sup>

Once the artist had finished the design on the block, the engraver then needed to interpret the image, employing knowledge of how the lines would appear when printed to make adjustments where it was thought necessary. The original image was destroyed by this process, and artists were at peril of being poorly represented by an inadequate engraver. According to the successful illustrator, Joseph Pennell, the engraver became, "supreme critic and final authority" over the artist.<sup>272</sup> This meant

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<sup>271</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Culture and Progress: Linton's "Hints on Wood-Engraving," *Scribner's Monthly*, March, 1880, 793.

<sup>272</sup> Joseph Pennell, *Adventurers of an Illustrator* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1925), 85.

that, despite the potential financial opportunities, many artists had maintained a professional distance from illustrative work.<sup>273</sup>

Many of the detractions of engraving as an artistic medium were mitigated by Alexander Wilson Drake's incorporation of photography at *Scribner's Monthly* in the 1870s. The process, known as photoxylography, was developed in the 1850s, but Drake refined its use for magazine engravings, establishing what became known as the "new school" of wood engraving.<sup>274</sup> It involved transferring a photographic image onto the woodblock via glass. This process avoided many of the points of friction identified above. The original image was no longer destroyed, and could be used, or manipulated, as a reference for the engraver whilst working (figs. 2.18 and 2.19). There was much less space for "interpretation" on the part of the engraver, although a fair amount of creative work was still required as a close comparison of figures 2.16 and 2.17 shows. The artist was no longer restricted by the size of the block and did not need to master drawing on it either. The integration of mechanical processes encouraged artists to produce illustrations for magazines in a range of media that could better express their ideas and style and consequently the stigma of working for a popular magazine as an artist was greatly diminished. *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine* were therefore viewed favorably by artists as the most sympathetic mass-market location for their work. However, this had inevitable consequences for the relative status of all but the best wood-engravers.

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<sup>273</sup> The keenness of many artists to distinguish themselves from engravers has a basis in a much longer history of tension between the mechanical and liberal arts which have an applied relationship with social class. Demographic and economic changes within the American metropolitan centers were causing anxiety over their social status amongst the middle-classes in New York in the Gilded Age, as written about influentially by Alan Trachtenberg amongst others. This may account for the caution with which many artists treated working for magazines, and also why Gilder was so at pains to frame his magazine as an artistic rather than manufactured object. To recall the discussion from the previous chapter, both Gilder and the artists that he wished to patronize would have been concerned by the popular magazine's balance of claims to cultural capital with commerciality.

<sup>274</sup> Jo Ann Early Levin, "The Golden Age Of Illustration: Popular Art In American Magazines, 1850-1925" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1980), 49-51.



Figure 2.13. Copy of a painting depicting Timothy Cole in 1930, engraving a woodblock, by his son, Alphaeus P. Cole. National Museum of American History Archives.



Figure 2.14. Woodblock engraved by Timothy Cole in 1926 of *The Calmady Children* by Sir Thomas Lawrence, now in the Metropolitan Museum, New York. National Museum of American History Archives.



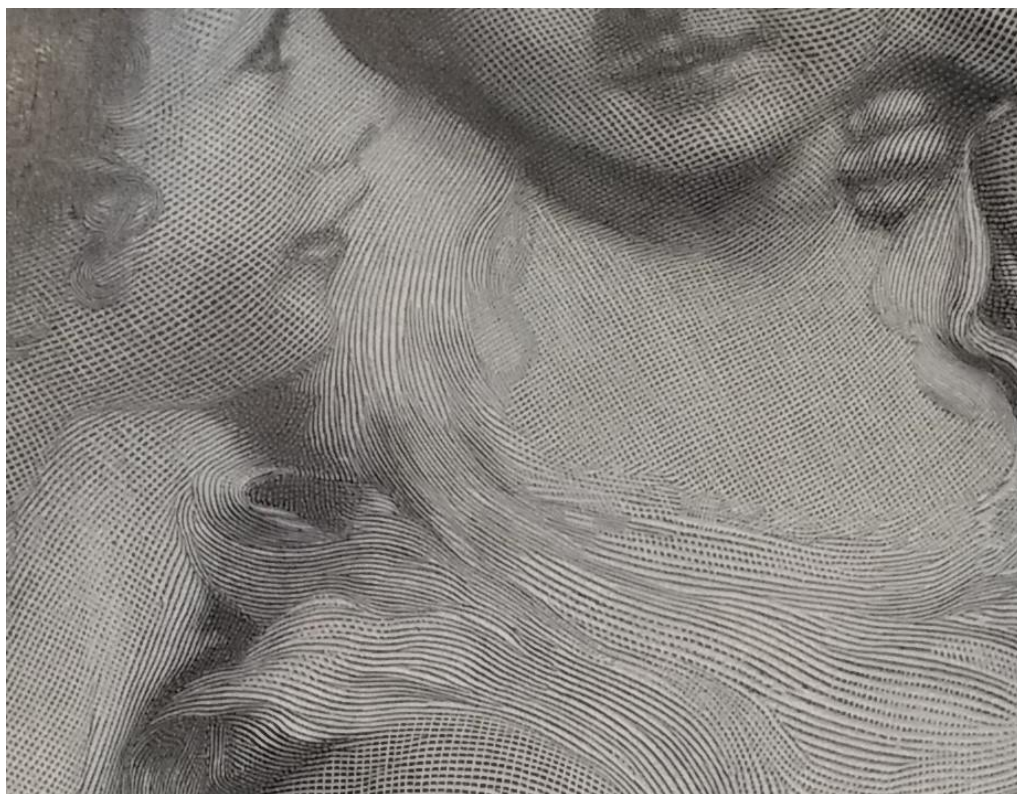


Figure 2.15. Detail of fig. 2.14, showing the variety of lines created by the engraver's burin to create various lighting, texture and modelling effects.



Figure 2.16. Timothy Cole after Sir Thomas Lawrence, *The Calmady Children*, wood engraving print on paper, 1926. National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C..





Figure 2.17. Sir Thomas Lawrence, *The Calmady Children*, 1823. Oil on canvas, 78 x 77 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Figure 2.18. Photograph of *The Calmady Children* by Sir Thomas Lawrence, adapted by Timothy Cole in pencil. Caption on the reverse reads: "In his later years Cole engraved the pictures he reproduced mostly from photographs which he corrected before the original pictures. This photograph has been worked over by the engraver and was used by him while cutting the block of the Calmady Children." National Museum of American History Archives.



Figure 2.19. Photograph of Timothy Cole in 1930, wearing an engraver's visor, making notations on a photograph before the original, *Portrait of Fray Hortensio Félix Paravicino* by El Greco, in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. National Museum of American History Archives.

It is difficult to identify the first image to appear in the magazine that used this process with absolute certainty, but an image engraved by John G. Smithwick after Edwin A. Abbey in January 1876 would have been amongst the first (fig. 2.20).<sup>275</sup> The range of tones and the suggestions of textures, particularly in the back ground and foreground (the soldiers on the left edge, the shadows on the buildings behind, the ground) show a marked improvement when it is compared with the earlier image engraved by the same hand, after Thomas Moran (fig. 2.8) five years earlier. The biggest change visible between these illustrations however is the artistic impression of the whole image. Figure 2.20 appears as the faithful translation of an artist's brush into print, in sympathy with the original's artistic expression, whereas figure 2.8 shows an image created with the limitations of the intended medium always in mind.

Timothy Cole, more than any other engraver, was able to capitalize on the opportunities offered when working under Drake at *Scribner's*

<sup>275</sup> An exact date for this change is not known but it was employed, according to *Scribner's/ Century* artist, Joseph Pennell, before 1876. Joseph Pennell, *Modern Illustration* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1895), 38.

*Monthly*. His name became synonymous with the “new school”, and his “Gillie-Boy” illustration, after an original design by James Edward Kelly, was the source of much discussion in the press when it was published in August 1877’s issue (fig. 2.21).<sup>276</sup> The back-ground to this image exhibited the possibilities for painterly effects in dramatic fashion. Here, Cole extended the illusion of the artist’s brush that was glimpsed in the earlier engraving by Smithwick. It may be difficult to conceive of the spectacle that this image caused for the readership, but comparisons with another image from a similar article one month earlier goes some way to illustrate the extent to which this was a perceptible watershed within the history of illustrated magazines akin to the introduction of photographic printing later in the century (fig. 2.22).



THE SONS OF LIBERTY, LED BY MARINUS WILLETT, SEIZING BRITISH ARMS.

Figure 2.20. Detail of John F. Mines, “New York in the Revolution,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, January, 1876. 313. Engraving by John G. Smithwick after a work by Edwin A. Abbey.

<sup>276</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 78. Gokey, “The New School of Wood Engraving,” 61.





THE GILLIE-BOY.

Figure 2.21. Detail of Charles E. Whitehead, "North American Grouse," *Scribner's Monthly*, August, 1877. 425. Engraving by Timothy Cole of "The Gillie Boy" by James Edward Kelly.

# SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY.

VOL. XIV.

JULY, 1877.

No. 3.

## BOW-SHOOTING.



Figure 2.22. Detail from Maurice Thompson, "Bow-Shooting," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1877, 273.

The new school of wood-engraving were able to better replicate the original works of other artists, in a broader range of mediums and styles, because of the mimetic, mechanically enhanced quality of their images. Paradoxically, the magazine was able to show a greater range of art, to become more artistic, when the hand of its engravers, the craftsmen employed by the magazine, became less visible to the reader. However, the potential to capitalize on and promote "the work of the best artists" was such a draw, particularly for an editor as personally invested in American art as Gilder, that the artistic status of wood-engraving was ultimately considered expendable by the magazine.<sup>277</sup>

Whilst this position was never stated in explicit terms by the magazine, it becomes apparent when reviewing the responses to the

<sup>277</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics of the Time: Engraving on Wood," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1879, 456.

controversy caused when *Scribner's* contributor, William J. Linton, wrote an article for *Atlantic* criticizing the new school, and Timothy Cole in particular.<sup>278</sup> Linton described his “disgust” with the “shameful faults,” “excessive fineness” and “pretentious impotence” of Cole’s series of engravings after sketches by Wyatt Eaton of American literary figures (fig. 2.23).<sup>279</sup> The positive attention that the new school of engraving had attracted had clearly piqued him.

these things have been lauded to the skies as fine art, when indeed they are only marvels of microscopic mechanism; not works of art at all, but bad, altogether bad, in all that an artist cares or ought to care for.<sup>280</sup>

The details of Linton’s criticism reveal the anxiety that was driving his outburst; that the adoption of photographic processes would subjugate the status of engraving to a mechanical rather than fine art. Considering Linton’s pre-occupation with socialist politics and class struggle, the roots of his anxieties with regards to the new school of engraving become apparent. This socio-political interest also revealed itself in his denigration of the publishers of magazines who Linton accused of leading engravers astray by being preoccupied with finances over artistry.<sup>281</sup> He was able to sum up the change that had taken place in his eyes by drawing analogy to translation.

the best drawings are not made in line. Tints are washed in with a brush, a more rapid and more effective and more painter-like method; and the engraver has to supply the lines, that is to say, he has to draw with his graver such lines as shall represent color,

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<sup>278</sup> *Atlantic Monthly* was a Boston based rival publication to *Scribner's* that made a virtue out of being a literary rather than an illustrated magazine, and therefore had a vested interest in criticizing the source of its rivals’ success. Linton had emigrated from Britain to America in 1867, with a reputation as one of the best engravers working for magazines and newspapers, most notably for the *Illustrated London News*. He was also known for his acerbic character and forthright political views as a British republican and chartist. However, even allowing for his professional and personal reputation, the direct criticism of the work of colleagues within his profession was highly unusual within the context of a genteel periodical like *Atlantic*.

<sup>279</sup> William J. Linton, “Art in Engraving on Wood,” *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1879, 708-710.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 708.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, 711.

texture, and form. [...] In such work he is an artist in exactly the same degree in which the translator of poetry is a poet. No literal translation is artistic.<sup>282</sup>

Linton's article was not entirely critical of Cole, praising his engraving of Helena Modjeska in the March 1879 issue of *Scribner's Monthly*, as the type of engraving that he should be producing. This approval was strange though, given that the image was clearly engraved from a photograph, confirmed by the caption below the image as it appeared in the magazine (fig. 2.24). Therefore, Linton's criticism of the new school was not straightforwardly that they used photographs. The results of this were commendable to Linton in the case of the Modjeska portrait, because the engraver had maintained a visible style of engraving rather than try to recreate the effects achieved by another artistic medium.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid., 713.

<sup>283</sup> William J. Linton, "Art in Engraving on Wood," *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1879, 709.

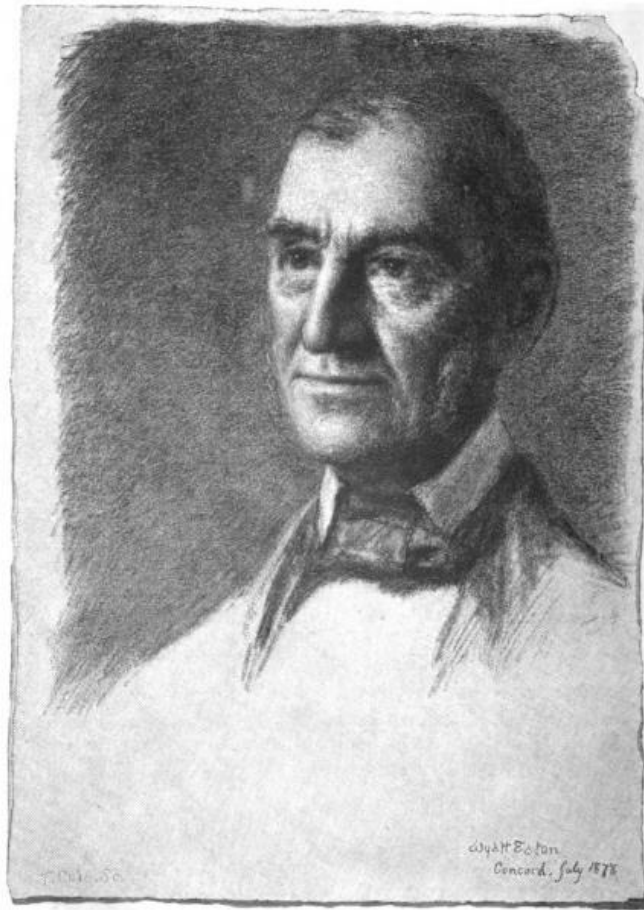


Figure 2.23. Portrait of Ralph Waldo Emerson engraved by Timothy Cole after a pencil drawing by Wyatt Eaton in *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1879, frontispiece.

MODJESKA.



MODJESKA AS "JULIET." (FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH BY SCHOLL.)

Figure 2.24. Engraving by Timothy Cole of Helena Modjeska as Juliet after a photograph in Charles de Kay, "Modjeska," *Scribner's Monthly*, March, 1879, 665.

The editors of *Scribner's Monthly* understandably took exception to Linton's article and replied in an uncharacteristically personal and severe manner in the following month's issue of the magazine.

In this marked improvement in engraving which Mr. Linton recognizes, has he had any share? [...] has he made any recognizable advances in his art? We believe it is pretty well understood among publishers that Mr. Linton's work is not what it used to be. [...] We do not know of an artist who would not choose to have Cole cut his blocks rather than Linton, yet Cole is the man whom Linton has "sat down on," if we may use the slang of the

time. It is the conservative old man, who has arrived at the end of his development, and sits petulantly enshrined within his conventional methods, who assumes to be god and arbiter of wood-engraving, passing judgment upon a young genius.<sup>284</sup>

Of course, the magazine had a strong interest in supporting the new school that they claimed to have initiated, as it was the source of much of their success with the readers. However, the criticism and the publicity it generated also threatened to undermine the magazine's mission to bring fine art to the American people. The management, led by Gilder, conceived of the unrest as a parallel to the conflict between the Society of American Artists and the academy of design; of youthful progress struggling against apparent conservative antipathy to change.<sup>285</sup>

Gilder's broader view on the side of fine art over engraving is apparent in his defense of *Scribner's* processes, which avoided "defacing" the original artwork and provided the engraver with a guide to "hold the feeling of the picture."<sup>286</sup> His reply to Linton did not seek to hide the use of photographic means, but rather celebrated it as an advance that was to the advantage of the magazine's readers.<sup>287</sup> Part of this pledge was due to the new school's ability to replicate textures of different mediums, and in so doing, maintain the integrity of the original artist's style. Referring to an illustration by Charles Stanley Reinhart and signed by the engraver, E. Heinemann (fig. 2.25), Gilder claimed that "Mr. Linton's line" would have negated the "raciness and character" of the artist's pencil drawing.<sup>288</sup> Reinhart was an artist and illustrator who had studied in Paris and Munich and had built a reputation in Europe for his expressive drawings. He returned to New York in the late 1870s and began working as an illustrator, before moving back to Paris to continue his artistic career. Reinhart was able to pursue a successful career in America throughout this time as one of the most recognizable and popular

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<sup>284</sup> "Topics Of The Time: Engraving on Wood," *Scribner's Monthly*, July, 1879, 456.

<sup>285</sup> "Wood-Engraving and the 'Scribner' Prizes," *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1881, 938.

<sup>286</sup> "Topics Of The Time: Engraving on Wood," 456.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., 457.



illustrators working for the popular monthlies. It was artists of Reinhart's background and reputation that Gilder sought to patronize, in order to transport back to America so that the benefits of his art could be enjoyed by his fellow countrymen. Gilder was very successful in doing so. Over the next few years well-known and esteemed artists provided original artwork for reproduction in the pages of *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*.<sup>289</sup> Commissioning artists of such caliber Gilder claimed, had "made the popular magazine the household treasure of a nation awaking to the sense of art".<sup>290</sup>

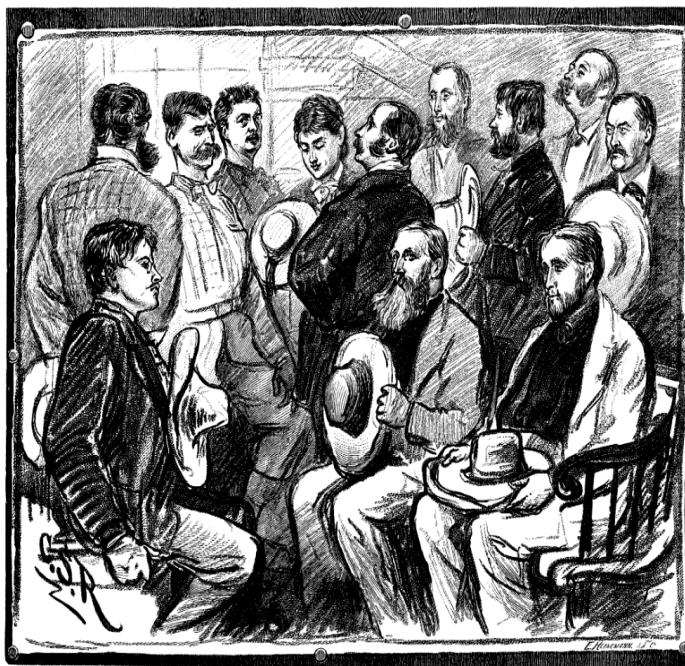
MIDWINTER HOLIDAY NUMBER  
OF  
SCRIBNER'S MONTHLY.

VOL. XVII.

FEBRUARY, 1879.

No. 4.

THE TILE CLUB AT PLAY.



THE TILE CLUB AND THE MILLINER OF BRIDGEHAMPTON.

Figure 2.25. Engraving by E. Heinemann of *The Tile Club and the Milliner of Bridgehampton* by Charles Stanley Reinhart, illustration for W. Mackay Laffan and Edward Strahan, "The Tile Club at Play," *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1879, 457.

<sup>289</sup> Artists who were commissioned by the magazine include: Walter Shirlaw, Charles S. Reinhart, Will H. Low, John La Farge, Winslow Homer, James Edward Kelly, Louis C. Tiffany, Wyatt Eaton, Thomas Eakins, William Merritt Chase, Douglas Volk, Robert Blum, F. S. Church, A. B. Frost, Edwin Austin Abbey, Francis Lathrop and Joseph Pennell.

<sup>290</sup> "Topics of the Time: Engraving on Wood," 457.



## Teaching Art History

The new school of engraving provided opportunity to discuss art in greater detail and in more eye-catching ways than previously possible. But the cultural values and direction of the magazine came from the editor. Richard Watson Gilder's aspirations for American civilization can be understood by examining the articles written for the magazine by the esteemed British Classicist, Sir Charles Waldstein (fig. 2.26).<sup>291</sup> *Century Magazine* published seven articles, all on classical subjects, by Waldstein, with his first about the frieze of the Parthenon appearing in the December 1883 issue. His two-part article titled "The Lesson of Greek Art", which appeared in December 1885 and January 1886, cast America in the familiar role of the "magna Grecians" of the current age, and suggested that America needed to educate its people to realize this pre-ordained cultural flourishing.<sup>292</sup> This was an idea that had its roots in the founding of American democracy and had already found expression through the American Greek Revival architecture of the early nineteenth century. This cultural-historical view still held great currency for idealists such as Gilder. Referring to Waldstein's article in his Topics Of The Time column for January 1886, Gilder stated, "The prime necessity is that we should go earnestly and systematically to work to inspire, to develop, to guide and clarify the taste of the people."<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Waldstein was an Anglo-American, initially educated at Columbia University, before taking further study in Europe and teaching Classical Archaeology at Cambridge University. He was the Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum between 1883 and 1889 before moving to Athens to take a leadership role for the American School of Classical Studies. Whilst in Athens he directed excavations for the Archaeological Institute of America, before returning to Cambridge in 1895 to take up the role of Slade Professor of Fine Art, a role he held again in 1904. The American circumstances and Classical cultural interests of Waldstein's life recommended him as an exemplary author for a magazine edited by Gilder who had aspirations to guide public taste and knowledge.

<sup>292</sup> Charles Waldstein, "The Lesson of Greek Art (Part II)," *Century Magazine*, January, 1886, 400.

<sup>293</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: A Broad View Of Art," *Century Magazine*, January, 1886, 474-475.



Figure 2.26. The Gilder family with Prof. Charles Waldstein (far left), Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (second right) and Bobby Shafter (the donkey) in Marion Mass. 1890. Photograph from the Sippican Historical Society.

Waldstein's articles should be contextualized amongst a large number of other articles educating the readership on Classical principles and culture.<sup>294</sup> Such material was particularly prevalent in the earlier years of Gilder's editorship, when his aspirations for cultural influence were strongest.<sup>295</sup> Some of the interest in such subjects can be attributed to the excitement and scandal that followed Luigi Palma de Cesnola from Cyprus to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, but the Classical material published in the magazine was sober and informative rather

<sup>294</sup> A series of five articles by Lucy Myers Wright Mitchell on Greek sculpture published in 1882 deserve particular mention. Mitchell was a pioneering Classical scholar who published an encyclopedic two-volume history of sculpture, starting with the Egyptians in 1883 (*A History of Ancient Sculpture*, New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.). She died in 1888 at just forty-three years old. All of the essays she had published for *Century Magazine* concerned Greek sculpture exclusively.

<sup>295</sup> Examples of articles on Classical/ Grecian artistic subject matter include, "About Greece and the Greek Museums" by John Arbuckle (May 1877), "Togas and Toggery" by Clarence Cook (October 1877), "Greek Terra-Cottas from Tanagra and Elsewhere" by Edward Strahan [Earl Shinn] (March 1881).

than sensational.<sup>296</sup> Gilder's interest in promoting an understanding of the cultural bedrock which underpinned so much of European (and American) art shows that he was not merely advocating for a particular style, but that his interest was much more fundamental. For many readers in the 1870s and 1880s, he had to convince them to think seriously about art before he could suggest what contemporary art they should enjoy.

Evidence of Gilder's aestheticizing approach to everyday life, an attitude typical of the artistic elites of the period, but also derived from Classical ideals, can be found in the magazine's campaigning for better coinage. William James Stillman, supported by Gilder in his editorials, pointed to Hellenic examples as providing a measure of the civilization that cast them.<sup>297</sup> Like the campaign for Free Art, discussed later, this campaign was drawn out and only bore fruit in 1907 when Saint-Gaudens, Gilder's favorite sculptor, was employed by the United States Mint to transform its coinage.<sup>298</sup>

Throughout Gilder's tenure as editor, *Century Magazine* published one-off as well as series of articles on various topics of European art history.<sup>299</sup> In these articles Gilder was able to exploit the full range of the artistic resources of the magazine's art department. Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer wrote a series of thirteen articles between 1887 and 1892 on the cathedrals of England, which proved highly popular in part due to the fanciful illustrations of Joseph Pennell, a follower of Whistler based

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<sup>296</sup> Rachel N. Klein, "Metropolitan Museum on Trial: Cypriot Antiquities, Expertise, and the Problem of Race," in *Art Wars: The Politics of Taste in Nineteenth-Century New York*, Rachel N. Klein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 161-207.

<sup>297</sup> William James Stillman, "The Coinage of the Greeks," *Century Magazine*, March, 1887, 788-799. Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Art In Our Coinage," March, 1887, 808.

<sup>298</sup> Willard B. Gatewood, "Theodore Roosevelt and the Coinage Controversy," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 1 (1966): 35-51.

<sup>299</sup> Examples of these include: "Leonardo Da Vinci" by Clarence Cook, "Frans Hals" by Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (July 1883), "Sculptors of the Early Italian Renaissance" by Kenyon Cox, (November 1884), "Dutch Portraiture" by William James Stillman (February 1885).

in Europe and one of *Century's* most fashionable artists (fig. 2.27).<sup>300</sup> The series was so well received that the essays and illustrations were published as a separate book in 1892, including a limited edition (fig. 2.28). The exclusivity of this offering which implies that it was a luxury or collectable item is further evidence of the magazine's conception of their work as artistically valuable to a cultural middle-class elite that had the interest and means to collect such books. Pennell's illustrations were, according to the advertisement, "masterpieces of drawing".

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*ELY CATHEDRAL.*



DISTANT VIEW OF THE CATHEDRAL, FROM THE SOUTH.

Figure 2.27. Illustration by Joseph Pennell of "Distant View Of The Cathedral, From The South." Detail taken from Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Ely Cathedral," *Century Magazine*, October 1887, 812.

<sup>300</sup> Artists/ illustrators were not employed by the magazine but were given contracts for projects. However, certain artists did become strongly linked with certain titles due to the amount of art they supplied.



THE LIMITED EDITION. READY IN OCTOBER, 1892.

## ENGLISH CATHEDRALS.

THE TEXT BY  
MRS. SCHUYLER VAN RENSSELAER.

THE ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
JOSEPH PENNELL.



Readers of THE CENTURY MAGAZINE are familiar with the series of articles on English Cathedrals by Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, and the exquisite engravings from drawings by Mr. Joseph Pennell, illustrating them, which have been a feature of the magazine during the past few years. These articles have been considered the most valuable and useful that have ever been written upon the subject, possessing both a historical and a critical interest. Mr. Pennell's drawings are masterpieces of drawing.

The articles and their illustrations are issued this autumn by The Century Co. in a royal octavo volume (7 x 10½) of 250 pages, costing \$6.00. There will be

**A LIMITED EDITION**

of two hundred and fifty copies, printed on heavy plate-paper from type and from the original woodcuts (the type is distributed after printing), each copy numbered and registered by the De Vinne Press. The size is 11 x 14¼, and the sheets are bound in two volumes (boards) and untrimmed. Such a superb collection of pictures of English Cathedrals has never before been offered to the public. In this edition all the full-page engravings are printed without type at the back. Seals of the twelve Sees treated in the book are reproduced with each chapter in the Limited Edition, printed in color on Japan paper. They are pen-drawings by Otto Bacher, made from photographs of the originals in the British Museum.

The price of the Limited Edition (to subscribers only) is \$25. Application may be made through booksellers, or to the publishers,

THE CENTURY CO., 33 East 17th St., New York.



Mrs. Van Rensselaer always writes sympathetically on art, and her papers on these old cathedrals of England have been one of the most attractive features of THE CENTURY. And when it is said that the pictures are by Mr. Pennell, no further commendation of them need be given.  
—*The Independent*, New York.

Mrs. Van Rensselaer is making a book which will find welcome in most libraries.—*The Churchman*, New York.

The pictures are surpassingly fine.  
—*Herald*, Boston, Mass.

Mrs. Van Rensselaer is equally apt in appreciation and criticism.—*Every Evening*, Wilmington, Del.

THE CENTURY CO. 33 EAST 17TH STREET NEW YORK

3

Figure 2.28. Advertisement for *English Cathedrals* from front matter to *Century Magazine*, September 1892.

However, relations between the author and illustrator were frayed due to a difference of vision for the work.<sup>301</sup> Van Rensselaer clearly conceived of the project as an informative architectural account and expected sober illustration to help explain her text, whilst Pennell saw himself on equal terms with the author, producing illustrations that evoked atmosphere over architectural details, drawn in a stylized,

<sup>301</sup> Judith K. Major, *Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic in the Gilded Age* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 40-41.

sketchy manner. Pennell envisioned the project as a travel book meant to transport and entertain the reader. Van Rensselaer thought of it as an educational text aimed at those with an interest in the history of architecture. The combination of these contrasting qualities was likely deliberate, as Gilder knew both van Rensselaer and Joseph Pennell personally, and was caught in the crossfire of their disagreements. However, Gilder realized that the project needed to be both educational and entertaining to have the widest appeal to the readership, and so the unlikely coupling was well conceived. The success of the project brought about a follow up series on French Cathedrals, starting in 1894, but this quickly lost momentum as the disagreements between illustrator and author became increasingly frequent, and the series discontinued in 1899 after only five articles.

The collaboration of an author based in the United States and an American artist based in Europe employed by a popular American magazine reveals the scale and reach of the magazine's operation at its height. The reuse of articles and illustrations was common for magazines attached to publishers and was a way of making expensive art projects commercially viable. Large publishers also took part in the international trade of engraved images for illustration, and so were an important part of the networks of financial and intellectual exchange in the art world. Amy Von Lintel has provided an interesting account which throws light on the trade in electrotypes between three of the largest publishers during the 1870s and 1880s: Louis Hachette of Paris, Sampson Low of London, and Charles Scribner's of New York, the publisher of *Scribner's Monthly*. This trade between publishers expanded the careers of arts educators to new audiences, and more significantly, helped shape the canon of Western Art that formed the basis of art history courses well into the twentieth century.<sup>302</sup> The trade in images and the recycling of content between books and periodicals was a financially led strategy, but its intention was to reduce prices as much as possible in competition with

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<sup>302</sup> Amy M. Von Lintel, "Wood Engravings, the 'Marvellous Spread of Illustrated Publications,' and the History of Art," *Modernism/modernity* 19 (2012): 516-542.

rival publishers, and in this way some of the finest art of Europe was transported into the homes of Americans who would otherwise have no access to these experiences.

The combination of mass-market forces, technology, craft and the appetite for art historical education was combined most successfully in the series of European masterpieces engraved for *Century Magazine* by Timothy Cole (fig. 2.29). Cole suggested that he travel to Europe to produce reproductive engravings of works from the originals to Lewis Fraser, the art manager, in 1883.<sup>303</sup> The management liked the ambition of the suggestion to send their best wood-engraver to Europe and so Cole sailed for France in October of the same year on what was expected to be a short project to engrave some of the most famous works of the Louvre. The results so pleased the management that Cole was employed continually for over twenty-six years by *Century Magazine* to work in Europe, travelling with his family on a systematic tour of the continent's art museums. The first series completed by Cole was the Italian Old Masters. This first appeared under this title in November 1888, although Cole had evidently been working on it for several years previously. In a short essay introducing the series, William James Stillman assured the readership of the unmatched quality of Cole's engraving, explaining his technique as well as his artistically sensitive temperament, claiming that

The undertaking to which THE CENTURY is devoting its resources, [...] (is) a great educational work, and one than which the head of our school of wood-engravers could find no more profitable object for the devotion of the best years of his life. For such work, on a scale which permits popularization, there is no method comparable to the work of this new school of engravers.<sup>304</sup>

As with *English Cathedrals*, Century Co. was able to maximize the investment in Cole's work by offering portfolios, including limited editions of the *Old Italian Masters* (fig. 2.30). Nevertheless, the undertaking

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<sup>303</sup> Alphaeus Cole and Margaret Cole, *Timothy Cole: Wood Engraver* (New York: Pioneer Associates, 1935), 36.

<sup>304</sup> William James Stillman, "Cole and His Work: The Popularization of Art," *Century Magazine*, November, 1888, 58.

represented a considerable commitment on the part of the magazine and publisher. The series ran between 1888 and 1892 and comprised thirty-eight images engraved by Cole, who would have electrotypes made and sent to New York to avoid paying the art tariff on the wood-block. Each one was accompanied by some text written by Stillman, to help explain the image and its broader significance to the history of Italian art. The value of Cole's task to the cultural elevation of the American public was cited as a reason for this venture. Stillman again tells us that,

If, therefore, it be possible to render early Italian art popular in America, and so to employ it in the furtherance of general art education, nothing could be more useful than a series of reproductions, by the best wood-engravers of America.<sup>305</sup>

Following the success of his "Italian Old Masters" (1888-1892) Cole proceeded to produce similar series of the Dutch (with notes by van Rensselaer), English (notes by John C. Van Dyke), Spanish (notes by Timothy Cole) and French (notes by Timothy Cole) schools of art, before returning to America in 1910 and engraving some of the masterpieces in American museums. His engravings were considered enough of an artistic achievement to be displayed in the Fine Arts building at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, as well as the Century Co.'s stand which was according to *Critic* magazine, "less an exhibit of books than of pictures and processes" (fig. 2.31).<sup>306</sup> The systematic grouping of these series supports their characterization as primarily educational content, meant to appeal to the readership through the fineness of Cole's engraving work.

Two other artistic series should also be briefly mentioned in a similar vein "The Century's' American Artists Series" (begun in 1890) and "Examples of American Portraiture" (begun in 1900). These were ongoing commitments of the magazine to showcase the best reproductive engravings (and eventually half-tone images) of works by American artists, usually as a frontispiece with some short explanatory text in the

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> "American Publishers' Exhibits at the World's Fair," *Critic*, July 1, 1893, 7-8.

Quotation taken from Leja, "The Illustrated Magazines and Print Connoisseurship," 58.



magazine's regular departments, "Open Letters" or "Topics Of The Time" (figs. 2.32 and 2.33).<sup>307</sup> Whilst these series were not as straightforwardly educational as those produced from Cole's engravings, they represent an advanced stage of public education which was built on the foundations laid earlier by the magazine with its art historical content.



Figure 2.29. Engraving by Timothy Cole after Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Miracle of the Slave*, 1548 now in Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, in, "Italian Old Masters: Tintoretto," *Century Magazine*, September, 1892, 747.

<sup>307</sup> William A. Coffin, the art critic at the *New York Evening Post* and *The Nation* magazine was the contributor most closely associated with "The Century's' American Artists Series".

*"If these woodcuts are ever issued in a portfolio of fine proofs they will form such an art-work as one rarely sees."—N. Y. TIMES, MARCH 16, 1890.*

**READY IN OCTOBER.**

**THE CENTURY CO.** announces to the lovers of the fine arts the issue of a limited edition of 125 copies of a superb Portfolio of Proofs of the famous engravings of the Old Italian Masters, made by Mr. Timothy Cole, the well-known wood-engraver, during a residence of seven years in Italy.

These exquisite examples of the work of the world's greatest artists have attracted wide attention as they have appeared from month to month in the pages of *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE*, accompanied with explanatory text by Mr. W. J. Stillman, and by Mr. Cole's own valuable and entertaining notes. Professor Charles Eliot Norton says of them: "No engravings hitherto existing of the works of early Italian art give so much of the essential spirit as well as of the manner of painting of these works as this series of Mr. Cole's." Each engraving has been made by Mr. Cole in the presence of the original, his method being to photograph the painting upon the block, and then to engrave it in the gallery, before the picture. He has reproduced the work of the masters of art more accurately than has ever before been done in black and white.

The Century Co. has spared no pains or expense to make this Portfolio of Proofs the most notable art issue of the day. Each of the 67 proofs is printed on the finest Japan paper, size  $17\frac{1}{2} \times 14$ , and is signed by Mr. Cole and by the printer, Mr. J. C. Bauer, professional proof-printer for wood-engravers, the latter certifying that the impression is one of 125 copies printed by hand from the original block or plate. The proof is mounted on heavy Japan paper, with another sheet of the same over it, leaving a space for the engraving, lined with gold. This is surmounted by a cover of linen paper bearing the number of the cut. Each engraving that is a detail of a large picture is accompanied by a small outline drawing of the latter, so that the engraved part may be properly located in relation to the whole painting.

The subscriber to the Portfolio of Proofs will receive also a copy of a book containing the text of Mr. Stillman's articles on the Old Masters (with Mr. Cole's notes), a special edition of 125 copies of which has been printed on Holland paper to accompany the Portfolio.

The edition of the Portfolio is absolutely limited to 125 copies, the price of each, to subscribers only, being \$175. Orders should be sent in at once. Address for further information

**THE CENTURY CO.**  
NEW YORK, AUGUST, 1892. 33 EAST 17TH ST., NEW YORK.

**THE CENTURY CO. 33 EAST 17TH STREET NEW YORK**

Figure 2.30. Advertisement for *Old Italian Masters* from front matter to *Century Magazine*, September 1892.



EXTERIOR OF THE CENTURY CO.'S PAVILION. (See pages 7 and 8.)

Figure 2.31. Engraving after a photograph of "Exterior of the Century Co.'s Pavilion" at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, in, "American Publishers' Exhibits at the World's Fair," *Critic*, July 1, 1893, 9.



PAINTED BY EASTMAN JOHNSON.

SEE "OPEN LETTERS."

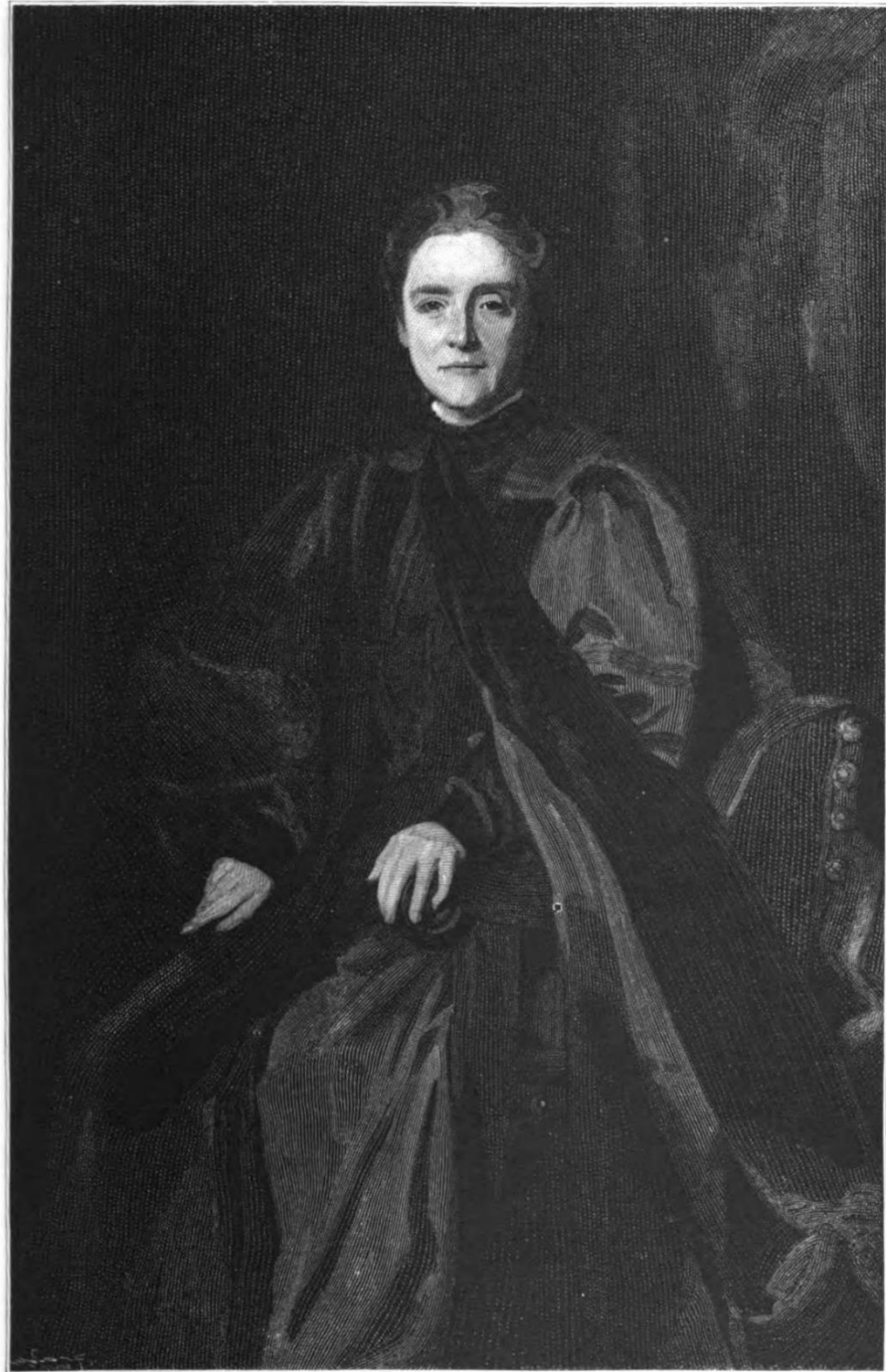
COPYRIGHT, 1893, BY E. D. ADAMS.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

THE NANTUCKET SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY.

Figure 2.32. Engraving by Henry Wolf after Eastman Johnson, *The Nantucket School of Philosophy*, in *Century Magazine*, October, 1894, 816.





EXAMPLES OF AMERICAN PORTRAITURE. I: MISS M. CAREY THOMAS, PRESIDENT OF BRYN MAWR COLLEGE. PAINTED BY JOHN S. SARGENT.

Figure 2.33. Engraving by Henry Wolf after John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of Miss M. Carey Thomas*, in *Century Magazine*, August, 1900, 519.

## The Campaign for Free Art

*Century Magazine* was successful in playing a significant role in bringing art to the people, in the form of both the visual tactile qualities of the magazine itself, and the publishing of educational material from esteemed and popular authors. However, Gilder appreciated that, whilst the magazine was popular and had influenced its rivals to follow its lead, it could be part of a larger cultural plan to improve the conditions for art in America, which required the co-operation and encouragement of legislators and institutions.

The campaign to abolish taxes on works of art imported to the United States was a regular topic for *Century Magazine*.<sup>308</sup> It was covered at least seventeen times as a headline issue in the Topics Of The Time department between 1881 and 1909, and was mentioned in passing in numerous other articles on art during that period.<sup>309</sup> There had been taxation on art previously, but in 1883 the tax was trebled to thirty percent.<sup>310</sup> This sparked a national debate in the press and periodicals over the question of what art's role and status should be in America.<sup>311</sup>

The measure was not taken in isolation, but was part of a wider series of taxes, referred to as the Tariff Bill, imposed in response to campaigns from manufacturers of a variety of goods to protect them from foreign competition. Art's inclusion in tariffs concerning manufactured goods is a telling indication that for many Americans, including those in political power, the majority of whom were members of the economic bourgeoisie, art was thought of as a commodity. Writing about Timothy's Cole's engravings in *Century* leading to a "popularization" of art amongst

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<sup>308</sup> "Topics Of The Time, A Retrospect of '*The Century*,'" *Century Magazine*, November, 1910, 153.

<sup>309</sup> Gilder admitted that the issue had been "rehearsed in these columns and elsewhere to the point of fatigue." Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art A National Necessity," *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 627.

<sup>310</sup> Earlier history of the tariff is covered in Klein, "Art and Industry," 95-127. A highly detailed account of the entire history of the art tariff is provided in Robert E. May, "Culture Wars: The U.S. Art Lobby and Congressional Tariff Legislation during the Gilded Age and Progressive Era," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 9, no. 1 (2010): 37-91.

<sup>311</sup> Kimberly Orcutt, "Buy American? The Debate over the Art Tariff," *American Art* 16, no. 3 (2002): 82.

the people, William James Stillman lamented that, “Our national temper is anti-artistic”.<sup>312</sup> This was a common attitude amongst critics and artists, and was taken as a challenge by Gilder to help transform the nation into art lovers, and ultimately impose his taste and interests on the rest of society.<sup>313</sup> He similarly pointed to this misapprehension by legislators, claiming that the politicians were confusing art with “potato-mashers” or a “pound of sugar”.<sup>314</sup> Following years of protest and lobbying the tariff was reduced to fifteen percent in 1891 and ceased between 1895 and 1897. However, the Dingley tariff reintroduced taxes on imports of art as high as twenty percent in 1897. In 1909 the Payne-Aldrich tariff excluded works of art more than twenty years old, and it was eventually fully removed in 1913.<sup>315</sup>

When first introduced, the tariff was not universally disliked by all American artists, and Clarence Cook claimed that certain members of the Academy actually supported it.<sup>316</sup> Amongst the American artists most vociferously opposed to the tariff were the new generation who studied and worked in Europe, artists such as William Merritt Chase, John Singer Sargent and Edwin Austin Abbey. The Academy of Design in New York was often conspicuous by its absence amongst organized efforts to abolish the tax, and this helped to fuel the generational animosities that were the topic of the previous chapter.<sup>317</sup> Gilder himself placed blame on

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<sup>312</sup> William J. Stillman, “Cole And His Work: The Popularization of Art,” *Century Magazine*, November, 1888, 57.

<sup>313</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Broad View Of Art,” *Century Magazine*, January, 1886, 474-475. As an example see also, “Topics Of The Time: A Chinese Wall for American Art,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1884, 784.

<sup>314</sup> “Topics Of The Time: Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 620. “Topics Of The Time: The Difference between a Painting and a Pound of Sugar,” *Century Magazine*, April, 1885, 953.

<sup>315</sup> I am indebted to Kimberley Orcutt’s scholarship for this concise timeline. Orcutt, “Buy American?,” 82-91.

<sup>316</sup> Clarence Cook, “The Cry from the Studios,” *Galaxy*, February 15, 1867, 435-439. The tax was not supported by all politicians either. Grover Cleveland was a strong voice against the tariff and his public opposition endeared him to Gilder before the two became friends through their wives.

<sup>317</sup> The Academy in New York only managed to pass a formal resolution condemning the tariff in 1905. The Academy had been one of the bodies who had requested the imposition of tariffs on foreign art in the 1850s.

members of the older generation in his first article for *Century* on the tariff.<sup>318</sup>

In his role as editor of a popular magazine and friend to many of the artists working abroad who were adversely impacted by the tariff, Gilder had clear personal interests in opposing the tax. The duty was applied to the wood-blocks sent to the magazine from engravers in Europe, as well as any illustrations that the magazine commissioned from artists based outside of the United States.<sup>319</sup> The tax was also an impediment to the careers of many artists that Gilder wanted to personally champion: Americans working in the artistic centers of Europe such as Paris, Munich, Dresden and Rome. The economic impact of the tax on the magazine's operation was surely significant, but it should not be used as a decisive piece of evidence for explaining the significance placed on the coverage of the tariff in the pages of the magazine. The tax equally applied to the magazine's rivals and *Century* was better positioned than any other similar publication to commission work from artists based domestically, thanks to the connections of Gilder and Drake. If the tax truly was financially crippling it could have been avoided by either only commissioning domestically based artists or reducing the amount of illustration and arts coverage. It is therefore appropriate to adjust any cynical interpretations concerning motive and examine the articles from Gilder's perspective of critical patriotism.

There were two principle arguments made in defense of the tariff: that it provided needed protection for artists in America at a

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<sup>318</sup> "those American artists who worked for a "protective" art tariff, with the intention of making a "corner" in art in the new world for their own especial benefit and that of their friends and cronies." Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art," *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 619. This was an often-repeated accusation. For example: Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Art and Congressmen," *Century Magazine*, September, 1884, 786.

<sup>319</sup> An example of the problems caused by the tariff to the work of the magazine is detailed in a letter from Elizabeth Robins Pennell, the author and wife/ manager of illustrator Joseph Robins Pennell, when Pennell's illustrations had been detained at New York customs house. Elizabeth Robins Pennell to Robert Underwood Johnson, April 2, 1898. *Century Magazine* correspondence, 1885-1914, The Huntington Library, Pasadena.

disadvantage to their European counterparts, and that art was a luxury item and therefore the tax only impacted the economic elite who could afford to pay. In the minds of many politicians it was electorally untenable to maintain tariffs on common manufactured goods bought by the “working man”, whilst reducing those placed on extravagances.<sup>320</sup>

*Century Magazine* disputed the veracity of the first argument, claiming that the clear majority of American artists did not want the protection offered by the tariff. According to data collected in February 1885 by the Art Committee of the influential Union League Club in New York, only eight of the one-thousand, eight-hundred and eighty-five artists surveyed supported the thirty-percent tariff.<sup>321</sup> Many established artists voiced their opposition prominently in the press. James Carroll Beckwith, Francis Davis Millet, Edwin Howland Blashfield and William Merritt Chase visited Washington to try and convince Congress of their error in 1884, and many art associations across America organized formal responses in protest, including the Society of American Artists.<sup>322</sup> *Critic* magazine, edited by Gilder’s siblings, Joseph and Jeanette Gilder, organized twenty-nine artists to write public letters against the tariff in 1885, many of them prominent expatriates writing from Europe such as John Singer Sargent and Elihu Vedder. It appears that *Century Magazine* was justified in its rejection of the protectionist argument; American artists as a whole did not want the protection and were put at a disadvantage when studying or working abroad.

The second argument, defining art as a luxury, was a more nuanced question upon which the magazine focused most of its critical attention. For Gilder, art was a necessity rather than a luxury because of the positive moral effects that the public would imbibe from experiencing examples of the best art.<sup>323</sup> The failure of legislators to appreciate art’s

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<sup>320</sup> Orcutt, “Buy American?,” 85.

<sup>321</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: The Difference between a Painting and a Pound of Sugar,” *Century Magazine*, April, 1885, 954.

<sup>322</sup> May, “Culture Wars: The U.S. Art Lobby and Congressional Tariff Legislation,” 37.

<sup>323</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Art and Congressmen,” *Century Magazine*, September, 1884, 787.



vital symbolic nature was all the more evidence for its necessity.<sup>324</sup> In taking such a view Gilder positioned himself and *Century* on the side of the “people”, taken to mean the middle-classes that bought his magazine.<sup>325</sup> Art was a “*a luxury of the poor*” and assumptions that the people were incapable of appreciating or enjoying art were callous and snobbish.<sup>326</sup> America was a “a beauty-loving, indeed a beauty-hungry, people” for whom good art was an “educational and civilizing” force.<sup>327</sup>

Art’s cultural status as an interest restricted to the very wealthy was challenged by the magazine’s articles calling for free art. The tariff did not apply to works of art bought specifically for public museums, but Gilder reminded the readers that public museums benefitted from private collections through exhibition loans and donations, and that the impediments to private collecting represented by the tax were the main reason for the meagre condition of America’s art museums.<sup>328</sup> Kimberly Orcutt has cited an article from 1902 in which it is claimed that over thirty million dollars’ worth of art, including works by American artists,

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<sup>324</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Luxury Of The Poor: A Plea For Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, December, 1905, 332.

<sup>325</sup> “The tariff on art is legislation that discriminates against the poor man. The rich man can afford to have the picture of his choice, no matter what the tariff may be; in fact, the higher the tariff the rarer the gem with which his wall is adorned.” Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Chinese Wall For American Art,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1884, 784. Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 620.

<sup>326</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Luxury Of The Poor: A Plea For Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, December, 1905, 332. Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: America’s Need Of Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1902, 793.

<sup>327</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Some Stupidities Of The Tariff: America’s Need Of Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1902, 793. Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: Some Stupidities Of The Tariff: The Duties On Art, Books, And Lumber,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1905, 635.

<sup>328</sup> “The free admission of pictures intended for public galleries, in a law which taxes all other picture importations, is a delusion. The public galleries, by means of loans and bequests, are constantly benefited by the treasures of art owned by private individuals; and, besides, a good picture hung upon a poor man’s wall, or in any private gallery, has an influence that cannot be measured.” Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Chinese Wall For American Art,” *Century Magazine*, March, 1884, 784. “Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: The Difference between a Painting and a Pound of Sugar,” *Century Magazine*, April, 1885, 953-954. Richard Watson Gilder, “Topics Of The Time: A Luxury Of The Poor: A Plea For Free Art,” *Century Magazine*, December, 1905, 332. “To Fight the Tariff on Art,” *New York Times*, January 3, 1905), 8.

was being stored in Europe by wealthy American collectors who wished to avoid the tax. Further evidence of this effect was provided when the tax repealed in 1909 and J. P. Morgan started transporting his vast collections to America. By 1917, after his death, nearly seven thousand objects were gifted to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.<sup>329</sup>

*Century Magazine* made alternative cases for the value of art to the nation when discussing the tariff, addressed to those who may be skeptical of art's proper place in The New World. Gilder suggested that there would be an additional benefit to the beauty and design of goods manufactured in America, if only the working people could gain experience of artistic beauty.<sup>330</sup> This was an argument designed to persuade those with a tendency to view issues always in mercantile terms, and a reminder that a significant proportion of the readership would have been members of the economic and even petty bourgeoisie. Gilder also drew attention to the damage being caused to America's international reputation; a culture that was self-confident should not require protection in the form of taxes on foreign art.<sup>331</sup> These alternative arguments were not decisive for men like Gilder, a "custodian of genteel culture," who saw the value in art for its own sake. However, his willingness to make these alternative arguments to appeal to as wide a base as possible is further evidence of the magazine's self-perception as a mouthpiece to a significant section of the nation and its popularity amongst a cross section of the middle classes at this time, not just members of "bohemian avant-garde" like Gilder.

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<sup>329</sup> The article cited by Orcutt on thirty million dollars of art in Europe was "The Duty on Art," *New York Times*, September 10, 1902, 8. Orcutt, "Buy American?," 87-88.

<sup>330</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art A National Necessity," *Century Magazine*, February, 1893, 628. Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Some Stupidities Of The Tariff: America's Need Of Free Art," *Century Magazine*, March, 1902, 793-794. Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art Gaining Ground," *Century Magazine*, November, 1907, 158.

<sup>331</sup> Evidence exists of substantial friction between America and other European countries, France and Italy in particular, over the tariff. Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Art and Congressmen," *Century Magazine*, September, 1884, 786. Orcutt, "Buy American?," 86.

Further arguments composed by Gilder possessed a greater sense of conviction. The people were at a disadvantage by being denied the experience of art made by their fellow Americans as well as the best examples of contemporary European culture.<sup>332</sup> This in turn stifled American art made at home, as the public taste was lacking to recognize and support good art. The culturally infertile condition of the nation forced the most promising artists to train and work in Europe, and so the cycle would continue until America's best artists could send their best works back home without the imposition of tariffs. The tax had had the effect of dramatically decreasing the number of art works by the younger generation of artists being bought and imported into America. Gilder's personal connections with these artists was clearly a strong motivating factor. He claimed to speak on behalf of the members of the Society of American Artists, upon whom the "the future of our art depends," writing that

They (the SAA) would probably say that art is not manufacture; that true art can flourish in no community where taste is not cultivated and keyed up by the contemplation of the best works of art, either in the original or by reproduction; that artists themselves especially need the example and stimulus furnished by the art productions of other hands and lands, both ancient and modern; and that every barrier against the free introduction into a country of art works, either in the original or in reproduction; is a barrier against the advance of art.<sup>333</sup>

This was Gilder's personal opinion, but it closely reflected the sentiments of members of the SAA, demonstrating how close Gilder was to them at this time. He continued to be a significant influence acting on behalf of artists during the campaigns for free art and was a member of the

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<sup>332</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Some Stupidities Of The Tariff: The Duties On Art, Books, And Lumber," *Century Magazine*, February, 1905, 635.

<sup>333</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art," *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 620.

American Free Art League, which was set up as a lobbying force in 1893.<sup>334</sup>

Although Gilder's personal connections and artistic tastes should be considered as a significant factor in the magazine's campaigning against the art tariff, the wider context and arguments presented should also be taken into account. Gilder was a man that felt the responsibility of his culturally privileged position, and his personal interests and those held on behalf of the nation often coincided. Gilder had the opportunity to meet a great many artists, and he sincerely admired and patronized many as editor of the *Century Magazine*, because he believed that their artistic work was exceptional. In the early months of the furor caused by the tariff he was clear in his conviction that his position was taken out of a sense of practical patriotic duty. "It is true that art should, in a certain sense, be national; but before being *national*, it must first be *art*."<sup>335</sup> Gilder continued to speak to the readership in its entirety, to those with and without artistic inclination and experience, convinced of the potential in everyone to develop a positive taste for art. Writing for *Century* on the details of tariff reform, the progressive Republican politician, Samuel William McCall, reminded readers that diminution of taxes was rarely a straightforward matter for governments.

I refer to the difficulties in the way of tariff reduction, not for the purpose of discouraging anybody, but to make it clear that they can be surmounted only by a firm resolution supported by a genuine public opinion, which will be the indispensable factor in bringing about any reduction.<sup>336</sup>

Gilder and *Century Magazine* took it upon themselves to mold and nurture public opinion so that decisions made to the advantage of a national artistic flourishing would become second nature to the citizenry.

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<sup>334</sup> "The Free Art League's Appeal," *New York Times*, January 1, 1894, 9. Pauline Periwinkle, "Work of the American Free Art League," *Brush and Pencil*, March, 1906, 103-106.

<sup>335</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: A Chinese Wall For American Art," *Century Magazine*, March, 1884, 784.

<sup>336</sup> Samuel William McCall, "The Outlook for Tariff Reform," *Century Magazine*, October, 1907, 848.

By 1893 Gilder clearly believed that public attitude had been sufficiently convinced of art's value as more than objects of manufacture, to start yielding institutional and legislative results.

Public sentiment clearly perceives that what we need to cultivate and encourage are the graces and refinements of life, pure learning, the best music, the beautiful arts, the progress of civilization being measured by the conversion of luxuries into necessities.<sup>337</sup>

The topics discussed in detail in this chapter have served to provide highlights of a variety of material which illustrates the patriotic and idealistic attitude of Richard Watson Gilder, and the ideas about art and its role in American society which flowed from this. Amongst these topics it is possible to see clear points of interdependence. The articles on art historical subjects and contemporary art would not have been popular without the advances in reproductive engraving, facilitated by the new school. Topics such as cathedral architecture in England would not have been so attractive to the readership without the illustrative flair of someone like Pennell. The magazine was able to attract the illustrative work of the best artists because of its aesthetic qualities and craftsmanship. Bringing the best art to the attention of the readers inevitably involved the importation of images from around the world, and the readership's knowledge and appreciation of the artistic content of the magazine required the support of parallel efforts in public museums and private collections made accessible to the public, displaying the best contemporary art from expatriate Americans and foreign artists.

There are other subjects which, space permitting, would have added to this tapestry of interconnecting threads. Regular discussions on the role and operation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other museums such as the Corcoran Gallery, The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts and the Freer Collection; on arts education, civic architecture and public art. *Scribner's*

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<sup>337</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: Free Art A National Necessity," *Century Magazine*, February, 1883, 628.

*Monthly* even proposed to act as an art agent in 1880, matching wealthy buyers with American artists, made possible due to their connections with contemporary American art and resources. This proposition was made, the magazine explained, to assist the artists of New York who were overlooked by dealers who favored foreign paintings, and offer assurance to wealthy buyers (economic bourgeoisie) who loved pictures but lacked “educated taste”.<sup>338</sup> Sadly no further information relating to this enterprise has been found, and the magazine did not mention it again, so it may be concluded that the offer was not enthusiastically received; doubtless a further confirmation to Gilder of the need to develop a love of art amongst the people of America. Gilder was far from being an impartial promotor of art. He was interested in the promulgation of his own tastes and the promotion of his friends, as the third chapter will seek to demonstrate, and ultimately in securing his own social status and justifying his economic and cultural capital. However, there is a need to acknowledge that a plurality of motivations affected the thoughts and actions of someone like Gilder over a substantial and significant career. He consistently showed an awareness of the needs beyond his own clique and a belief in the nation, evidenced by his dedication to public causes for which he was perhaps best known at the time of his death in 1909. He appreciated that the public had to develop a sensitivity to art, before any efforts to direct such sentiment towards a specific aesthetic style or perspective. The magazine therefore continued to be addressed “for the people” throughout his tenure as editor, regardless of the fact that the magazine most closely reflected the desires and opinions of a cultured middle-class. The patriotic instincts and idealistic beliefs of Gilder’s personality, which found expression in his work at *Scribner’s Monthly*

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<sup>338</sup> “We propose, therefore, through the good offices of the art-department of this magazine, to purchase pictures to order, for any part of the country. We will consider all wants that are intelligently expressed, carefully and conscientiously canvass and record all values, give letters of advice and counsel, send photographs of any desired picture, and transact all the business for a consideration which shall simply cover expenses, such expenses always being expressed or covered by the round price of any picture in question.” “Topics Of The Time: The Purchase Of Pictures: A Proposition.,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, March, 1880, 783.

and *Century Magazine* should be remembered when considering the reasoning and intended impacts of much of the content related to the visual arts between 1875 and 1909.

### 3. Richard Watson Gilder, *Century Magazine*, and the Aesthetic Movement

The period from 1870 to 1900 saw a cultural flourishing in America which coincided with the best years of Richard Watson Gilder's career working at *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine*. This thesis argues that the development of American art during this period was steered and promoted in certain directions by the magazine, due to its popularity amongst the public and the privileged position of its editor in relation to the New York art world. According to Gilder, monthly magazines were "the great modern intellectual amphitheater" of the age, where the editor "must directly and strongly affect the taste and culture of the people, while the energy, originality and enterprise of the magazine publisher become modifying forces in art, literature and life."<sup>339</sup> The first chapter focused on the events of the 1870s, when Gilder was gaining influence within *Scribner's Monthly* and became intimately acquainted with the New York art scene through his marriage to the artist Helena de Kay in 1874. Gilder had found himself at the epicenter of the disputes between a youthful generation of artists and the National Academy in New York and had used his position at *Scribner's Monthly* to offer promotion and support to the "younger painters of America". The second chapter examined some of the ways in which Gilder, as editor from 1881 onwards, sought to bring art to the readership, motivated by his sense of critical patriotism and belief in the spiritually elevating effects of culture. This third chapter builds upon these foundations by considering Gilder and *Century Magazine's* fraternal and collaborative relationships to the American Aesthetic Movement.

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<sup>339</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "The Rise and Work of a Magazine: The History of The Century Magazine (Scribner's Monthly)," *Century Magazine*, November, 1882, addendum, 17–28. Quoted in, Page Knox, "Publishing and Promoting a New York City Art World: *Scribner's Illustrated Monthly*, 1870-1881," in *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge Research in Art History, 2019), Kindle Edition.



The Aesthetic Movement claimed a position of universal validity, with the potential of incorporating the entirety of artistic endeavors, past and present, as long as they were aesthetic, that is to say that their primary value lay in their visual beauty. This was a natural perspective for members of the bohemian and consecrated avant-gardes, who valued works of art (autonomous production to recall the terminology used in the first chapter) for their symbolic rather than financial qualities. For the promoters of the movement, style was the “language” embedded in a particular time and place. The Aesthetic Movement negated the “unified artistic vision of earlier eras” by simultaneously embracing a multitude of objects, mediums and styles, creating historically and geographically incoherent original works.<sup>340</sup> This mixing of cultures resulted in the packed and jarring interiors of the period which are closely identified with Aesthetic philosophy, as famously depicted in William Merritt Chase’s paintings of his studio in the Tenth Street Building in the 1880s. Here European-style oil paintings and framed works on paper hung casually alongside Chinese pottery, musical instruments, ceramic wares, classical busts, hanging silks and eighteenth-century furniture (fig.3.1). By choosing to not express itself in any one style, the Aesthetic Movement could claim to speak a universal artistic language which could be enjoyed by anyone with an interest in the visual qualities of things, and an eye for beauty. One of the most distinctive and ironic achievements of Aestheticism was its capability of embodying its philosophy coherently in objects, including magazines, which could be marketed and consumed by the public.

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<sup>340</sup> Roger B. Stein, “Artifact As Ideology: The Aesthetic Movement In Its American Cultural Context,” in *In Pursuit Of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Rizzoli, 1986), 39.



Figure 3.1. William Merritt Chase, *In The Studio*, 1882. Oil on canvas, 71 x 102 cm, Brooklyn Museum, New York.

The American Aesthetic Movement had roots in the intellectual and artistic developments that had started in Britain in the 1850s, spearheaded by figures such as John Ruskin, Augustus Pugin and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. This movement was distinctive in its promotion of stylistic eclecticism, both in terms of history and geography, and its self-consciousness as an agent for social reform in reaction to the material and spiritual changes to life that were initiated by the industrial revolution. The conditions which produced the impetus for an artistic reform movement were replicated in the United States, although the strife caused by the Civil War in the 1860s had taken precedence. The Jacksonian ideal of an independent, innocent and peaceful nation in harmony with the natural world was irreparably broken. The impressive landscape views of the 1850s no longer held the answers to philosophical angst or appeared aspirational to the culturally savvy metropolitan, professional middle-class in places like New York. The Aesthetic

Movement, which sought to critique previous models of life subsequently became more pronounced in America from the 1870s onwards.<sup>341</sup>

It is tempting to view the American Aesthetic Movement as a delayed echo of events across the Atlantic, but this was far from being the case. Americans were familiar with the movement in both its intellectual foundations and artistic forms from the point of its conception. Ruskin was widely read in America, and even claimed that his ideas had received a warmer reception there than at home.<sup>342</sup> The paintings of many of the so called “Hudson River School” artists encapsulated Ruskin’s famous “truth to nature” maxim and demand for art to serve a higher moral purpose in their minute recreations of the American landscape imbued with patriotic and religious symbolic narratives. However, the “Hudson River School’s” dialogue with European artistic trends towards Aestheticism, that is a privileging of the visual over conceptual qualities, continued into the 1860s in the so-called “luminist” works by painters such as Asher B. Durand, Frederick Kensett and Sanford Robinson Gifford, as Alan Wallach has shown.<sup>343</sup> Intellectually also, the ideas which underpinned much of the thinking of Ruskin in terms of nature and the artist’s role in interpreting its beauty for a wider social purpose

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<sup>341</sup> The conditions which created anxiety for fundamental reform are identified in Alan Trachtenberg’s canonical text, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and wang, 1982). In brief summary these were migration from rural to urban centers of employment, a re-orientation of life from local to national and international perspectives, the undermining of religious authority, spiritual pluralism from contact with new faith movements and philosophies, the advances in medical science and diagnosis of mental and psychological disorders, increasing participation of women in the workforce and accompanying pressure for equal rights, waves of immigration from culturally disparate regions of Europe, mechanization of work processes and segregation of people from the land, the beginning of mass culture and mass media aided by rapid technological innovation, depressed wages and workers unrest, supported by Socialist political movements.

<sup>342</sup> John Ruskin, Letter published in *The Crayon*, May 2, 1855, 283. A detailed examination of Ruskin’s influence in America is provided in Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America 1840-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

<sup>343</sup> Alan Wallach, “Aestheticizing Tendencies in Hudson River School Landscape Painting at the Beginning of the Gilded Age,” in *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge Research in Art History, 2019), Kindle Edition.

resonated with Americans who were well versed in the philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalist movement.<sup>344</sup> Given the similarities between the two, it is unsurprising that the Aesthetic Movement was initially best received at Harvard, and the groups of intellectuals and artists based around Boston. Charles Eliot Norton was one such Bostonian who found himself drawn to Ruskin as an interpreter of Emerson, who managed to combine the latter's metaphysical and cultural ideals with a sense of social responsibility and energy for political reform. Norton became a close friend to Ruskin and helped to promulgate the intellectual underpinnings of aestheticism to American audiences, through his essays, lectures on art and editorship of the *North American Review* in the 1860s.<sup>345</sup> However, the cultural capital of the nation gradually followed the economic national interests that were firmly located in New York City, with many writers and artists drawn to the metropolis for inspiration and opportunity.

The establishment of an Aesthetic Movement centered in New York and the city's dominance as a focus of trade, in the 1870s were not unrelated. New York was the most cosmopolitan of American cities, where trade in objects from around the globe took place constantly and connections with the capitals of Europe were the strongest. The city's department stores merchandised exotic objects to a middle-class that increasingly had both time and means to spend on decorating their interior spaces. New York was also, in many respects, the place that represented the issues of the age most completely, with regular scandals of political corruption, a new class of incredibly wealthy businesspeople living in close proximity to immigrants arriving in the city with nothing, a professional middle-class increasingly removed from the physical substance of life and anxious for their place in society.

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<sup>344</sup> Jonathan Freedman, "An Aestheticism of Our Own: American Writers and the Aesthetic Movement," in *In Pursuit Of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, ed. Doreen Bolger Burke and Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art: Rizzoli, 1986), 386-389.

<sup>345</sup> Peter C. Hoffer, "Charles Eliot Norton: Aesthetic Reformer in an Unaesthetic Age," *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 8, no. 3 (1974): 19-31.

New York was a natural home for American Aestheticism, but I would like to argue that *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* was also a particularly fertile ground for such ideas to take root and grow, and that the magazine played an important role in guiding public tastes and justifying aesthetic experience in everyday life, assisting towards a democratization of beauty in American society during the Gilded Age. The magazine as a format was already eclectic, embracing of a plurality of styles and mediums. The etymological connections to the department store, with its displays of exotic objects designed to entice the onlooker, are also reflected in the magazine's organization, segregated into "departments", selling cultural products to a clientele who had increasing economic capital to spend in order to display and justify their superior cultural tastes.<sup>346</sup> *Scribner's Monthly's* regular final department of cartoons and light-hearted anecdotes or verse was even called "Bric-a-Brac".<sup>347</sup> A feature of the Aesthetic Movement as it came to be manifested in the visual arts was the celebration of craft, decorative art and collaborative working processes, in contrast to the Romantic myth of the lone artistic genius. Many of the works that are considered exemplars of the movement, such as Trinity Church, Boston or the objets d'art sold by Tiffany and Company in New York were the fruits of labor shared between artists, designers and craftsmen. There was also a strong sense

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<sup>346</sup> The connection between department stores and magazines, both of which experienced rapid rises in popularity during this period and were responsible in their separate ways for the development of a mass culture in America has been described by Richard Ohmann in *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class At The Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996).

<sup>347</sup> This department was maintained by Gilder when *Century Magazine* replaced *Scribner's Monthly* in 1881. It lasted until November 1891 when it was renamed "In Lighter Vein". The natural connections between magazine publishing, New York and the Aesthetic Movement was recorded in the fiction of William Dean Howells, a friend of Gilder, who moved to New York in 1889. Howells was a novelist and editor of *Atlantic Monthly* during the 1870s and was a fixture within the literary elite circles of Boston. His autobiographical novel, *A Hazard of Fortunes*, was published shortly after his move to New York and tells the story of Basil Marsh, who moves from Boston to New York in order to become the editor of an aesthetic magazine, financed by a philistine (to use Matthew Arnold's terminology) farmer from Ohio. The novel is frequently satirical but provides a well-informed reflection upon the dilemmas of the Aesthete magazine editor who seeks popularity whilst protecting and promoting the high cultural standards of his personal life.

of artistic community amongst practitioners. Images of artists, as aesthetes or in the act of creation is a distinctive feature of the period (figs. 3.2 and 3.3). The magazine was, again by nature, in accordance with this communal ethic, and the previous chapter discussed the ways in which it was at pains to communicate the processes of its manufacture to the readership. Magazines were therefore intuitive agents for the Aesthetic Movement, particularly those with the resources for an art department as well appointed as *Scribner's / Century*.<sup>348</sup> Going further still, *Century Magazine* was particularly receptive to the philosophies that championed art and culture as vehicles for social reform due to its editor, Richard Watson Gilder.



Figure 3.2. Kenyon Cox, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens*, 1908 replica of lost original painted in 1887, oil on canvas, 85 x 120 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

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<sup>348</sup> Stein, "Artifact As Ideology," 37.





Figure 3.3. William Merritt Chase, *Duveneek Painting "The Turkish Page"*, 1876. Oil on canvas, 26 x 36 cm, Cincinnati Art Museum.

The over-arching ambition of the Aesthetic Movement, of reform through an elevation of the public spirit initiated by engagement with high-culture, resonated with Gilder's sense of critical patriotism and paternal concern for the progress of the nation, discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>349</sup> Gilder would of course have been aware of both Transcendentalist and Aesthetic philosophical ideas, from his position working in the American literary scene and his introduction to the New York art world through his marriage. Attention has been paid to Gilder's friendships with artists and the fruits of these connections as they appeared in the magazine which he edited, but less critical energy has been spent in trying to identify the connections between his artistic tastes and the broader context of his ideas and career regarding social and political reform, which took up so much of his life from the mid-1880s onwards.

Although from a religious household, Gilder became an agnostic in adult life, and was known for his humanism above any religious moralizing.<sup>350</sup> Page Knox has produced a persuasive argument which contextualizes Gilder within the challenges to religion posed by science

<sup>349</sup> Lois Dinnerstein, "Opulence and Ocular Delight, Splendor and Squalor: The American Renaissance As A Concept," *Arts Magazine* 54, no. 3 (November 1979): 158.

<sup>350</sup> John, *The Best Years of the Century*, x.

and materialism in New York during the 1870s and 1880s, as described by T. J. Jackson Lears and Kristin Schwain.<sup>351</sup> Knox explains that Gilder experienced a spiritual crisis, which instigated his first trip to Europe which lasted fourteen months between 1879 and 1880. Following this, he saw aesthetic experience as an answer to the problems being caused by the materialism of the industrial age which was challenging traditional conceptions of religious experience.<sup>352</sup> The outcome of Gilder's contemplations whilst imbibing European culture were then expressed most forthrightly in a piece for "Topics of the Times" titled "Pictures". This article represents the most fully formed prose on Gilder's personal philosophy in relation to visual art. He positions himself as editor at the juncture between high-art and its potential audience, insightfully identifying the importance of points of clear communication between the artist and society, and seeing this as his proper role. "It is well, it seems to us, to look at art from the public side,—from the market side,—and particularly to learn the limitations of the public appreciation of art, and to do what one can to make those limitations less."<sup>353</sup> Gilder's suggestion is that "that art is the best which subordinates everything to the revelation of spiritual beauty and verity."<sup>354</sup> This statement invites scrutiny but it becomes apparent that Gilder has identified the spiritual with the symbolic value of the Aesthetic art which he admired. This becomes clear when he goes on to restate the competing visions between the SAA and the older generation of landscape artists with their supposed truth to nature philosophy. However, he approaches the issue through the public—through his readership—those members of the economic bourgeoisie who lacked the cultural capital to appreciate the spiritual in art:

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<sup>351</sup> Kristin Schwain, *Signs of Grace: Religion and American Art in the Gilded Age* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 5-6; T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), xv.

<sup>352</sup> Knox, "Scribner's Monthly 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World", 303-369.

<sup>353</sup> Gilder, "Topics of the Time: Pictures," *Scribner's Monthly*, November, 1880, 152-153.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.



In the reading of a magazine like this, there are always two distinct sets of people. One—far the larger—knows nothing of art. They have a love of the beautiful and of the pictorial, but have no knowledge whatever of the principles of art. They “know what suits them,” and some of them have an idea that they know what ought to suit other people. They have a very great contempt, often, for pictures that are the result of a higher art and a deeper knowledge than they possess, and lose all patience with pictures that are beyond their scope of appreciation. These people always like smooth pictures, —the highest possible finish that can be attained, either with the brush or graver; and, whenever that finish of surface is wanting in a picture, it is condemned as imperfect. It is quite impossible for them to accept a sketch as of any value whatever. All lack of finish in their eyes is imperfection. The art that can convey a thought or fancy in a few lines and touches is of no account with them. The exterior—the shell—means the whole of art to them.<sup>355</sup>

Here stated most explicitly is Gilder’s sense of personal mission with regards to art— in effect to educate these “philistines”, and provided clear evidence of the class conflict which was a subtext to the cultural disputes of the Gilded Age, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis.<sup>356</sup> Knox goes on to describe how Gilder commissioned articles and reproductions of artists such as William Blake because of their spiritual character, citing his interest in transcendentalism and the influence of Boston’s cultural and intellectual leaders, such as Charles Eliot Norton. Knox makes a strong case for the spiritual instincts that guided Gilder’s personal interest in such artists, but does not adequately explain how he could justify the championing of such challenging art to the uncultured readership of *Scribner’s Monthly/ Century Magazine* that he described in the quotation above. It was clear that such art should matter a great deal to Gilder as an antidote to “these days of confusion,”<sup>357</sup> but what about

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<sup>355</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>356</sup> The appreciation of “sketches” and “studies”, previously mentioned in the First chapter, was a point of contention within the Gilded Age art world upon which matters of class conflict can be mapped, as explained by Alan Wallach and Eleanor Harvey. Wallach, “Aestheticizing Tendencies in Hudson River School Landscape Painting at the Beginning of the Gilded Age,” Kindle Edition. Eleanor Jones Harvey, *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions From Nature, 1830–1880* (Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art, 1998).

<sup>357</sup> “in these days of confusion of doctrine and lessening of faith, are turning for something stable and indisputable, not to science, but to art.” “Topics of the Time: Prophecy and Science,” *Scribner’s Monthly*, May, 1881, 143.

the readership? Why was it important to convince them of what types of art to appreciate? I suggest that his appreciation for Matthew Arnold, admired amongst the Brahmin elite that Knox mentions as influencing Gilder's artistic instincts, may explain his rationale.

The ideas of Matthew Arnold would have played a significant role in recommending Aestheticism as a movement appropriate to Gilder's broader aims for social and cultural progress. Arnold was a British author and schools inspector who became very popular in America during the 1870s and 1880s, following his collection of essays on art, titled *Culture and Anarchy*, first published in 1867 in *Cornhill Magazine*. Arnold brought a more "palatable" social critique in place of moralizing lessons from Ruskinian and Emersonian discourse on the importance of culture to society.<sup>358</sup> He advocated for Hellenism over Hebraism, signifying a civic rather religious application of culture to achieve "sweetness and light," an expanded social consciousness free from the trappings of materialism through which society could realize its full intellectual and artistic potential. Gilder was personally acquainted with Arnold. George Washington Cable, the novelist for *Century* described an evening of interesting debate on "the subordination of details in art" which took place during one of the Friday evening meetings on October 29, 1883, at the Gilder *studio* on East 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Cable lists the attendees as E. L. Godkin, editor of *The Nation*, John Burroughs, the nature writer, Reverend (later Bishop) Henry C. Potter, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the actor Joe Jefferson, Charles de Kay (critic and brother to Helena), Andrew Carnegie, and Matthew Arnold.<sup>359</sup> Such a gathering provides a sense of the eclecticism of Gilder's social and professional life. Gilder's letters mention that he escorted Arnold to the docks when he was leaving New York in 1884, and that he personally admired Arnold.<sup>360</sup> Again, in a

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<sup>358</sup> Stein, "Artifact As Ideology," 25.

<sup>359</sup> Lucy L. C. Bikle, *George W. Cable, His Life and Letters* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1928), 103-4.

<sup>360</sup> Letter dated March 8, 1884. Richard Watson Gilder and Rosamond Gilder, ed., *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1916), 123.

letter from August 21, 1884 to Roswell Smith, business manager of Century Co., Gilder referred to the civilizing influence of the magazine with reference to Arnold.

Civilization is travelling westward on the million wings, shall we say of the "Century" [...] I am greatly interested in this enormous, somewhat vulgar West. I am glad we can hang on to it through such heated terms as the present (presidential election) campaign — in order that now and hereafter we can drop in a word now here, now there — if not of Arnold's "sweetness and light," at least a word containing broader views than those they seem too often to entertain.<sup>361</sup>

Arnold was also a strong influence on the criticism of William Crary Brownell, who was described as "the most thorough, and maybe greatest, American disciple of Arnold."<sup>362</sup>

*Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine* published several articles on all aspects of Arnold's career. Following his unexpected death in 1888 *Century Magazine's* premier art critic, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, wrote an open letter on "Mr. Arnold and America Art", in which she praised him for inspiring the young generation of American artists with "an extraordinarily tonic, stimulating, illuminating effect — not merely furnishing the mind but opening the eyes of the soul," before rebuking him for criticizing the condition of American art and the architecture of Henry Hobson Richardson in an article published shortly before his death.<sup>363</sup> Arnold remained relevant in American literary circles

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<sup>361</sup> Letter dated August 21, 1884 to Roswell Smith. Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 394-395.

<sup>362</sup> John Henry Raleigh, *Matthew Arnold and American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 88.

<sup>363</sup> Marianna Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Open Letters: Mr. Arnold and American Art," *Century Magazine*, June, 1888, 314. Van Rensselaer was Richardson's biographer, and admitted her personal connection to him in her article on Arnold. Other articles on Arnold published by Gilder include, George S. Merriam, "Some Aspects of Matthew Arnold's Poetry," (June 1879), Andrew Land, "Matthew Arnold," (April 1882), John Burroughs, "Matthew Arnold's Criticism," (June 1888), Florence Earle Coates, "Matthew Arnold," (April 1894) Royal Cortissoz, "Some Writers of Good Letters: Edward Fitzgerald; James Russell Lowell; Matthew Arnold" (March 1897).

well into the late 1890s, and was ranked alongside Ruskin and Pater as one of the “three great critics of our time” by *The Outlook* in 1896.<sup>364</sup>

The secular interpretation of Aestheticism which Arnold espoused appealed to Gilder, whose views on spirituality became increasingly skeptical as he aged, whilst his commitment to improving the conditions of existence for his fellow citizens strengthened. In 1891, following success in the campaigns for international copyright and Civil Service Reform, Gilder was appointed President of the Kindergarten Association, whose aim it was to establish free early years education in New York, not only for the ostensible educational benefits, but also for the “better civic life” for those living in the city’s overcrowded tenement buildings.<sup>365</sup> Following this Gilder was made chairman of the Committee of Investigation for the New York Tenement House Commission in 1894. Gilder took this role very seriously, travelling through the tenements door to door throughout that summer collecting data, “heart-deep in misery”, and even attending fire service call outs to tenement buildings during the night.<sup>366</sup> As Gilder himself explained, he was at this time living three separate lives, as an editor, campaigner for renewed standards of tenement living, and promoter of municipal political reform.<sup>367</sup> However, his work on behalf of society and for *Century Magazine* regularly collided during the 1890s in the form of editorials on these subjects and the publishing of essays by Jacob Riis, twenty six in total from 1894 until Gilder’s death in 1909. Gilder’s life was commemorated in a series of essays by the magazine in the February 1910 issue, and the essay on his philanthropic work was written by Riis, with whom Gilder had become close on a personal as well as professional level.

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<sup>364</sup> “Books and Authors Walter Pater’s Last Essays,” *The Outlook* 53 (January 25, 1896), 160.

<sup>365</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 205.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid., 255. Jacob Riis, “Richard Watson Gilder’s Public Activities: III. *His Philanthropic Work*,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1910, 629.

<sup>367</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 257.

The above paragraph serves to illustrate via some highlights Gilder's continual commitment to social reform throughout his time as editor of *Century Magazine*, doubtless encouraged by his patriotism. In light of this it is possible to see how Matthew Arnold's interpretation of culture's role to society was deeply attractive to Gilder.<sup>368</sup> It carved a moderate pathway between the Victorian moralizing of figures like Ruskin, and the more nihilistic extreme interpretations of the Aesthetic Movement embodied by exponents of the "art for art's sake" doctrine, who seemingly made a public point of their amorality in the wake of their pursuit of beauty (Oscar Wilde, unfairly, being the ridiculed figurehead for this attitude amongst the American public).<sup>369</sup> In essence, the Aesthetic Movement, as interpreted through Arnold, provided Gilder with the intellectual framework to pursue his passions for art both professionally and privately, in good conscience.

The remainder of this chapter seeks to build upon this contextualization of Richard Watson Gilder and *Century Magazine* within the Aesthetic Movement, and explore the ways in which the magazine's content was influenced by Gilder's own life; his friendships and homes. Other scholars have previously described the "Gilder Circle" in terms of a series of interconnected friendships and working collaborations, or have focused on the period 1870-1881, and his initial involvement with the Society of American Artists and the new generation of European trained American painters.<sup>370</sup> This chapter proposes to follow the threads of these

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<sup>368</sup> The application of Arnold's philosophical perspective to the patriotism and cultural stratification of the literature and historical essays published in *Century Magazine* is analyzed in Arthur J. Bond, "'applying the Standards of Intrinsic Excellence' Nationalism and Arnoldian Cultural Valuation in the 'Century Magazine,'" *American Periodicals* 9 (1999): 55-73.

<sup>369</sup> Freedman, "An Aestheticism of Our Own," 385-399. Sarah Burns has written about the uneasiness over the art for art's sake mantra amongst the American cultural elite. The language used to criticize this extreme interpretation of Aestheticism reveals anxieties rooted in deeper concerns over physical health, disease, degeneration and emasculation. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 79-119.

<sup>370</sup> Jayme Alyson Yahr, "The Art of *The Century*: Richard Watson Gilder, the Gilder Circle, and the Rise of American Modernism" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2012). Knox, "Publishing and Promoting a New York City Art World," 90-105.

relationships beyond 1881, and to pay particular attention to the impacts of Gilder's connections both in terms of the careers of his friends, and the magazine that he edited at this time, with reference to the archival material of personal correspondence available. The great number of significant relationships that Gilder had with artists and other influential figures in the American art world over the course of a career which lasted nearly forty years necessitates selectiveness. This chapter will therefore take an assortment of material chosen in order to reflect the breadth of Gilder's connections. The chapter examines in detail the early critical stance of the magazine in the 1870s, led by Clarence Cook as well as the influence exerted by John La Farge on Helena de Kay and Richard Watson Gilder. It will also cover the close productive friendship between Gilder and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, whose art criticism held great sway within the magazine during the 1880s and 1890s. Through the course of these representative examples it will be possible to view Gilder's interest in and support for the visual arts throughout his career against the context of the artistic developments occurring in New York in the Gilded Age. This will demonstrate some of the ways in which Gilder helped to shape this, to negotiate the cultural difficulties of the period and bring about some of the "sweetness and light" that the nation craved.

### **Clarence Cook and *The House Beautiful***

Gilder was not the editor of *Scribner's Monthly*, but he was responsible for most of the art content in the magazine's first eleven years, either through his writings in "The Old Cabinet" department, or through his connections with contributors and artists.<sup>371</sup> Gilder met his future wife, Helena, in the offices of *Scribner's Monthly* during the winter of 1871-72, which initiated a courtship which culminated in marriage in 1874. She was introduced to him through a mutual acquaintance, the author Helen Hunt (Jackson), whom Helena knew through her summers vacationing at Newport, Rhode Island, where her family socialized with many cultural

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<sup>371</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 84-85. John, *The Best Years of the Century*, 81-84.

luminaries of the town. Helena was Gilder's superior in traditional cultural and societal terms. She was well-travelled and connected, educated in Europe where she had gained thorough knowledge of the European canons of music, art and literature. At the time of their meeting Helena was an aspiring art student at the Cooper Union and the National Academy, and a contributor of illustrations to *Scribner's Monthly*. Their friendship blossomed through a shared passion for high culture and Gilder's eagerness to develop his knowledge and experience in this sphere.<sup>372</sup> Helena therefore had a strong and continual guiding influence on the personal art opinions and tastes of Gilder. It was through her that he became acquainted with John La Farge and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, the artists with whom he shared the strongest lasting friendships, and promoted most enthusiastically, including in the pages of his magazine.

However before considering the impacts of Gilder's longer lasting friendships, it is important to briefly consider the art criticism and ideas that Gilder found himself connected with in New York in the 1870s through his work for *Scribner's Monthly*. Art criticism had been transformed in the previous decade in the newspaper press. A new professionalized class of critic was in ascendance, that sought to champion the best artists, establish criteria for elevated tastes, educate the uninitiated and promote the value of art to the nation.<sup>373</sup> A number of newspapers had a full-time position for an art critic, and the appointees to these positions established followings amongst readers who sought their guidance. The so-called "quality magazines" such as *Harper's Monthly* had remained fairly aloof from any sort of partisan criticism, deterred by fears of offending some of their readership, they continued the genteel tradition of "men of letters" writing about art in general and

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<sup>372</sup> "With her family traditions, her familiarity with European literature, her knowledge and appreciation both of art and music, she opened new fields of interest and enjoyment to her eager "comrade." Together they went to concerts and art exhibitions, they listened to lectures, read poetry and studied Dante, with an ever-increasing pleasure and intimacy." Ibid., 56.

<sup>373</sup> Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 8.

positive terms, often as part of broader cultural discussions. However, the success of the new professional critics was influencing the monthly magazines by the 1870s.<sup>374</sup>

The best known of the new critics in New York was Clarence Cook. There has been surprisingly little focused attention on his career in its entirety, as a critic, author, editor and managing owner of *Studio* magazine.<sup>375</sup> He was raised in New York and educated at Harvard, where he briefly studied architecture and landscape design under Andrew Jackson Downing and Calvert Vaux. He absorbed the influences of Augustus Pugin, and later John Ruskin, and in his early years reflected these in his writings about art. He was a strong advocate for form derived from function, truth to materials and the essential moral element in art.<sup>376</sup> In 1863 he co-founded the Society for the Advancement of Truth in Art,<sup>377</sup> an organization heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelite movement. He was the first editor of the Association's journal, *The New Path*, which published Ruskin's writings and provided commentary. His connection with *The New Path* and the Ruskinian ideas which became fashionable in the New York art world of the 1860s led to him being appointed the art critic at the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1864. He spent time travelling through France, Switzerland and Italy in 1870 for the paper, before returning to his position as New York art critic in 1871 and

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<sup>374</sup> The reader may recall discussion in the first chapter of the field of cultural production described through an analogy to economic markets. Products of culture in stable societies where supply and demand are balanced and there is reduced competition between producers are concerned with being inoffensive in order to appeal to the broadest possible consumer base. When conditions change due to external forces (as they did in New York following the end of the Civil War) the balances of supply and demand are adjusted and competition increases, causing producers to take greater risks and push boundaries in order to attract an audience, abandoning the pursuit of providing for all. This explanation of conditions leading to cultural change may be useful to understandings of the professionalization of art criticism in New York during this period.

<sup>375</sup> Barbara Stephanic's PhD dissertation from 1997 remains the most comprehensive examination of Cook to date. Barbara Jean Stephanic, "Clarence Cook's role as art critic, advocate for professionalism, educator, and arbiter of taste in America" (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1997).

<sup>376</sup> See Chapter 2: "Clarence Cook and Jarves: Fact, Feeling, and the Discourse of Truthfulness in Art," in *Critical Shift: Rereading Jarves, Cook, Stillman, and the narratives of nineteenth-century American Art*, Karen L. Georgi (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), Kindle Edition.

<sup>377</sup> Sometimes referred to as the Association for the Advancement of Truth in Art.



remained a fixture at the paper until 1883.<sup>378</sup> In addition to his permanent positions at the *Tribune* and *Studio*, Cook wrote articles and essays for many significant periodicals including *Galaxy* in 1868, *Putnam's Monthly* between 1868 and 1870, *Atlantic* between 1872 and 1879, and *Scribner's Monthly* between 1875 and 1881.<sup>379</sup>

Cook may be identified as the most significant figure in American art criticism of the period, who introduced a more acerbic, opinionated and professional style, from the time that he was appointed at the *Tribune* in 1864. Cook, who signed his columns "C. C." was ridiculed by George William Curtis, the establishment pillar at *Harper's Monthly* and *Harper's Weekly*, who nicknamed him "Thomas Tomahawk" or "T.T.". The dispute between the two serves to illustrate the transition from the genteel to the professional critical traditions. Curtis, a close friend to many of the establishment landscape painters at the time, took exception to Cook's unpatriotic putdowns of American art and public taste, particularly during his reviews of the annual exhibitions at the National Academy.<sup>380</sup> Curtis had himself been the art critic at the *Tribune* between 1851 and 1853 before leaving to become the co-editor and eventual co-owner of the first incarnation of *Putnam's Monthly*. However, by 1854 he had publicly given up criticism, writing in *Harper's Monthly* that it was "thankless work [...] a base trade [and] at best an expression of individual

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<sup>378</sup> Cook left the *Tribune* due to disagreements with the editor, Whitelaw Reid over the Luigi Palma di Cesnola controversy (Cook was at the forefront of the attacks on Cesnola). In 1884 he bought the art magazine *Studio*, which had started in 1882, but had quickly faltered. Cook successfully relaunched the magazine with a cover designed by Elihu Vedder and remained the magazine's editor until he retired in 1892.

<sup>379</sup> In addition to his journalistic endeavors, Cook wrote and edited several books on matters of art and design including *A Description of the New York Central Park* (1869), *What Shall We Do with Our Walls?* (1880), Wilhelm Lübke's *Outlines of the History of Art* (editor, 1878), *Goethe's Mother: Correspondence of Catherine Elizabeth Goethe* (1880), and *Art and Artists of Our Time* (1888), a six-volume survey of American and European art. Cook's best known work however was *The House Beautiful: Essays on Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks*, which was published in 1878, discussed later.

<sup>380</sup> Amongst the group of artists that would later become known as the "Hudson River School" painters at the academy, Curtis was on particularly close terms with John Frederick Kensett who illustrated Curtis's third book chronicling his travels, *Lotus Eating* (1852). James Cephas Derby, *Fifty Years Among Authors, Books and Publishers* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co., 1884), 683.

opinion.”<sup>381</sup> The low-esteem in which Curtis held the role of the newspaper or magazine critic illustrates an important social divide between the “Old New England” patrician class, and an educated class, whose cultural capital was initially undermined by their need or desire to write for money, pursuing criticism as profession rather than vocation.<sup>382</sup> This was the case with Cook, who graduated from Harvard and complained that he was forced to write criticism because of the “lack of a fortune” which was required to pursue a literary career.<sup>383</sup>

By the time Cook became associated with Richard Watson Gilder and *Scribner's Monthly* in the 1870s his opinions on art had shifted from when he was most strongly under the influence of Ruskin and the “truth to nature” standard for artistic beauty. Cook had taken the opportunity to visit France and Italy between 1869 and 1871, coming into first-hand contact with some of the most esteemed contemporary art being produced by American as well as European artists. Upon his return to the United States he became art editor for *Atlantic Monthly*, favored publication of the Boston Brahmin cultural elite, between 1872 and 1875, and his tone had softened. There were important continuities between his earlier and later criticism: he maintained a belief in the ideal, the ultimate moral

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<sup>381</sup> George William Curtis, “Editor’s Easy Chair,” *Harper’s Monthly*, October, 1854, 693. On the literary tradition of which Curtis was a part see George Milne, *George William Curtis and the Genteel Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956). Emily Halligan, “Art Criticism in America before *The Crayon*: Perceptions of Landscape Painting, 1825-1855” (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2014), 13-19. John Peter Simoni, “Art Critics And Criticism In Nineteenth Century America” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1952), 1-24.

<sup>382</sup> Social class is an important aspect of the history of art criticism in the United States. Pierre Bourdieu’s work in this regard is instructive to an understanding of the dynamics at play here. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>383</sup> Simoni, “Art Critics And Criticism,” 131. To recall the geometry of the social and cultural fields described in the first chapter, Cook for a time inhabited a social site between the bohemian and consecrated avant-gardes, an individual whose cultural capital outweighed his economic means, and who, like Gilder was in a position whereby he needed to trade some of one for the other in order to advance to a position of political/social authority. The principle of “loser wins” meant that the economic advancements that came with professional success threatened to diminish the cultural capital acquired through his “*habitus*,” and upon which he traded. The position of the professional art critic was therefore always a precarious and anxious one.

purpose of art, and in art's usefulness as a tool for social critique of materialism and corruption.<sup>384</sup> However, the standards of his criticism had become more open to a variety of styles based upon a range of periods and geographies.

Cook's later perspective informed the series of eleven articles that he wrote for *Scribner's Monthly* between 1875 and 1877 under the title "Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks." The articles were written at the time when the Aesthetic Movement's interest in interior design was reaching a new height. Whistler and Jeckyll were constructing *The Peacock Room* for Frederick Leyland in London, now on display at the Freer Gallery in Washington D.C., whilst Henry Hobson Richardson was collaborating with John La Farge on the interior decoration for Trinity Church in Boston, both iconic examples of the Aesthetic Movement in Britain and America respectively. Cook had maintained his Pre-Raphaelite belief that art should enter every-day life, primarily in the aesthetic qualities of objects made and manufactured to be bought, sold, used and displayed. His essays were intended as practical guides, "not as rich people's reading," on how to enhance the aesthetics of the American home, to ultimately improve, in a metaphysical sense, the lives of the inhabitants.<sup>385</sup> Cook's advice was to follow one's own tastes and ignore as best possible considerations of fashion, convention and financial value, recalling his Pre-Raphaelite past in his criticisms of mass-produced products and preference for "old time methods."

Cook's essays were collected and published in 1878 by Scribner, Armstrong and Company, in a book titled *The House Beautiful*. His essays proved very popular amongst the public and the book was

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<sup>384</sup> See Chapter 3: "Cook and the "Revolution" in Art," in *Critical Shift: Rereading Jarves, Cook, Stillman, and the narratives of nineteenth-century American Art*, Karen L. Georgi (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013), Kindle Edition.

<sup>385</sup> "I look upon this ideal living-room of mine as an important agent in the education of life; it will make a great difference to the children who grow up in it, and to all whose experience is associated with it, [...] It is therefore no trifling matter whether we hang poor pictures on our walls or good ones, whether we select a fine cast or a second-rate one." Clarence Cook, "Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks: Some Chapters on House-Furnishing," *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1875, 172, 174.

reprinted in 1879, 1881 and 1895. Cook's own tastes as expressed in *The House Beautiful* were eclectic with regards to period, geography and style. He recommended antiques, Gothic Revival, Colonial era and Japanese furniture styles, "Oriental" carpets, Asian porcelain, and the designs of Morris and Company, Russell Sturgis and Cottier and Company in New York. The book's frontispiece was designed by Walter Crane, the British artist who was himself a luminary of the Arts and Crafts Movement, who combined influences of Japanese prints with Gothic Revival illuminations in his illustrations (fig. 3.4). Emerson's poem "Art" was printed on the reverse of the frontispiece and the essays were generously illustrated, including designs by members of the new generation of artists based in New York, Francis Lathrop and Maria R. Oakey, Helena de Kay's close friend from when they studied at the Cooper Union together. Visually and conceptually the book embodied the Aesthetic Movement's values and was Cook's lasting contribution to the movement.<sup>386</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Burke, *In Pursuit Of Beauty*, 412-413.



Figure 3.4. Walter Crane, *My Lady's Chamber* Frontispiece to Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful*, (New York: Scribner Armstrong and Company, 1878).

Richard Watson Gilder and Helena de Kay knew Cook personally in the early years of their marriage. The couple's joint journal includes numerous references to social occasions with the Cooks, and he is listed amongst the names who presented the couple with wedding gifts in 1874.<sup>387</sup> Cook wrote to the couple tenderly in 1876 to express his condolences for the death of their first child, Marion, and was also mentioned alongside Richard Watson Gilder as an honorary member at the foundational meeting of the Society of American Artists (SAA) at the Gilders' home in 1877, discussed in the first chapter.<sup>388</sup> He was the group's most enthusiastic supporter in the newspapers, alongside

<sup>387</sup> Richard Watson and Helena de Kay Gilder papers, 1874-1878, microfilm, image 464, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C..

<sup>388</sup> Condolence letter: Clarence Cook, letter to Richard Watson Gilder and Helena de Kay Gilder, July 25, 1876. Box 3, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1984, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

Helena's brother, Charles de Kay, and his presence at the inaugural meeting of the SAA provides evidence of his personal closeness to this group of New York based artists in the 1870s. Cook's stature within American art at the time must have exerted some influence on Richard. Photographs of the interior of his home at 103 East Fifteenth Street show that the Gilders subscribed to the Aesthetic Movement values espoused by Cook in *The House Beautiful* (figs. 1.12 - 1.19). However, Helena's view on Cook was not always positive. She was frustrated by his lack of appreciation for her art and that of her female companions, Maria R. Oakey in particular. The low esteem with which she held his opinion was laced with class snobbishness.

Clarence Cook is like an old maid, in not too disagreeable a sense. He is not a Critic, it seems to me, but a Criticiser. He lacks study & breadth but hates as heartily as if he had them.<sup>389</sup>

It is likely that her animosity to Cook was influenced by her close relationship to her mentor La Farge, who was dealt with harshly by the critic during the 1860s.<sup>390</sup> La Farge was known to bear grudges and held similarly snobbish cultural attitudes. The extent to which Cook's opinions had changed by the mid-1870s is evidenced by the fact that he singled out La Farge as a "good guide" in matters of interior decoration in *The House Beautiful Essays*.<sup>391</sup> He also provided a flattering appraisal of La Farge's work at Trinity Church in Boston and St. Thomas Church in New York

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<sup>389</sup> Helena de Kay Gilder, Journal note before July, 1874, Richard Watson and Helena de Kay Gilder papers, 1874-1878, microfilm, image 467, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.. Punctuation corrected.

<sup>390</sup> This was during the time when Cook was still adhering stringently to the truth to nature standard, and was building his reputation on the back of lively reviews in the *Tribune*. La Farge's landscapes at this time were textured and atmospheric, omitting the minute details that Cook favored for the effect of the whole in the harmony of tones. They demonstrated a fashionable awareness of European artistic trends. In his 1864 review of the Academy of Design exhibition Cook singled out La Farge for particular criticism for the "absurdity" of his landscapes, drawing insensitive allusion to arguments in favor of slavery, with regards to La Farge's misguided principles. Clarence Cook, "National Academy of Design: The Thirty-Ninth Exhibition." *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 23, 1864, 4.

<sup>391</sup> Clarence Cook, "Beds and Tables, Stools and Candlesticks: II More About the Living Room," *Scribner's Monthly*, January, 1876, 346.

for *Scribner's Monthly* in 1878.<sup>392</sup> Nevertheless, Cook's contributions on art to *Scribner's Monthly* were surprisingly slight following the success of the *The House Beautiful* series.<sup>393</sup>

### **John La Farge**

A far more lasting influence on Gilder was John La Farge. Described by Royal Cortissoz in 1911 as "our sole 'Old Master,'" La Farge was arguably the most complete example of the Aesthetic Movement in America amongst artists.<sup>394</sup> He was born in New York from a wealthy and distinguished family of French émigrés and obtained a classical education, painting his first pictures whilst studying Law in New York between 1854 and 1855. During this period he started collecting prints by Barbizon artists and became acquainted with American artists influenced by French painting, including Homer Dodge Martin and George Inness. He was able to travel through France in 1856 and was introduced through family connections to many of Paris's leading artists and writers, including Charles-Pierre Baudelaire. He studied for a short period with Thomas Couture, who encouraged him to study the paintings at the Louvre, which formed a foundational influence. He travelled further throughout Europe, including an influential stay in Britain where he saw the work of the Pre-Raphaelites, before returning to New York in 1857. Initially continuing his Law studies, he also rented a studio in the Tenth Street Studio Building where he befriended the architect Richard Morris Hunt. He moved to Newport in 1859 in order to study with Hunt's brother, William Morris Hunt, alongside William and Henry James, who became close friends. William Morris Hunt, also a pupil of Thomas

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<sup>392</sup> Clarence Cook, "Recent Church Decoration," *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1878, 569-576.

<sup>393</sup> Apart from "Recent Church Decoration", Cook's articles on artistic topics were on Leonardo Da Vinci and the Old Masters owned by the British collector Morris Moore in January 1879 and November 1879 respectively. *Century Magazine* did not publish any articles on art by Cook, who moved on from contributing to the "quality" magazines in the 1880s.

<sup>394</sup> Royal Cortissoz, *John La Farge: A Memoir and a Study* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1911), 261.



Couture, had been strongly influenced by Jean Francois Millet whilst studying in France, and La Farge absorbed some of this influence in his early figure paintings. Under Hunt's tutelage he started experimentations with plein-air painting and completed his striking *Portrait of the Painter*, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (fig. 3.5).

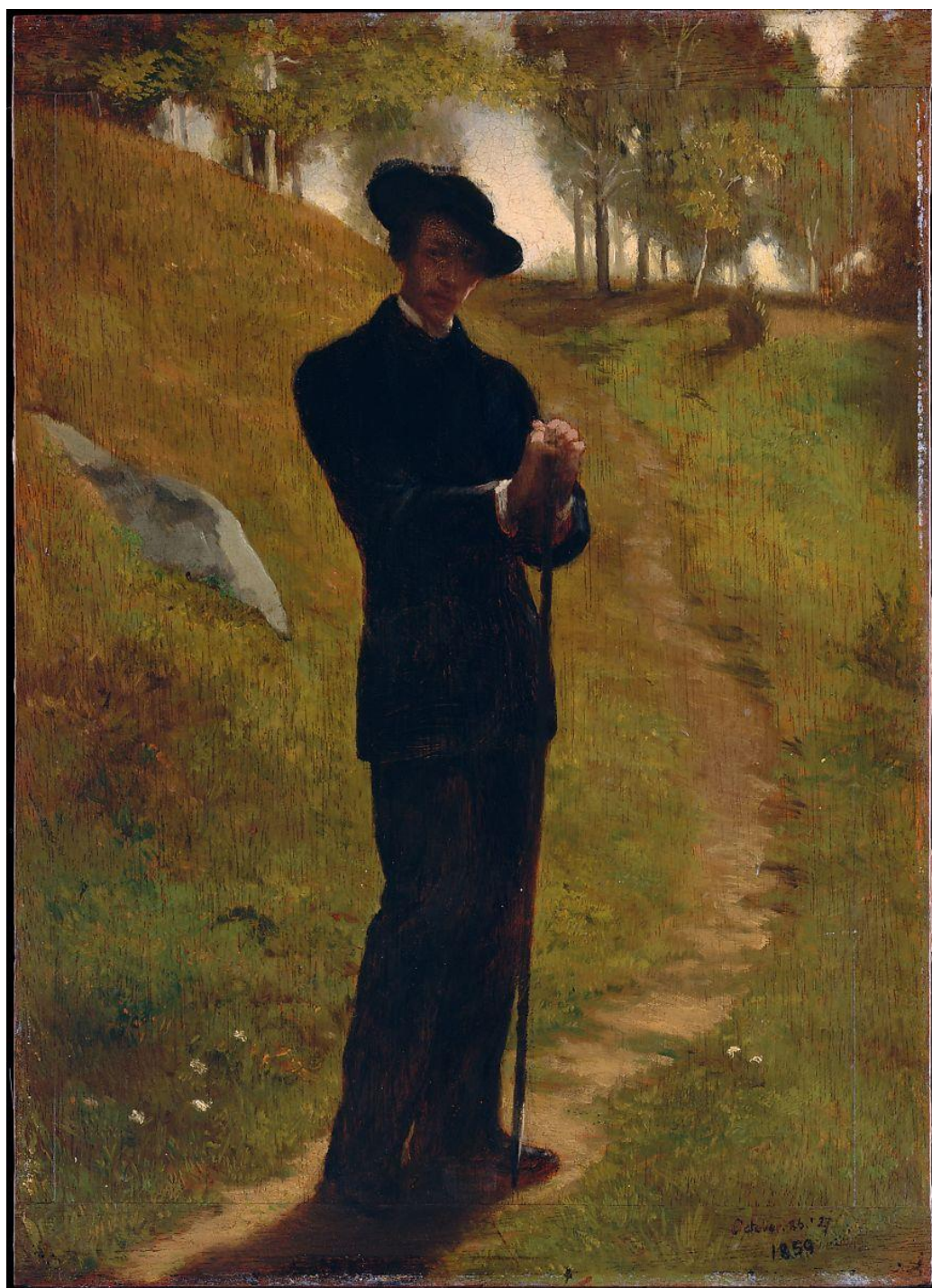


Figure 3.5. John La Farge, *Portrait of the Painter*, 1859. Oil on wood panel, 41 x 29 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



This self-portrait is interesting because of several details which distinguish it as an early expression of American Aestheticism. La Farge depicted himself within a landscape that self-consciously worked against the conventions of the genre promulgated by the “Hudson River School” during its 1850s heyday. There are no wide vistas or dramatic details. The viewpoint is low, looking up at the artist and the pathway behind him which meanders up the hillside to a crest punctuated by trees.<sup>395</sup> The sky is barely visible, the majority of the canvas taken up with the green and brown tones of the grasses on the hill behind the artist. The perspective is flattened by the saturation of color which remains constant from foreground to background. This flattening effect is enhanced by the conspicuously placed boulder on the left-hand bank, with its simplified flat planes. La Farge was already collecting Japanese prints at this time and it is plausible that their influence is perceptible in the lack of perspectival depth and the stylized forms of the boulder and trees. The texture of the paint is another key feature which distinguishes the work from its contemporaries, and shows La Farge’s experience of French painting from the Barbizon school. The tactility of the materials has been made into a feature; this is a painting asserting itself as a work of art made by an artist rather than a facsimile of nature. This tactility of the artwork became a trait of works by Aesthetic Movement artists, most characteristically seen in the work of Whistler. La Farge’s self-portrait from 1859 reflects the influence of 1850s atmospheric landscapes by Jean Baptiste-Camille Corot (fig. 3.6) and anticipates La Farge’s further experimentation with frustrated views, flattened perspective and atmospheric textural effects, seen in works such as *Autumn: October. Hillside, Noonday, Glen Cove, Long Island*, now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (fig. 3.7).

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<sup>395</sup> La Farge used photographs to create the painting.



Figure 3.6. Jean Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Twilight: Landscape with Tall Trees and a Female Figure*, 1855-60. Oil on panel, 42 x 29 cm, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

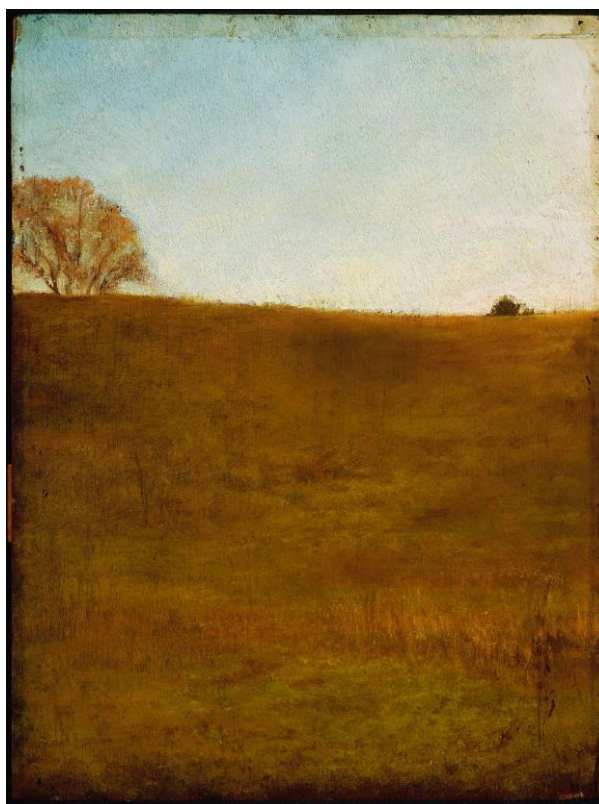


Figure 3.7. John La Farge, *Autumn: October. Hillside, Noonday, Glen Cove, Long Island*, 1860. Oil on panel, 32 x 24 cm, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

The figure of the artist in La Farge's painting is also a strong statement of artistic personality. The languid stance in a dark suit with hat cocked to one side as he stares slightly downward at the viewer identifies the figure with a bohemian and cultured persona, almost provocative in the "dandyish," self-consciousness of the pose. The image strongly recalls Sarah Burns's descriptions of artists manufacturing their public image in the Gilded Age as poseurs and performers. Burns contrasts La Farge's public image of "dignity and intellect" with Whistler's performative construction as the artist-provocateur. Whistler, born a year earlier than La Farge, was the Aesthetic movement's most renowned personality, largely because of the way he manipulated his public image, as Burns explains.<sup>396</sup> However, her characterization of La Farge relies heavily on his persona as it was in the 1890s and after, and does not take into account the earlier La Farge presenting himself in the late 1850s. There are surely strong formal and conceptual connections that can be drawn between La Farge's self-portrait from 1859, and Chase's famous image of Whistler in his Aesthetic pomp, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (fig. 3.8).

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<sup>396</sup> Burns, *Inventing The Modern Artist*, 236-240.



Figure 3.8. William Merritt Chase, *James Abbott McNeill Whistler*, 1885. Oil on canvas, 188 x 92 cm, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

La Farge had a successful career during which he made several bold transitions in style and medium. He continued to experiment with landscape painting in the 1860s, completing *Paradise Valley* in 1868, one of two paintings of this subject which foreshadowed American Impressionism.<sup>397</sup> The following year he was elected a member of the National Academy of Design in New York, and on the founding committee for the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In 1870 he contributed a chapter on

<sup>397</sup> James L. Yarnall, *John La Farge, A Biographical and Critical Study* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 74–76.

Japanese art for the second edition of *Across America and Asia*, by Raphael Pumpelly, a Harvard Professor and mining engineer. The essay was significant as one of the first written by an American on the subject. In the 1870s he exhibited works in London as a member of the London Society of French Artists, and in Paris at the Salon. In 1875 he helped to found the Museum School at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and it was at about this time that he started experimenting with designs in stained glass for which he is perhaps best known now. He collaborated with Augustus Saint-Gaudens, another close friend of the Gilders, on several projects, most notably at St. Thomas Church, New York. He founded a Decorative Arts Company which closed after a short period due to financial disputes with partners and took influential journeys to Japan and then the Pacific islands with the historian Henry Adams in 1886 and 1890. In his later years from the 1890s onwards he focused increasingly on writing books and delivering lectures on art and culture, as well as travelling in Europe once again with Henry Adams.

This short precis of a long and distinguished career serves to demonstrate La Farge's significant status within the landscape of American art in the Gilded Age. His involvement as a model for the artists seceding from the academy in 1877, around whom they rallied themselves, discussed in the opening chapter indicates the significance of his cultural status in America, at least to the members of the bohemian avant-garde. He was in many ways an avant-garde figure, provocative in his assimilation of foreign and exotic influences and willingness to experiment and push contemporary art into new markets and areas of interest. Simultaneously he maintained his status as an establishment figure, involved in the administration and business of art (notoriously unsuccessfully), and eventually in its historiography.<sup>398</sup>

All of this is significant to consider in relation to the impact that La Farge had on Richard Watson Gilder. He had been Helena de Kay's

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<sup>398</sup> Books on art by La Farge include *Considerations on Painting* (1895), *The Great Masters* (1903), *The Higher Life in Art* (1908), and *One Hundred Masterpieces of Painting* (1912).

mentor during the late 1860s when she had received painting tuition from him during her summers staying in Newport. She introduced Richard to the artist, who was a regular at their weekly studio meetings. La Farge became a contributor to the magazine of both artwork and articles, and was a subject of several more articles by other writers. The warm personal feelings between them are perceptible in the personal correspondence which exists in archives dating from the 1870s up to the first decade of the twentieth century (La Farge died in 1910). Social occasions such as an “amusing” Japanese tea to discuss the artist’s recent travels and the sketches he had produced stand out as examples of the fashions of the period that were enthusiastically adopted by the cultural elite.<sup>399</sup> However, beyond their personal friendship the significance of La Farge to Gilder was his value as a model artist who embodied and successfully negotiated, through his Aestheticism, the difficulties of an American art that at once sought legitimacy through proximity to European culture and originality in its national identity. Put more simply, La Farge provided the Gilders with their most legitimate connection to the cosmopolitan modern art world that was establishing itself in the latter half of the nineteenth century. When considering the American contributions to the nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic art world centered around Paris, London and New York, expatriate artists such as Whistler, Cassatt and Sargent come to mind more readily than La Farge, in part due to his muted mature public characterization mentioned earlier, and because the majority of his career was spent in the United States. Yet his proximity to the newest developments and claims as a cultural authority were as strong if not stronger than the artists previously mentioned. La Farge was ahead of his American based contemporaries in his taste for and exposure to French Barbizon painting and he had the experience of studying with a Parisian master. He had connections with the tastemakers in London and Paris and was personally familiar with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He was a New Yorker who had established close connections with Boston and the old

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<sup>399</sup> Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 217-218.

Brahmin elite whilst studying with William Morris Hunt and in many ways represented the drift in cultural power from Boston to New York. He was pioneering in his taste for and knowledge of Japanese and Pacific cultures (coincidentally arriving in Tahiti a week before Gauguin), and his artwork consistently put the assimilation of these experiences and influences on display. His status as a figurehead was illustrated by the younger generations of painters who followed in his footsteps by seeking art inspiration across the seas, and who rallied around him upon their return home in the 1870s. Moreover, the fact that he was based in the United States for prolonged periods of his career made him all the more appealing as a figurehead to the editor of a national magazine with Gilder's motivations and beliefs. For Gilder, the fact that an artist like La Farge could find support and flourish in America, rather than go abroad for a career, was a vital sign of progress that he worked hard to support.

La Farge was very interested in the management of his public reputation. As Sarah Burns has described, he negotiated with Russell Sturgis, art editor at *Scribner's Magazine*, over who should write an article on him in 1898, expressing a preference for his friend William Crary Brownell over William Coffin, Edwin Blashfield, John Van Dyke or Kenyon Cox, because of his sympathy for the "importance of color and expression" in La Farge's art.<sup>400</sup> This anecdote is interesting but omits the proactive agency of the magazine editor in the creation of the artist's public image. This is all the more pertinent in the case that Burns refers to, as the eventual article, published in the July 1899 issue of *Scribner's Magazine*, ended up being written by Sturgis, not Brownell.

Interestingly a parallel situation arose in the case of Richard Watson Gilder and La Farge twenty-five years earlier. A letter dated February 28<sup>th</sup>, 1875 to La Farge from Gilder recounts a recent "Studio-chat" between himself, Helena de Kay Gilder and the poet and critic Edmund Clarence Stedman concerning art and artists. Gilder informs La Farge that Stedman had volunteered to write an article on the artist for *Scribner's Monthly*, but had since left New York for recuperation and was

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<sup>400</sup> Burns, *Inventing The Modern Artist*, 238-239.

no longer in a position to write it. Gilder therefore proposed that the poet, George Parsons Lathrop, take Stedman's place on the back of a "little notice in the *Atlantic*" which "seemed to show sympathy". Gilder sought to assure La Farge that he had great faith in Lathrop's "honesty, thoughtfulness, and desire to seek out the truth in art-work," and Stedman had given his blessing to the suggestion, stating that,

Mr Lathrop can and will do it better. He is an expert- has been abroad: has a better knowledge of art than myself. Besides, he is a poet, and seems to me to have the [...] faculties necessary for him who would do justice to our most original and poetic painter.<sup>401</sup>

The "little notice" referred to in the *Atlantic* was an unsigned article titled "Art" in the September 1874 issue which reviewed a recent exhibition in Boston of La Farge's works, comprising of flower studies, landscapes and figure paintings. Lathrop noted features of La Farge's figure paintings, such as their "influence from Japanese decorative art," but his most poetic reflections were spent upon his landscapes, in which he appreciatively emulated the artist's "genius" for the creation of atmosphere through "intense and exquisite sympathy" for color.

A rich, rusty, orange passage of weed and lichen rock, on the left, draws the eye to the white mist, thick and warm, ascending beyond it. This mist passes into a very faintly tinted mauve-colored mass, in the right background, which moves slowly off, under a pale green sky, from the level face of the sea.<sup>402</sup>

Crucially, for Gilder, Lathrop perceived the divergent aims of La Farge's landscapes, to reproduce "a true effect" that "we do not remember to have seen noticed by our landscape painters heretofore." Lathrop's distinction between La Farge's landscapes and those of the "Hudson River School" were particularly pointed in 1874, as Lathrop himself went on to explain for the reader. The works on display in the Boston exhibition had been "rejected by the hanging-committee at the last exhibition of the New York National Academy of Design, although Mr. La Farge is himself

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<sup>401</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, letter to John La Farge, February 28, 1875. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

<sup>402</sup> George Parsons Lathrop, "Art," *Atlantic*, September, 1874, 377.



an Academician”.<sup>403</sup> The reader may recall from the first chapter of this thesis that La Farge’s objections to his treatment in 1874 led to a passing of a motion guaranteeing Academicians representation at the annual exhibition, which in turn ironically limited the opportunity of the younger artists, creating the protest which culminated in the establishment of the Society of American Artists. Lathrop’s article however assured the reader that “Mr. La Farge has acted in the interest of the public and of all the painters.”<sup>404</sup>

It was this flattering interpretation of the events of 1874 that Gilder was referring to in his letter to La Farge when he assured the artist that Lathrop had shown “sympathy”. The letter provides a view onto the work of Gilder as the orchestrator, putting the elements in place for the mutual benefit of all involved. Gilder informed him that Henry Marsh, La Farge’s preferred engraver, was “enthusiastic” about the project, whilst Lathrop was already “anxious to undertake the study”. Gilder was therefore writing to obtain La Farge’s consent to the article, claiming that it was his duty to share his talents and suggested that the artist may arrange a concurrent exhibition in order to capitalize on the publicity.

It seems to your New York friends that the time has come when you should at least let them remove from the candle the bushel which you have shadowed it with so sedulously. You are sure of posterity – but contemporaries have a right to demand the full force of an artist’s original and beneficent influence. [...] you should have an exhibition of your paintings during the coming winter – at about the time of the appearance of the article.<sup>405</sup>

Gilder finished the letter informing La Farge of Helena’s enthusiasm for the project and saying that he would write again with regards to a poem by Lathrop “which we should be glad to have you ‘illustrate.’” The use of the quotation marks around the word “illustrate”

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 379.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

<sup>405</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, letter to John La Farge, February 28, 1875. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

shows Gilder's sensitivity to La Farge's sense of artistic hierarchy; illustration and art were separate in the minds of many established artists like La Farge. The poem referred to by Gilder was most likely *Jessamine* which appeared in the October 1875 issue, whose illustrations bear strong resemblances with those for *Little Sigrid* from February 1878, which are assuredly designed by La Farge and engraved by Marsh (figs. 3.9 and 3.10).<sup>406</sup>

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No. 6.

JESSAMINE.



Figure 3.9 (Left). Illustration by John La Farge (?) for George Parsons Lathrop, "Jessamine," *Century Magazine*, October, 1875, 657.

Figure 3.10 (Right). Illustration by John La Farge for Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "Little Sigrid: A Ballad," *Century Magazine*, February, 1878, 513.

It has been necessary to go into some detail analyzing Gilder's letter to La Farge as it neatly encapsulates Gilder's pivotal role in aligning his contacts for the benefit of his magazine, as well as the ways in which Gilder's personal and professional life were entwined, and his

<sup>406</sup> The *Sigrid* illustration (fig. 3.10) was included in the *Selected Proofs From The First And Second Portfolios Of Illustrations From Scribner's Monthly and St. Nicholas*, published in 1881, and attributed to La Farge and Marsh.

efforts to promote the art and artists that he personally favored. George Parsons Lathrop was a promising poet and writer who had already had work published in *Scribner's Monthly* from 1871 onwards. When Gilder took over in 1881 he continued to commission Lathrop for numerous assignments up to the late 1890s. Lathrop was also a personal acquaintance of Gilder, a detail omitted in his letter, through his brother, Francis Lathrop, who was an artist, close friend to Helena and future founder member of the Society of American Artists, and assistant to La Farge for the decorations at Trinity Church, Boston.<sup>407</sup> It is unsurprising therefore that George Lathrop was in accordance with La Farge's art and position in relation to the Academy. Meanwhile Gilder was also concerned with promoting the work of La Farge. The article being proposed was to be the first lengthy study of the artist in a popular American magazine, although it only appeared some six years later in the February 1881 issue, for reasons which are not readily apparent. It could be that the project did not meet with the approval of Dr. Holland, or that La Farge's profile was not yet considered large enough amongst the general public to warrant such special treatment. This had certainly changed by 1881 thanks to the artist's recent work in church decoration and stained-glass design. By this time he was also more assuredly an American artist, working for the benefit of fellow Americans in the public spaces of their major East Coast cultural centers. The article represented a considerable expenditure of capital and effort, running to approximately seven thousand words and illustrated generously (figs. 3.11 and 3.12). Lathrop was unsurprisingly enthusiastic about La Farge's art, claiming that he was "the first American artist possessing a recognized individual style."<sup>408</sup> It considered the breadth of La Farge's output, comprising illustration, church decoration, religious mural painting, figure and flower painting as

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<sup>407</sup> Francis Lathrop had studied in Britain between 1870 and 1873 with Whistler, Ford Maddox Brown, Edward Burne-Jones, Spencer Stanhope and William Morris. He was also one of the artists who provided illustrations for Clarence Cook's *House Beautiful*, mentioned earlier in this chapter. His experience in Britain with the Arts and Crafts movement there meant that he was well positioned to act as illustrator to Cook's book on interior decoration as well as assisting La Farge with the interior of Trinity Church, Boston.

<sup>408</sup> George Parsons Lathrop, "John La Farge," *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1881, 503.

well as landscapes and stained-glass work. Throughout Lathrop was at pains to stress to the reader La Farge's assimilation of influences, originality and national identity.

He has caught the medieval mood, he has shared the impulse of the Japanese, he has drawn from one branch of the modern French school, and yet his work reminds us constantly that he represents a national quality new in art.<sup>409</sup>

Both Gilder and Lathrop admired much about La Farge's art, but it is interesting to note these aspects which were emphasized for the reader alongside his spiritual connection with his religious works. It was these aspects that Gilder would have felt most comfortable about promoting to the readership and that coincided with his broader patriotic editorial philosophy described in the previous chapter.

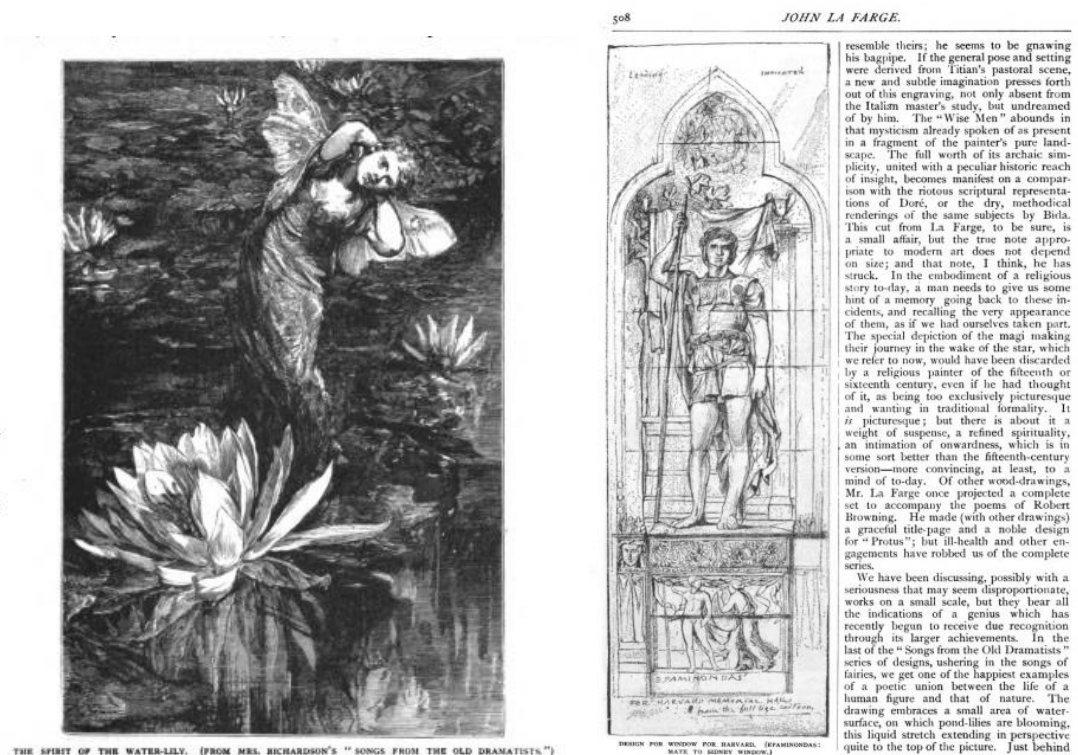


Figure 3.11 (Left). John La Farge, *The Spirit of the Water-Lily*, illustration for George Parsons Lathrop, "John La Farge," *Century Magazine*, February, 1881, 503.

Figure 3.12 (Right). John La Farge, *Design for Window for Harvard*, illustration for George Parsons Lathrop, "John La Farge," *Century Magazine*, February, 1881, 508.

Gilder's magazine also benefitted from his friendship with La Farge in ways beyond his contributions as an illustrator and subject for

<sup>409</sup> Ibid, 506.

articles. In 1878 La Farge wrote several letters in the *New York Press* appealing to the American selection committee for the Paris Exposition to include wood engravings. The reader may recall from the previous chapter that Gilder was personally invested in the appreciation of wood engravings as a legitimate form of art. Timothy Cole's engraving after James Edward Kelly of the "Gillie-Boy" that garnered so much attention had appeared in the August 1877 issue. The new school of engraving that *Scribner's Monthly* initiated was building as a phenomenon by spring 1878 when La Farge was writing open letters to the press. America was, according to La Farge, in danger of overlooking a rare success story that had attracted the "praise of every principal artist and critic I have met and it has been my good fortune to know a good many both here and across the Atlantic."<sup>410</sup> Gilder discussed La Farge's intervention in his "The Old Cabinet" column for June 1878, quoting at length his second letter to the *New York Evening Post*, "A Plea for the Engravers," published on March 20, 1878.<sup>411</sup> La Farge's intervention, according to Gilder, was an interesting "essay on the principles of engraving and of art in general," supplemented by *Scribner's Monthly's* own content on the matter, William J. Linton's article, "The Engraver, His Function and Status" in particular.

The controversy, and Gilder's position in proximity to it and La Farge's intervention, should be viewed within the broader contexts of

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<sup>410</sup> John LaFarge, "American Wood Engraving at Paris," Letter to the Editor, *New York World*, March 16, 1878, 5.

<sup>411</sup> In fact, it was La Farge's letters that sparked the dispute in the press and magazines, when George Inness responded writing that "wood-engravers, properly speaking, are not artists." It was this dismissal that William J. Linton responded to sarcastically in his article in the same June 1878 issue of *Scribner's Monthly*, titled "The Engraver, His Function and Status", discussed in the previous chapter. The dispute between Inness and La Farge on the matter played out in the following articles in the *New York Evening Post*: George Inness, "Artists and Engravers," Letter to the Editor, *New York Evening Post*, March 16, 1878, editorial page. John La Farge, "A Plea for the Engravers", Letter to the Editor, *New York Evening Post*, March 20, 1878, 3. George Inness, "A Plea for the Painters", Letter to the Editor, *New York Evening Post*, March 21, 1878, 2. Page Knox has written that La Farge innovated the photoxylography process to transfer photograph negative images onto the woodblock directly by preparing the block with photosensitive chemicals and exposing it with the negative to the sunlight for a brief period. Knox writes that La Farge helped introduce this way of working to Henry Marsh and Timothy Cole. Knox, "*Scribner's Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World", 358-359.

*Scribner's Monthly's* publishing of engravings by the new school of engraving, their attempts to have engraving considered a fine art, and the support for the new generation of artists and the rivalry taking place between the Society of American Artists and the art establishment of the time.<sup>412</sup> This is reflected in the other topics discussed in the same "The Old Cabinet" editorial by Gilder. His musings of the importance of taste in art, acquired through a mixture of learning, experience and natural feeling, bore significance to the situation at the academy and the support that the younger artists were receiving from critics in the press and magazines. Gilder also highlighted the public good achieved through the judicious selection of art displayed in *Scribner's Monthly* and its skillful recreation in engraving by Timothy Cole, when mentioning a work by Augustus Saint-Gaudens in St. Thomas Church, New York, featured in an article by Clarence Cook in the February 1878 issue.<sup>413</sup> Two months earlier Gilder's "The Old Cabinet" articles for April 1878 had taken a similar theme. He discussed the possibility of an annual exhibition of "Black-and-White" pictures<sup>414</sup> on the basis of the success of the display of such work at the annual exhibition of the Water-color Society, held at the National Academy building in New York. Gilder praised the American achievement in wood-engraving, claiming that the public would, "be greatly interested in, and greatly instructed by, such an exhibition [...]" and it is equally clear that it would be of benefit to our art and to our artists."<sup>415</sup> Singled out for specific praise amongst artists and engravers were, unsurprisingly, John La Farge and Henry Marsh, Mary Hallock Foote (Helena de Kay's closest friend), Wyatt Eaton and Timothy Cole, in particular his sketches of famous literary figures. In actuality, Gilder was praising the work executed originally for the magazine by some of his closest friends. Henry Marsh and La Farge had produced work together

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<sup>412</sup> The first exhibition by the Society of American Artists having taken place that April, 1878.

<sup>413</sup> The article in question, "Recent Church Decoration," praised La Farge specifically, and his collaborations with Gilder's close friend, Saint-Gaudens.

<sup>414</sup> Meaning to include both wood engravings and etchings – the significance of combining these two mediums is described in the previous chapter.

<sup>415</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "The Old Cabinet," *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1878, 888.

for *Scribner's* (figs. 3.9 and 3.10), Foote submitted many illustrations for the magazine throughout her career, and Timothy Cole's engravings after Wyatt Eaton's drawn portraits were commissioned for the magazine, discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>416</sup>

Although La Farge's interventions were not successful in admitting more engravings to the American exhibition of art at the Paris Exposition in 1878, they did result in some etchings by the artist himself being accepted. *Scribner's Monthly's* write up of the exhibition finished with only a few general lines about the American submissions, stating that "In one branch of art,—that of wood-engraving,—although the number of examples shown by America is small, in quality we equal, if we do not excel, most others."<sup>417</sup> However, La Farge's involvement in the matter did provide much oxygen to the debate in the press, and provides a view onto the symbiotic relationship between Gilder, *Scribner's Monthly*, and the artist, as well as the intricacy of connections between subjects and contributors.

Gilder's 1878 editorials and Lathrop's article on La Farge were amongst many others which promoted the artist in *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*.<sup>418</sup> These should also be viewed as a part of a larger effort to promote modern art that benefitted from cosmopolitan influences at this time.<sup>419</sup> La Farge was a significant and lasting presence

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<sup>416</sup> In the same set of articles Gilder addressed the "many questions" that they had received regarding the technique for Timothy Cole's engraving of Wyatt Eaton's portrait of Lincoln which appeared as the frontispiece to the February 1878 issue. Gilder advised readers that, "for its proper effect, the engraving should be held at a greater distance from the eye than is necessary with most magazine illustrations." Richard Watson Gilder, "The Old Cabinet," *Scribner's Monthly*, April, 1878, 891.

<sup>417</sup> A Painter (unsigned), "Art at the Paris Exposition," *Scribner's Monthly*, December, 1878, 281.

<sup>418</sup> As examples see Clarence Cook, "Recent Church Decoration," *Scribner's Monthly*, February, 1878, 569-576, mentioned above, and "Some of the Union League Decorations," *Century Magazine*, March, 1882, 745-752.

<sup>419</sup> The first two essays of William Crary Brownell's important "The Younger Painters of America" had appeared in 1880, with the third and final instalment published in July 1881. Crary had already written an article on Whistler for the magazine in August 1879 and would write again on contemporary French sculpture between 1886 and 1887 (Brownell became identified as a leading expert on French art in particular). Helena de Kay's translation of the biography of Jean Francois Millet was serialized throughout 1880, and Henry Bacon offered readers "Glimpses of Parisian Art" in December 1880

in Gilder's life who helped to legitimize his artistic outlook. For his part, Gilder and his magazine was a reliable source of support for La Farge, as the archives of personal correspondence reveal. *Century Magazine* published La Farge's accounts of his journeys in Japan under the title, "An Artist's Letters from Japan," in ten instalments between February 1890 and August 1893. Again, this represented a significant undertaking by a magazine, on a subject that was by this time a well-established fashion, as the Aesthetic Movement was at its height in America.

The articles took the form of a travel diary, and covered a range of topics, including food, music, architecture, culture and the people, inserting the impression of realism into the travel writing formula typical of magazines such as *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's Monthly* in the previous two decades.<sup>420</sup> La Farge's articles provide the reader with an account of the journey in the company of an artist-persona, who is concerned with being as entertaining as he is informative of the national

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and March 1881. Richard Watson Gilder himself provided an article on the French realist painter, Bastien Lepage, in June 1881. The magazine also played an important role in establishing American artist personas for the public through the publishing of articles such as the "The Tile Club at Work," "The Tile Club at Play," and "The Tile Club Afloat", in January 1879, February 1879 and March 1880 respectively, written by William McKay Laffan and Charles de Kay. The Tile Club was a society of artists and creatives who met in order to socialize whilst painting tiles, a thoroughly Aesthetic pursuit, almost satirically so. Such articles helped to make the personalities and lives of artists more relatable for the public. Other examples of this include "Young Artists' Life in New York" by William H. Bishop, and "The Art Schools of New York," and "The Art Schools of Philadelphia," by William Crary Brownell, published in January 1880, October 1878 and September 1879 respectively. In aggregate, this content concerning the work, personalities and lives of contemporary artists, interspersed with the educational and informative subjects discussed in the previous chapter, shows the extent to which Gilder transformed *Scribner's Monthly* into a "magazine of art" by 1881. On the one hand the magazine's increased interest in art was reflective of the "Renaissance," to use Brownell's phrase, that was occurring in American art during these years. However, the details of who was writing and about what to a national audience were not predetermined. The continuities between various subjects in the magazine reveal the extent to which they were an extension of Gilder's personal friendships and tastes, being promoted across America and to Europe. *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* was increasingly read in Europe, Britain in particular, and admired for the quality of its printing and illustrations. Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Wood-Engraving and the Century Prizes," *Century Magazine*, June, 1882, 230.

<sup>420</sup> An example of this sort of travel writing was *Scribner's Monthly's* serialization of *The Great South* by Edward King, which was a great early success for the magazine between 1873 and 1874.



culture. The illustrations, when they appear, show La Farge returning the favor of inspiration by bringing a contemporary, painterly American illustrative style to Japanese subjects (figs. 3.13 – 3.17). However, they were surprisingly sparse, with some articles in the series lacking any illustrations, a strange omission given the author. The archive correspondence reveals a great deal of toing and froing between Richard Watson Gilder, Robert Underwood Johnson and La Farge concerning the series, and reading between the lines it seems that the artist, ever in need of money, was doing his utmost to stretch his material as far and wide as it would carry to any publisher that might be interested. Gilder was offering La Farge twenty dollars a page for the writing, and fifty dollars for each illustration, without any claims on the copyright, a generous sum for magazine work at the time.<sup>421</sup> Gilder had agreed with Drake, head of the art department, that they would do best to “take up only those [illustrations] which would be most effective.”<sup>422</sup> The series did have an impact and within two years *Scribner’s Magazine* published a small series, “An Artist in Japan,” by Robert Blum in 1893. The volume and contemporary quality of Blum’s illustrations, when compared with La Farge’s more formal style, may suggest a reason why Gilder and Drake

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<sup>421</sup> At the time *Century Magazine* usually paid between \$250 and \$400 for an article. An undated note in the archives records Joseph Pennell’s English Cathedral series for Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer’s articles (1887-1892) as costing on average \$30 a drawing. A letter from Gilder to La Farge dated December 19, 1901, proposes paying La Farge \$200 for copy and \$200 for pictures for a short article, presumably that on the Pacific Islands. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University. Another letter from La Farge to Richard Watson Gilder dated February 18, 1902, regarding the article on Fiji asks for payment of \$400 for the text and \$200 for the illustrations- a sizeable sum for an article. Another undated note regarding a series of articles written by Elizabeth Pennell and illustrated by Joseph Pennell between 1906 and 1909 shows payment of \$1500 for eleven articles. *Century Magazine Letters 1870-1918*, microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C..

<sup>422</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, letter to John La Farge on behalf of *Century Magazine*, February 8, 1889. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University. The rest of the letters concerning of Japan and Pacific Islands articles have been archived at The Huntington Library, Pasadena: *Century Magazine Correspondence 1885-1914*. The collected articles were published in a book, in 1890 by The Century Co.. La Farge also had one of his articles on the Pacific Islands, “A Fiji Festival” published in *Century* for the February 1904 issue. The others had been published in *Scribner’s Magazine* between May and July of 1901.

were reserved in their approach when publishing La Farge's letters, at a time when magazine illustration had moved beyond traditional art to form its own genre (figs. 3.18 – 3.21). La Farge's illustrations were competent, but would not have appeared out of place in the pages of the magazine fifteen years earlier. A comparison between the image of the pagoda in La Farge's figure 3.13 and the view of Fairmount Park from 1871 (fig. 2.9) share many of the same techniques in terms of types of lines used to create the illusion of the image. La Farge's illustration can be viewed as a refinement of the earlier example, with a more aesthetically pleasing overall composition thanks to the increased sense of depth. Blum's images however communicate in a new lexicon for reproductive engraving with a far greater variety in composition and technical effects to evoke textures.

The comparison between the two artists' illustrations in response to similar subjects is striking and invites analysis. Robert Blum (1857-1903) was a generation younger than La Farge and an artist whose career reflects the changes that had taken place thanks to the increased opportunities afforded by the proliferation of illustrated periodicals and advertising. Born in Cincinnati, Blum was largely self-taught but did attend the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia and studied with Frank Duveneck before moving to New York in 1879 in search of an art career. This inevitably took him to the offices of Scribner where he was hired by Alexander Wilson Drake. Blum illustrated numerous articles for *Scribner's Monthly* from 1879, and these early illustrations display the painterly bravura which must have impressed Drake.<sup>423</sup> An article by Clarence Cook on Spring from the June 1880 was illustrated by numerous artists, credited in the contents pages, including Blum. A comparison between Blum's illustration and that of the much more experienced artist and illustrator Winslow Homer shows the younger man making full use of the new engraving methods perfected at *Scribner's Monthly* in order to translate his artistic personality into print,

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<sup>423</sup> Blum was compared to Mariano Fortuny throughout his career and was nicknamed "Blumtuny" amongst friends.

beyond what Homer was able to achieve (figs. 3.22 and 3.23). Homer's illustration has a strong graphic quality imparted by the black outline defining the subjects. It's an image which comes from Homer's background as an artist producing brief sketches and caricatures for news publications, communicating the essential and required information in a clear, well executed manner. By contrast, Blum's illustration is more interested in communicating the artist's personality through the gestural quality of his lines which impart a much stronger sense of texture; content is subordinate to style.

Blum's work for magazine publications enabled him to travel to Venice where he stayed for two years with his close friend William Merritt Chase and was taught by Whistler, who encouraged his interest in Japanese art and drawing in pastels. Blum was one of the most accomplished exponents of pastel in American art and founded the Society of Painters in Pastels along with Chase.<sup>424</sup> He enjoyed a successful art career until his early death, travelling throughout Europe and receiving accolades amongst his colleagues and lucrative contracts for periodicals. He eventually visited Japan on a commission to produce images and text to be packaged and sold in numerous formats including the articles for *Scribner's Magazine*.

Blum's images for the *Scribner's Magazine* article show an artist in full appreciation of the format in which his images were intended to operate. At first glance the differences between La Farge's more pedestrian offerings and those of Blum appear to be due to style and technique. However, a more sustained analysis of Blum's images shows the artist employing a range of more complex visual strategies to engage the viewer in the formulation of the picture. La Farge's images are illustrations to the text; Blum's are far more ambitious in attempting to be works of art which function according to the periodical printed medium.

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<sup>424</sup> M. M. Lovell, *Venice, the American View 1860-1920*, exhibition catalogue (San Francisco: Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, 1984).

Blum's images draw attention to the physical qualities of their original and current medium. In each of the below images (figs. 3.18-21) the drawing is presented in a dynamic state of (in)completion. Central details of hands and faces are fully drawn, but other aspects of the image are depicted more suggestively until the image starts to deconstruct itself into an abstract assortment of lines, dashes and washes at the edge. This can be seen most clearly in figures 3.19 and 3.21, as Blum breaks any illusion of three-dimensional space by producing a series of thick dark impasto lines over the faint pencil under-drawing. However, he replaces the illusion of three-dimensionality with a different kind, leaving evidence of his artistic presence by emphasizing the textures of the materials of his art: the pastel, pencil and paper. Drawing attention to the surface of the paper, the material which creates a link of continuity between the original work of art on his drawing desk and its printed surrogate, the reader is able to sense the echo of the auratic work of art<sup>425</sup> on the texture of the paper pages held in their hands.

Whilst the image from 1880 (fig. 3.22) has elements of this strategy in so far as Blum draws attention to the texture of his materials through his bravura style, the images made thirteen years later show an advanced form of illustration that was experimenting with the artistic potential of transporting images into the hands of viewers, enabling them to experience the image with a degree of physicality. Jennifer Greenhill's essay on the cover artwork for magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* (fig. 3.24) and *Life* by Coles Phillips c. 1910-15 describes how artists working for magazines were employing visual strategies centered around dynamism that were being developed from the competition for consumers' attention amongst patrons and practitioners of commercial art. Greenhill argues that Phillips' technique of "fade away" images, whereby the female figure and ground merged into the planes of color which made up the paper of the front cover drew beholders' attention to the "material and kinetic conditions of magazine pictures and the experiential dimensions

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<sup>425</sup> Employing Walter Benjamin's terminology.

of consumption.”<sup>426</sup> Greenhill rightfully suggests that the strategies employed by artists such as Phillips grew out of the developments in advertising which took place in the 1880s and 1890s. The growth in advertising during this period was correlated to the popularity of illustrated magazines amongst consumers.<sup>427</sup> Another opportunity to develop commercial art’s pictorial potential came in the form of “Art Posters,” produced by publishers to advertise their magazines. *Harper’s Monthly* was the first amongst the monthly magazines to employ lithography firms to produce large color posters c.1893, inspired by their French counterparts.<sup>428</sup> Soon all of the popular monthly magazines were employing their art departments to produce advertisements and front-covers designed to beat the competition in attracting the eyes of consumers. This brought the worlds of commercial art and magazine illustration closer together. Blum’s images from his Japanese tour were created with the intention of being reproduced in a magazine transported into the hands of a consumer. His visual strategies to attract and hold the viewer’s attention for the requisite amount of time show his attunement to the latest developments within the worlds of American periodical illustration and advertising. His images aesthetically reflect the reading practices of the magazine consumer, focusing attention on the central portion of the image and then allowing it to gradually dissipate as the eye moves away to the periphery in anticipation of flicking the page to see the next image.<sup>429</sup> The manner in which his images deconstruct themselves and draw attention to their materiality anticipates the “fading away”

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<sup>426</sup> Jennifer Greenhill, “Flip, Linger, Glide: Coles Phillips and the Movements of Magazine Pictures,” *Art History* 40:3 (June 2017): 583.

<sup>427</sup> Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class At The Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996), 81-117; T. J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, Basic Books, 1994).

<sup>428</sup> Phillip Dennis Cate, Nancy Finlay and David W. Kiehl, *American Art Posters of the 1890s* (exhibition catalogue), (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987). Greenhill provides the example of Will Bradley’s poster for advertising the *Chap-Book* in 1895 as a precursor for Cole Phillip’s images of “fade-away” figures. Greenhill has written more extensively on Will Bradley in Jennifer Greenhill, “Selling Structures: The Periodical Page and the Art of Suggestive Advertising c. 1900,” in *Visuelles Design: die Journalseite als gestaltete Fläche / Visual Design: The Periodical Page as a Designed Surface*, eds. Andreas Beck, Nicola Kaminski, Volker Mergenthaler, and Jens Ruchat (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2019), 427–450.

<sup>429</sup> Greenhill, “Flip, Linger, Glide,” 595-600.

strategies employed by Coles Phillips that Greenhill identifies as evidence of artists creating images that were not meant to be experienced through vision alone, but that exploited the physical potential of the magazine as medium. The complexity of Blum's images is shown all the more clearly when placed in juxtaposition with those of La Farge. Considering this it is understandable that Gilder and his colleagues at *Century* would have been reticent to expend resources on La Farge's rather uninspiring illustrations. La Farge was certainly no less talented an artist than Blum, so we may suppose that the difference between them is that the latter grew up amidst the illustrated periodical and appreciated its potential as a new artistic medium much more so than La Farge, who doubtless saw illustration as a lower form of art, subordinate to the text that it was supposed to reflect faithfully. Perhaps this short case study serves to illustrate the changes in perception that occurred through the visual revolution which took place on the Gilded Age thanks to the proliferation of images created and transported by illustrated magazines.

La Farge's articles on his travels in Japan represent both Gilder's support for his friend, and the presentation of a subject matter that suited the increasingly cosmopolitan atmosphere of American art and culture of the period. In supporting and patronizing his friends in his magazine, Gilder often had to tread a careful line that employed all of his considerable diplomacy. In January 1891 he wrote to La Farge, consenting to a request to show some of the artist's unpublished papers to his friend and *Century Magazine* art critic, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, but reminded La Farge that they had already been accepted and money paid to La Farge's son for them in the expectation of them being published by Century Co..<sup>430</sup> A later letter from December 1901

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<sup>430</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, letter to John La Farge on behalf of *Century Magazine*, January 9, 1891. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University. La Farge was resourceful with his contacts and also wrote articles for rival magazines, including *Scribner's Magazine* and *McClure's*, the latter of whom was a regular thorn in Gilder's side, undercutting *Century's* prices and taking authors and artists away.

concerning La Farge's attempts to sell articles of his journeys to the Pacific Islands shows Gilder negotiating the terrain between his editorial and friendship duties.<sup>431</sup> These incidents again show Gilder at the nexus of communications and collaborations between artists, critics, administrators and businesses – a vantage point from which he could exert significant influence.

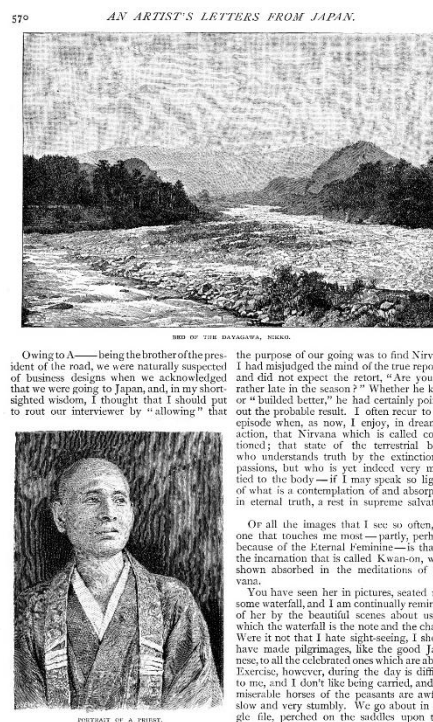
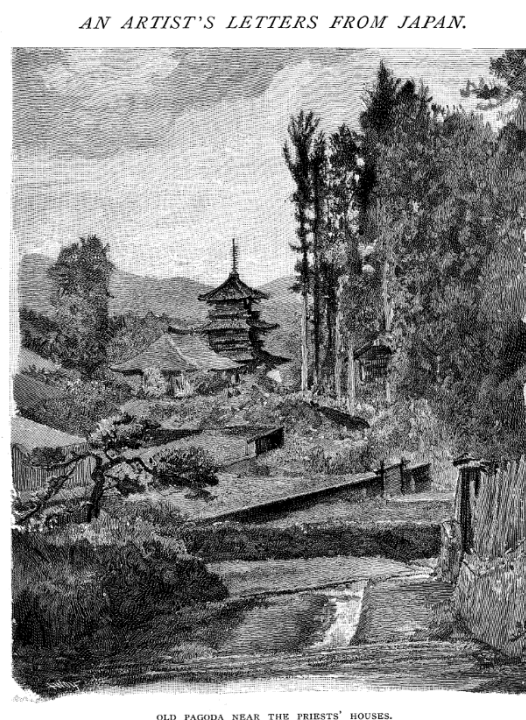
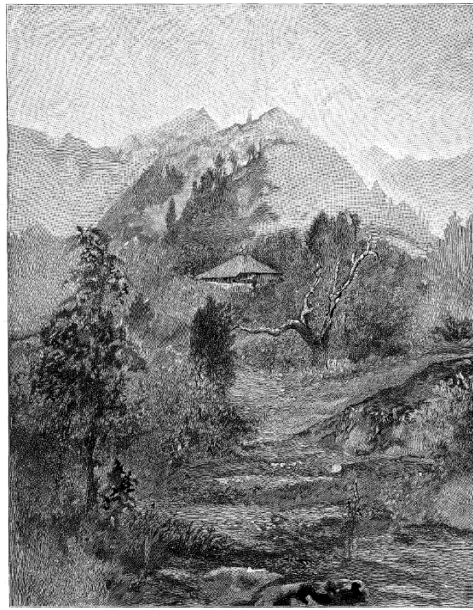


Figure 3.13 (Left). John La Farge, *Old Pagoda Near The Priests' Houses*, illustration to “An Artist's Letters From Japan,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1891, 569.

Figure 3.14 (Right). John La Farge, “An Artist's Letters From Japan,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1891, 570. Showing illustrations by John La Farge of *Bed of the Dayagawa, Nikko*, and, *Portrait of a Priest*.

<sup>431</sup> “There is a desire to show to you the respectful interest in your work which is felt here – but a disinclination to go beyond the offer made. The article is a good little one and will carry a few of the best originals you can offer”. Emphasis in the original. Richard Watson Gilder, letter to John La Farge on behalf of *Century Magazine*, December 19, 1901. Box 9, The Gilder Manuscript Collection 1781-1988, Lilly Library, Indiana University.





MOUNTAINS IN FOG BEFORE OUR HOUSE.



STATUE OF OYA JIZO.

Figure 3.15 (Left). John La Farge, *Mountains In Fog Before Our House*, illustration to “An Artist’s Letters From Japan,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1891, 571.

Figure 3.16 (Right). John La Farge, *Statue Of Oya Jizo*, illustration to “An Artist’s Letters From Japan,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1891, 573.



PEASANT GIRLS AND MOUNTAIN HORSES OF NIKKO.

Figure 3.17. John La Farge, *Peasant Girls and Mountain Horses of Nikko*, illustration to “An Artist’s Letters From Japan,” *Century Magazine*, August, 1891, 572.





DRAWN BY ROBERT BLUM.

The Ameya—a Curious Crowd.

Figure 3.18. Robert Blum, *The Ameya—a Curious Crowd*, illustration to “An Artist in Japan,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, June, 1893, 735.



DRAWN BY ROBERT BLUM.

The Musmee—Night.

Figure 3.19. Robert Blum, *The Musmee-Night*, illustration to “An Artist in Japan,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, June, 1893, 744.



DRAWN BY ROBERT BLUM.

Cherry Blossoms.



DRAWN BY ROBERT BLUM.

The Geisha.

Figure 3.20 (Left). Robert Blum, *Cherry Blossoms*, illustration to “An Artist in Japan,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, June, 1893, 731.

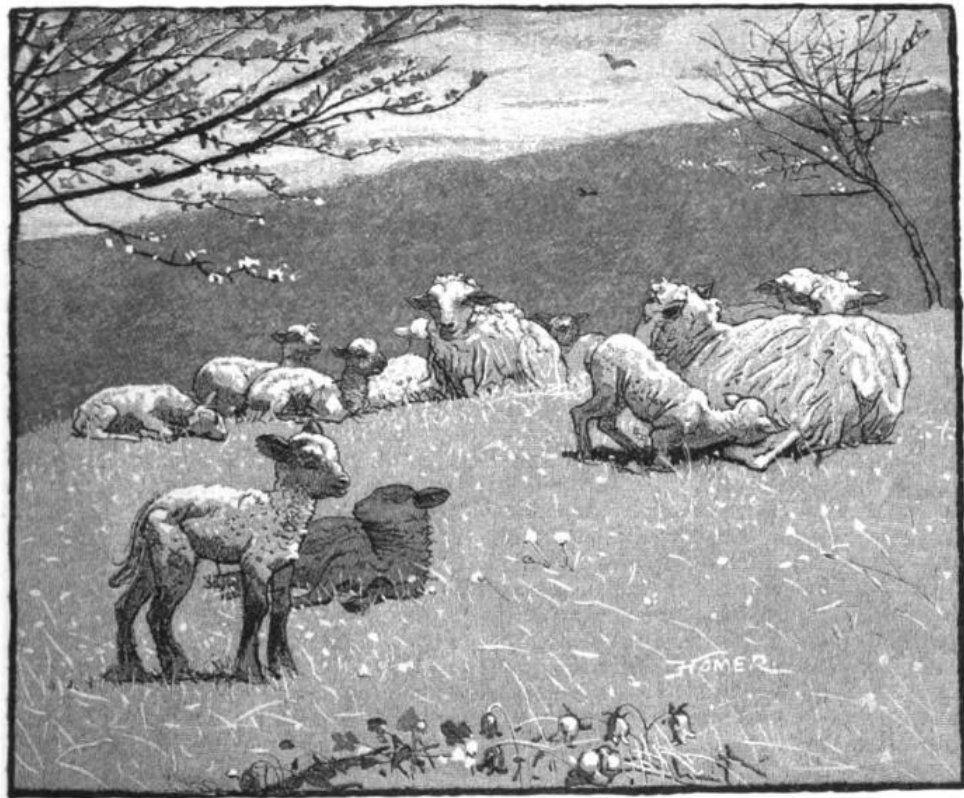
Figure 3.21 (Right). Robert Blum, *The Geisha*, illustration to “An Artist in Japan,” *Scribner’s Magazine*, June, 1893, 737.





WATCHING THE GOATS.

Figure 3.22 Robert Blum, *Watching the Goats*, illustration to “Spring Hereabouts,” *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1880, 166.



SPRING LAMB.

Figure 3.23 Winslow Homer, *Spring Lamb*, illustration to “Spring Hereabouts,” *Scribner's Monthly*, June, 1880, 161.

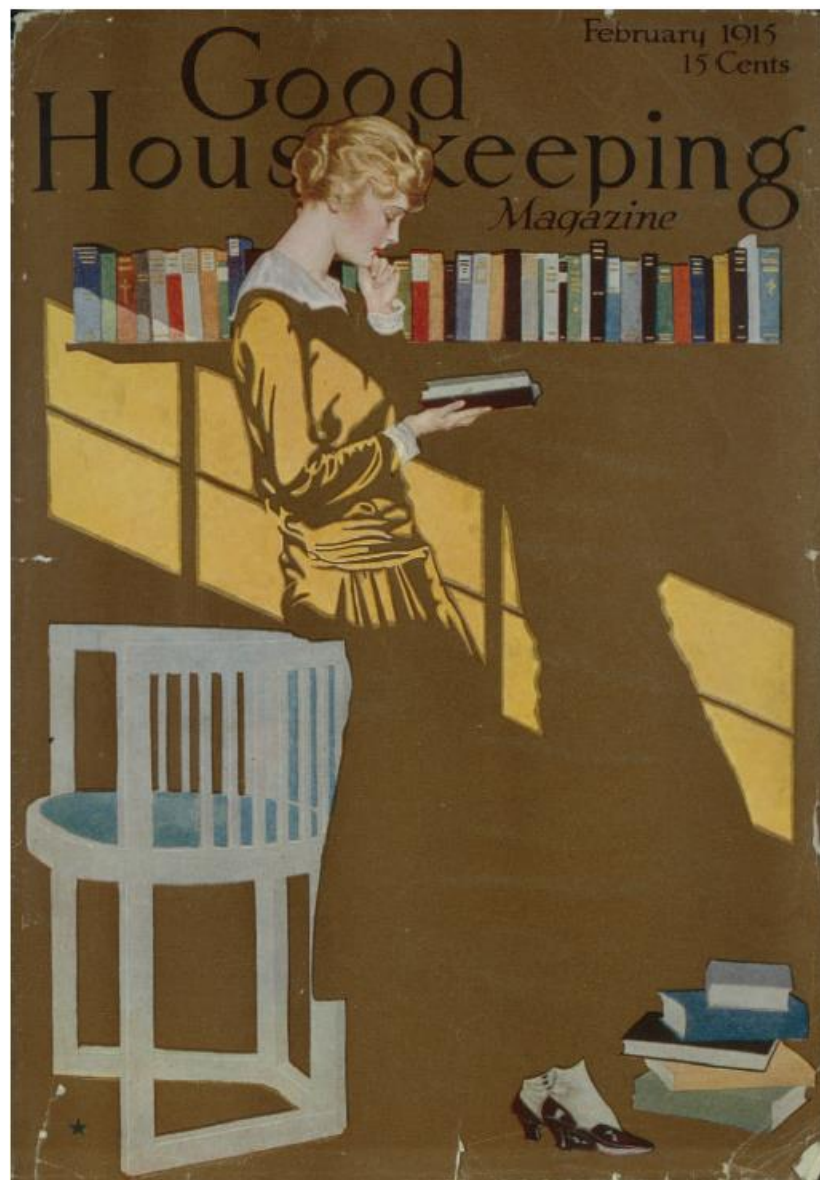


Figure 3.24 Coles Phillips, cover of *Good Housekeeping*, February 1915.



Figure 3.25 Louis John Rhead, poster for *The Century Magazine*, Midsummer Holiday Number, 1894.

### Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer

Whilst John La Farge was amongst the most consistently high-profile of the artists in Gilder's life, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer represented his counterpart in terms of art criticism. Van Rensselaer's history brought her naturally within the social orbit of Helena de Kay and John La Farge, and as with so many *Century Magazine* alumni, there are numerous intersections and "coincidences" between Van Rensselaer and other regular contributors. Similar to La Farge, the close friendship between Richard Watson Gilder and Van Rensselaer was very productive. Although she wrote for other popular periodicals including *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's Magazine*, she was most closely associated with *Century Magazine*, for which she wrote more than seventy-five articles, reviews and letters between 1882 and 1918. Van Rensselaer offered *Century Magazine* an authoritative critical perspective on matters of art and culture, whilst Gilder in turn was able to offer her prestigious and relatively lucrative patronage during a time when criticism was predominantly written by men.

Van Rensselaer's reputation as a pioneer of writing on landscape gardening has been recently established thanks to the scholarship of

Judith K. Major and her book *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age* (2013). Mentions of her criticism regularly appear in works dedicated to other subjects, but Lois Dinnerstein's doctoral thesis from 1979 remains the only in-depth study of this extensive aspect of her career.<sup>432</sup> Born in 1851, she came from a well-established New England family that had settled in America in the seventeenth century and built a fortune through trade with Asia. She grew up in an old, impressive home on Fifth Avenue in New York, living alongside some of the nation's elite families: the Vanderbilts, Belmonts and Astors.<sup>433</sup> Her uncle, John N. A. Griswold, had built a holiday "cottage" in Newport in 1864, designed by Richard Morris Hunt, friend of La Farge and brother to his mentor William Morris Hunt. Van Rensselaer, like Helena de Kay, therefore spent some of her summers in Newport as an active member of the fashionable society that summered there. Well-educated in the classical tradition, she moved with her family to Dresden in 1868 and was part of the large American expatriate community that Helena de Kay had been part of nearly a decade earlier. Whilst in Europe she completed her education, becoming familiar with the high culture that the continent had to offer. In 1873 she married Schuyler Van Rensselaer, an American mining engineer of distinguished Dutch ancestry. Her background therefore was highly reminiscent of Helena de Kay.

During her time based in Europe Van Rensselaer developed her knowledge of European art and architecture, familiarizing herself with the writings of Ruskin, the art history of Karl Schnaase and Hippolyte Taine, and, influentially, the works of a renowned female critic, Mrs. Anna Brownell Jameson.<sup>434</sup> This first-hand experience of the Western art canon, combined with theoretical knowledge gained through wide reading

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<sup>432</sup> Lois Dinnerstein, "Opulence and Ocular Delight, Splendor and Squalor: Critical Writings in Art and Architecture by Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1979).

<sup>433</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Fifth Avenue," *Century Magazine*, November, 1893, 7-8.

<sup>434</sup> Judith K. Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 11.



provided Van Rensselaer with the critical tools to later establish a career as a respected art critic. She had an uneasy relationship with Ruskin's criticism, disliking its overly literal interpretation of truth in art. Like Gilder, she preferred Matthew Arnold's explanation of culture's social significance, and wrote the "Open Letters" article for *Century Magazine*, "Mr. Arnold and American Art" following his death. In it, she claimed that Arnold's 1873 book, *Literature and Dogma*, had been her greatest influence.<sup>435</sup> She also studied science whilst in Europe and was, according to Judith Major, a follower of both Darwin and Alexander Humboldt. Although these writers influenced her interest in botany and landscape gardening most directly, Major has noted that her interest in Darwinism was shared by Hippolyte Taine, whose *The Philosophy of Art* (1865) was a formative source for Van Rensselaer's opinions on art.<sup>436</sup> The implications of Darwinism were not just restricted to science but took in most aspects of life, including visual art. The popular writings and lectures delivered by Herbert Spencer in America were particularly influential to understandings of art and cultural history in terms of natural selection and evolution.<sup>437</sup> It is difficult to say with certainty the extent to which scientific writings had an impact on the art opinions of Van Rensselaer, but it is possible that her respect for the scientific method did help to inform the empiricism of her writing style.

Her personal correspondence with Helena and "Watsy" (Richard) Gilder, where she signs herself as "Rensie", is often lighthearted and humorous, and this did translate on rare occasions to some of her magazine writings (such as that for the World's Fair discussed in the following chapter). However, her writings on art and architecture were for the most part detached, and factual, giving the reader an impression

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<sup>435</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Open Letters: Mr. Arnold and American Art," *Century Magazine*, June 1888, 314.

<sup>436</sup> Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age*, 15-17.

<sup>437</sup> Linda Nochlin and Martha Lucy, eds., *The Darwin Effect: Evolution and Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture*, special issue of *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2003). Rachael Ziady DeLue, *George Inness and the Science of Landscape* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

of the professional that she was; it is likely that she particularly felt the need to emphasize her professionalism given her genteel background and her sex.<sup>438</sup>

She started a career as a writer in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 1876 after her son, Gris, was born the previous year, but started to rely on it as a means of income only after the death of her husband from illness associated with his work in mining in 1884. By this time Van Rensselaer had already gained esteem amongst art critics for her contributions on art in periodicals including Sylvester Rosa Koehler's short lived luxury specialist periodical, *American Art Review* (1879-1881).<sup>439</sup> Her early art criticism appeared at the point when the Society of American Artists (SAA) was formed and seceded from the Academy of Design in New York, discussed in detail in the first chapter. Van Rensselaer was at this point unfamiliar with most of the members of the SAA on a personal level, but recognized their early promise for American art. Her time spent in Europe until 1875 made her a sympathetic judge for the artists returning home from study in the academies of Munich and Paris, and she was an early supporter of their efforts. Her informed and generally favorable reviews of the works of SAA members naturally brought her into the social and professional orbit of Richard Watson Gilder.<sup>440</sup>

She started her working relationship with *Century Magazine* in 1882, writing an article on wood engraving and the prizes being offered by *Century Magazine* as part of the fall-out from the debates around the new school of engraving which were discussed in the second chapter. She had clearly created a strong impression on Gilder as he subsequently published a diverse selection of her articles on "American Etchers", "Frans Hals", "An American Artist in England" (Winslow Homer), and

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<sup>438</sup> Dinnerstein, "Opulence and Ocular Delight," 72-73.

<sup>439</sup> Koehler asked Van Rensselaer if she would consider running a successor to *American Art Review* when it finished in 1881, but she turned him down on the grounds of her family duties and poor health due to asthma in the spring months. Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age*, 35.

<sup>440</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "The New York Art Season," *Atlantic Monthly*, August, 1881, 193-202.



“George Fuller”, all published during the course of 1883 and accompanied with quality illustrations.

A closer reading of Van Rensselaer’s article on Winslow Homer serves to illustrate the expert qualities of her prose that built her esteemed reputation and made her a senior writer within *Century Magazine*. The article focused on Homer’s watercolor pictures, the likes of which he had started to display at an exhibition organized by the American Watercolor Society, staged at the National Academy in New York in 1881. Homer’s paintings had received some strong criticism from newspaper critics, even from the likes of Charles de Kay at the *New York Times*, who was a friend of the artist.<sup>441</sup> Homer was criticized for poor draftsmanship and garish coloring which suggested a preoccupation with the excesses of French Impressionism.<sup>442</sup> Van Rensselaer’s take on these works by Homer had distinguished her amongst her peers, and this may have been what encouraged Gilder to publish her article. Recalling this exhibition and her reactions to it, Van Rensselaer wrote:

Two or three years ago, Mr. Homer must have astonished, I think, many who, knowing his work so well, thought they had gauged his power and understood its preferences and its range; for he then exhibited a series of water-colors conceived in an entirely novel vein. [...] I would not be understood to mean, nevertheless, that even in these pictures Mr. Homer won himself a title to the name of colorist in its highest sense.<sup>443</sup>

Van Rensselaer adapted well to writing for different audiences. She eased the *Century Magazine* readership into her critique with an introduction to the “rurally minded” Homer that contextualized him as an artist who had forged his own way in art, from a generation before the cosmopolitan “younger painters of America”.<sup>444</sup> Her article moved the reader quickly onto the discussion of Homer’s latest pictures of English

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<sup>441</sup> Charles de Kay, “Painters in Water-Color. The Exhibition at the Academy off Design,” *New York Times*, January 22, 1881, 2.

<sup>442</sup> Margaret C. Conrads, *Winslow Homer and the Critics: Forging a National Art in the 1870s* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 179-195.

<sup>443</sup> Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, “An American Artist in England,” *Century Magazine*, November, 1883, 16.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

and American seaside subjects which had been displayed at that year's exhibition of the American Watercolor Society. Her analysis of Homer's art focused around two images, *Inside The Bar* and *Listening To The Voice From The Cliffs*, illustrations of which accompanied her article (figs. 3.26 and 3.27). The inclusion of reproductions of the artworks empowered Van Rensselaer to offer a detailed critique to layman readership of *The Century* which highlighted her expert knowledge and visual acuity.

It is this most recent phase of Mr. Homer's work which is illustrated here,[...] "The Voice from the Cliffs" and the "Inside the Bar" [...] seem to me not only, as I have said, the most complete and beautiful things he has yet produced, but among the most interesting American art has yet created. They are, to begin with, pictures in the truest sense, and not mere studies or sketches, like most of his earlier aquarelles. Then they are finer in color than anything except the sunset sketches just described, and finer than these in one way— as being more explicit and comprehensive in their scheme. [...] In " The Voice from the Cliffs," the same fault in the flesh-tones was noticeable. Yet I cannot say the picture was disagreeable in color. It was pitched in a peculiar and rather crude key, but held well together within that key, and this is always the first thing that must be secured to make color good, if not beautiful.<sup>445</sup>

Van Rensselaer's critique for *Century Magazine* was forthright, written without jargon and contained within it lessons for the readers on how to properly judge pictures, as the mention of color keys in the above excerpt illustrates. Van Rensselaer was fulsome in her praise for the vivacity of Homer's art and was able to explain her reasoning with reference to the visual evidence provided to the reader by the illustrations. The reader was thus invited to take part in her critique, in effect to see the art on the page in front of them through the eyes of an expert.

The pose of the woman in "Inside the Bar" is fine in its rendering of strength, of motion, of rugged vitality. But it is very beautiful as well, even in the almost over-bold line of the apron twisted by the wind, which gives it accent, and greatly aids the impression of

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<sup>445</sup> Ibid., 17.

movement in air and figure. The grouping of “The Voice from the Cliffs” is still more remarkable. These outlines might almost be transferred to a relief in marble; and yet there is none of the stiffness, the immobility, with which plastically symmetrical effects are usually attended in painted work. They are statuesque figures, but they are living, moving, breathing beings, and not statues; and they are as characteristic, as simply natural and unconventional, as are the most awkward of Mr. Homer's Yankee children.<sup>446</sup>

Van Rensselaer's article was generally positive but still contained some harsh criticisms. Homer's technique was described as “a little primitive, a little *rustic*.” However, her technical criticisms, based upon her familiarity with the latest art from the European ateliers, were still sweetened.

we are tempted to feel, indeed, that upon this unconventional, unacademic accent of his brush depends something of the interest if not the value of his work. Perhaps it is *because* of his *naïveté*, his occasional gaucheries, his sturdy if angular independence, and not in spite of these things, that his handling seems so fresh, so unaffected, so peculiarly his own, so well adapted to the nature of the feeling it reveals. [...] No artist has a more personal message to deliver than Mr. Homer, and none tells it more distinctly or in a more native way. And we can well afford to lose a little possible technical brilliancy or charm in the gain we register hereby.<sup>447</sup>

Her recognition of the potential for Homer's individuality and separation from European styles to be interpreted as an important example for the development of an American school highlights the patriotic interest in art that she shared with Gilder, and provided the inspiration for articles of such contemporaneity and depth in a publication like *Century Magazine*.

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<sup>446</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid., 19.



"INSIDE THE BAR."

Figure 3.26. Winslow Homer, *Inside the Bar*, (detail), engraved reproduction for Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, "An American Artist In England," *Century Magazine*, November, 1883, 20.



LISTENING TO THE VOICE FROM THE CLIFFS.

Figure 3.27. Winslow Homer, *Listening To The Voice From The Cliffs*, engraved reproduction for Mariana Griswold van Rensselaer, "An American Artist In England," *Century Magazine*, November, 1883, 18.

Following the group of articles from 1883, Gilder commissioned Van Rensselaer to write a major piece on "Recent Architecture in America," which was serialized in nine parts between May 1884 and July 1886. The scope and expense of this commission reveals the esteem in which Gilder held Van Rensselaer's opinions. Together they shared a keen interest in architecture and city planning, recognizing its significance to the broader mission of societal reform through an appreciation of beauty in all aspects of contemporary life. The consistencies between Van Rensselaer and Gilder with regards to their faith in art is striking. Lois Dinnerstein has described the aims of her criticism as "fueled by a profound faith in progress, social-Darwinism, and the potentiality of art and education to elevate the human condition."<sup>448</sup> Dinnerstein also describes Gilder as a mentor to Van Rensselaer, not only in matters of writing but also social reform.<sup>449</sup>

<sup>448</sup> Dinnerstein, "Opulence and Ocular Delight," 4 and 89-90.

<sup>449</sup> Dinnerstein, "Opulence and Ocular Delight," 54. It was Van Rensselaer that involved Gilder in the Kindergarten movement in New York. The extent to which Van Rensselaer can be considered a progressive voice for social reform is colored by context. From a

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contemporary perspective her anti-suffrage views could disqualify her from such a description. Cynthia Kinnard criticized Van Rensselaer for her conservative views on the role of women in society which, according to Kinnard, tainted her critical opinions. Judith K. Major has responded that “Her opinion on suffrage had nothing to do with her professionalism or her scholarship [...] Her stance is an interesting biographical fact—and that is all.” (Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age*, 160-165). The question of support for women’s suffrage was more complicated for women of the late nineteenth-century than may be supposed. Elite women were, according to Ellen Carol DuBois, equally divided on the issue. Reasons for being opposed to suffrage included class concerns about an expanded franchise that would threaten to further diminish the influence of societal elites, anxiety over the fractious state of society within big cities following waves of immigration and growing disparities in wealth between the rich and poor, concerns that the “proper” role of women in society was being undermined by expectations that they actively participate in public life, and concerns for fairness, as the franchise amongst men brought responsibilities for military and civic service in the armed forces and fire departments—roles which some thought too physical or dangerous for women. Van Rensselaer ironically took part in the first American election to allow women to vote in Colorado in 1893. In a letter to Richard Watson Gilder she explained this was partly at the request of her son and because it was the law and therefore her civic duty. However, Van Rensselaer was committed in her anti-suffrage opinions and shared this view with Helena de Kay Gilder. Mariana and Helena both had anti-suffrage pamphlets published in 1894 titled “*Should We Ask for Suffrage?*” and “*A Letter on Woman Suffrage From One Woman to Another*” respectively. Richard Watson Gilder mentioned in a letter to G. E. Woodberry dated September 16, 1894 that Helena had received much praise for her public stance on the subject. This occurred after Richard gave a letter on the subject written by Helena to her close friend Mary Hallock Foote to his sister and brother, editors of *The Critic*, a weekly literature and arts magazine. They published the letter as the lead article to the August 4, 1894 issue. Subsequently Helena became a public figure in New York for the anti-suffrage position. She wrote several articles in newspapers on the subject, and she and Van Rensselaer were active members of the New York State Association Opposed to the Extension of Suffrage to Women. Gilder’s sister and editor of *The Critic*, Jeannette Leonard Gilder, was also a public anti-suffrage figure. She was a self-professed tom-boy who pursued an unconventional career in newspapers and periodicals and was a pioneer for women working in these fields. Still, she apparently saw no contradiction in her position as a professional career woman who was opposed to female suffrage. See, Cynthia Kinnard, “Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (1851-1934): America’s First Professional Woman Art Critic,” in *Women as Interpreters of the Visual Arts, 1820-1979*, Claire Richter Sherman and Adele M. Holcomb (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1981), 200. Ellen Carol DuBois, “Working Women, Class Relations, and Suffrage Militance: Harriot Stanton Blatch and the New York Woman Suffrage Movement, 1894-1909,” *The Journal of American History*, 74, no. 1 (June, 1987): 39. Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age*, 161. Gilder, *Letters of Richard Watson Gilder*, 258. Helena de Kay Gilder, “A Letter on Woman Suffrage From One Woman to Another,” *The Critic*, August 4, 1894, 63-65. Helena de Kay Gilder, “Ballot Will Not Help Women,” *The New York Times*, March 7, 1909, 11. Susan Goodier, *No Votes for Women: The New York Anti-Suffrage Movement*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012).

The project on American architecture for *Century Magazine* gave Van Rensselaer the opportunity to meet Frederick Law Olmsted, on the proviso of a meeting to discuss the architectural work of Henry Hobson Richardson. Olmsted was a part of Gilder's social circle and was admired by Van Rensselaer for his ideas on the amelioration of architecture with natural beauty. The friendship between Van Rensselaer and Olmsted that continued after their initial meetings proved to be a fruitful one. Olmsted trusted Van Rensselaer to write a piece on his behalf explaining his proposals for The Niagara Reservation for the readers in *Century*, as part of the strategy to garner public support and pressurize legislators to act decisively to protect the site.<sup>450</sup> Olmsted also persuaded Van Rensselaer to write the first biography of Henry Hobson Richardson, which was one of the first monographs on an American architect. Van Rensselaer wrote and translated many books throughout her career, but her *Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works*, published in 1888, became a staple of American architectural history, and is the work that her name has been most closely associated with by scholars until recent decades.<sup>451</sup> The productive relationship between an artist and writer, in the forms of Olmsted and Van Rensselaer, is yet another example of an important connection, instigated by *Century Magazine* at the home of Richard Watson Gilder.

She was a continuous presence in the life of Gilder and followed his lead by buying a property in Marion, Massachusetts. The Gilders had purchased a property there in 1884 and summered there for the next ten years. They had commissioned Stanford White once again to renovate an old icehouse into a new "studio" where they could work and entertain, transporting their New York social life with them (figs.3.28 - 3.31). Stanford White's renovation, which added a large fireplace and prominent chimney breast, maintained the robust qualities of the original building, and the existing photographs of the interior show a constructed rusticity.

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<sup>450</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Topics Of The Time: The Niagara Reservation," *Century Magazine*, August, 1887, 631-632.

<sup>451</sup> Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age*, 44-45.

This “studio” provides a window into the aesthetic trends of the era and the psyche of Gilder and his wife. The studio’s décor embodied a desire to return to simple and authentic ways of living, acting as a sanctuary from the modern world of the metropolis. The presence of copper kettles, milking stools and spinning wheels artfully placed around the space conjured up associations to a simpler time and a connection to the history of handmade craft, and honesty in materials; associations which resonate with the arts and crafts movement. The Gilders were able to attract many of their friends, like Van Rensselaer, to purchase property in Marion, and the town became a sort of artistic colony, frequented by painters, writers, sculptors, musicians, actors and politicians. Charles Dana Gibson, the popular artist and illustrator for *Century* was a regular visitor, as was the portrait painter Cecil Clark Davis. Grover and Frances Cleveland, who were close friends of the Gilders also purchased a house there, and a photograph of Augustus Saint-Gaudens taking Frances Cleveland’s portrait at the Gilder studio speaks of the period’s fashions, and the central place of the Gilders amongst the American cultural, and by this time political, elites (fig. 3.31). The Gilders could no longer claim to be members of a marginalized bohemian avant-garde. The success of the magazine and the group of artists it had championed in the 1870s had meant that they were now in a position of bourgeois dominance, with economic and political capital to match their cultural capital.





Figure 3.28. Photograph of Richard Watson Gilder standing in front of "The Studio" at Marion Mass. The Gilder Manuscript Collection, Lilly Library, Box 25.

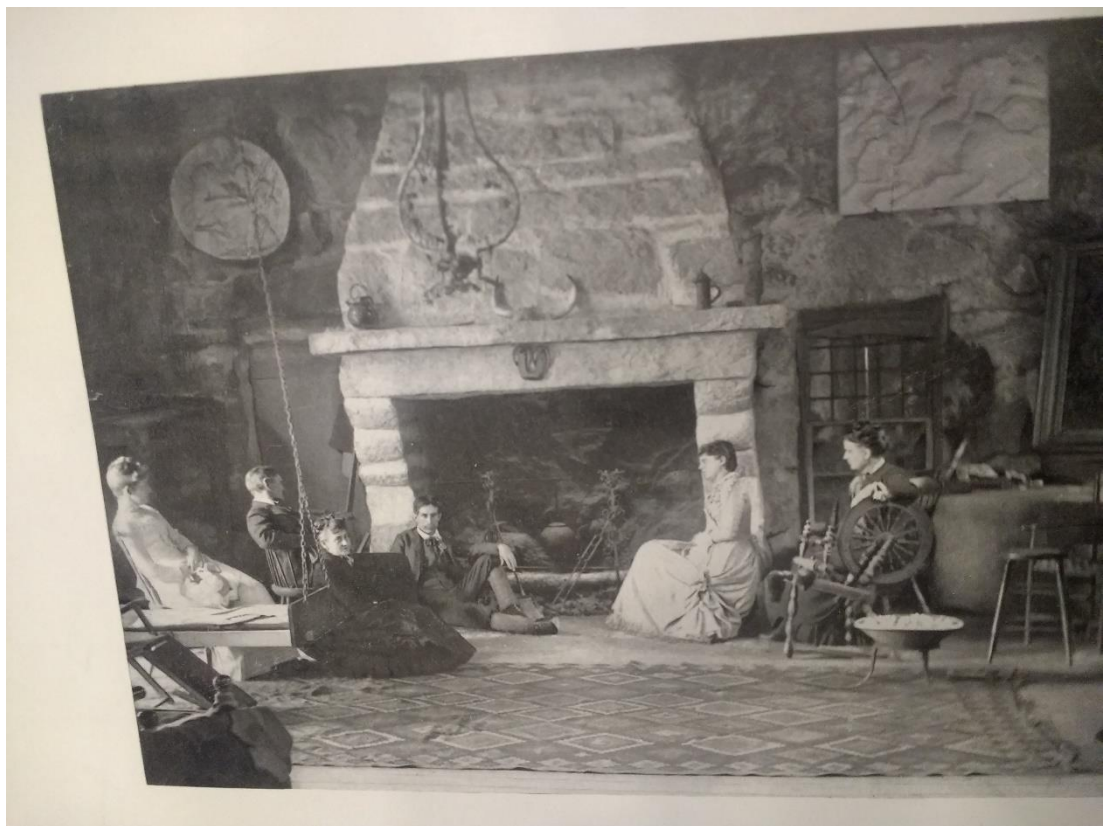


Figure 3.29. Photograph of interior of the studio in Marion, Mass. From left to right: Frances Cleveland's mother, Joseph Jefferson (the actor), Mrs. Jefferson, Richard Watson Gilder, Frances Cleveland and Helena de Kay Gilder. The Gilder Manuscript Collection, Lilly Library, Box 25.



Figure 3.30. Photograph of Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer at her home in Marion, Mass. In 1887. Image from the Sippican Historical Society.



Figure 3.31. Photograph of Augustus Saint-Gaudens drawing Frances Cleveland at the studio in Marion, Mass in 1887. Image from the Sippican Historical Society.

Van Rensselaer was an important presence in the life of Gilder. They fed off each other's ideas, informed each other's tastes and clearly enjoyed working and socializing together. Her association with *Century Magazine* did much to add intellectual weight to its art writing, but it also brought a perspective that could alienate. The depth of her expertise and experience, and the evolution of criticism towards specialization and professionalism created a tension between authors and some of the laymen readership who may have been attracted to the magazine for its popular fiction, its illustrations, or the hugely successful Civil War series which ran between November 1884 and January 1888. This tension between high cultural goals and popularity – each offering increased cultural and economic capital respectively, represented a paradox for editors of popular magazines in the 1880s and 1890s. According to Dinnerstein, Van Rensselaer held a “disdain for the nouveaux riches and the ravages of commercialism.”<sup>452</sup> This disdain was certainly felt by Gilder, but not necessarily by the majority of his intended readership, which, as a popular monthly magazine, necessarily extended well beyond the bohemian avant-garde circles that Gilder and Van Rensselaer inhabited during the 1870s and early 1880s. This gap in perspectives would grow, even as the aesthetic tastes of Gilder and Van Rensselaer received vindication at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

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<sup>452</sup> Dinnerstein, “Opulence and Ocular Delight,” 71.



#### 4. The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition.

The previous three chapters have established the important connections between Richard Watson Gilder, the magazine that he edited and American art. The relationships between these three subjects were often interdependent and reciprocal. The first chapter established Gilder as an idealistic and ambitious man of letters and centered around his involvement with the 1877 secession of the Society of American Artists from the National Academy of Design in New York. The following chapter discussed the ways in which Gilder's belief in America as a democratic experiment helped to direct various forms of engagement and intervention with art in both *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine*. The third chapter built upon this and suggested how Gilder's personal, elite artistic tastes were reconciled with his philanthropic instincts and aspirations for the advancement of all of American society, through an understanding of Matthew Arnold's views on culture as an agent of social reform. This allowed Gilder to justifiably promote the art, artists and critics, such as John La Farge and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, that he knew and admired through his nationally popular magazine. Having examined material from the magazine over the course of approximately two decades, this final chapter takes a focused look at its coverage and critique of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The manner in which the magazine responded to this historically significant event illustrates the depth and breadth of its influence on American culture in the 1890s. The World's Columbian Exposition is presented as the apogee of Gilder's cultural vision; a perspective that pictured America as the natural inheritor of European artistic traditions. This moment of triumph is also presented simultaneously as the start of the decline for both the magazine and its aesthetic vision for America, as it became ossified by its own success.

## The History of the Fair

The 1893 World's Columbian Exhibition was an event at which America spoke to itself as much as to the broader international community. It ran for six months between April and October on a six-hundred and eighty-six-acre site on the banks of lake Michigan, specially created at Jackson Park, just south of Chicago city center. Over twenty million people visited the fair throughout the course of the year, many from overseas, and still more from around the country. It was an event designed to compete directly with the Paris Exposition of 1889, purposefully exceeding it in physical scale, as a projection of American material wealth and political power to the world. Paris had shown the summit of what civilization had achieved in the Old World, and now the moment had arrived to see if America was ready to prove that the future of civilization's progress belonged to the New World, just as the twentieth century beckoned. It was an event that has influenced interpretations of American culture and history. Neil Harris, described the fair as "educational pleasure grounds" where the ideal Victorian world view was realized and communicated most successfully.<sup>453</sup> Another influential cultural historian, Alan Trachtenberg, defined the exposition in class and economic terms, as "an ideal shape of an incorporated America" which concluded a period of conflict over competing visions of American society that had taken place since the civil war.<sup>454</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears has furthered Trachtenberg's cultural analysis, arguing that the fair unwittingly came to represent the replacement of Gilded Age laissez-faire capitalism with the corporate managerial capitalism of the Progressive era that would define much of the proceeding century. Lears contrasts the intended political messaging of the Beaux-Arts "White City" buildings erected to house the exhibits of the Exposition with the popularity of the "Midway Plaisance", a strip of low-culture entertainments mixed with ethnographic displays placed

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<sup>453</sup> Neil Harris, *Cultural Excursions: Marketing Appetites and Cultural Tastes in Modern America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 128, 61.

<sup>454</sup> Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 7-8, 215-231.

physically and conceptually at the periphery of the fair grounds.<sup>455</sup>

Lears's own discussion of the contrasts between high and low culture at the fair have also been taken up by art historians in assessing the Fair's impacts on American visual culture and its stratification based upon class lines.<sup>456</sup>

At the time of its planning, a significant stated purpose of the fair was to bring the nation together by helping to define a unified American culture for itself. A hundred years previous to the Exposition, America ceased to exist West of the Mississippi. It extended as far as the banks of the Rio Grande by 1846 and had further expanded West to the Pacific Ocean as recently as 1853 with the Gadsden Treaty and the purchase of land from Mexico.<sup>457</sup> A short while after that the nation had threatened to

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<sup>455</sup> T. J. Jackson Lears, "Chapter 5: Crisis and Regeneration," in *Rebirth Of A Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877–1920*, (HarperCollins e-books, 2009). Digital Edition.

<sup>456</sup> JoAnne Mancini, *Pre-modernism : Art-world Change and American Culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 68. Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 302-320. Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art From Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 212-219. Jennifer A. Greenhill, *Playing it Straight: Art and Humor in the Gilded Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 164-167.

<sup>457</sup> The nature of the so-called "Gadsden Purchase" and its historical impacts on various levels from the individual to the international is a topic of understandable tension and political and historical debate. The expansion of the American national frontier westwards during the nineteenth century was informed to a significant degree by imperialistic aspirations to establish an American Empire. Imperialistic attitudes were a significant aspect of American life during the nineteenth century and offer a potentially illuminating perspective through which to view American history. Recent scholarship in American history and politics has brought attention to the complexities and problems caused by the border disputes and American expansion in the nineteenth century. See: Laurence French and Magdaleno Manzanarez, *North American Border Conflicts: Race, Politics and Ethics* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2017). William S. Kiser, *Illusions of Empire: The Civil War and Reconstruction in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022). Kevin Waite, *West of Slavery: The Southern Dream of a Transcontinental Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021). Questions which seek to define the relationship between Imperialistic attitudes and beliefs and the history of American art have also gained currency amongst art historians who are taking part in efforts to "decolonize" our understanding of the arts, and society more broadly. Notable amongst recent examples is the collection of articles brought together by guest editor Maggie M. Cao in the Spring 2020 issue of *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art*. Cao poses the question, "What is the Place of Empire in the History of American Art?" and brings together responses from Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Shana Klein, Taína Caragol and Kate Clarke Lemay, Florina Capistrano-Baker, J. M. Mancini, and Stacy Kamehiro. Maggie M. Cao, "What is the Place of Empire in the History of American Art?," *Panorama: Journal of the Association*

tear itself apart along the Mason-Dixon Line. The effects of that bloody war were still being felt in the decades that followed. The delicate question of American identity had further been complicated by strained race relations, class tensions resulting from urbanization, economic expansion and crises, and waves of immigration from different parts of Europe, each bringing with them distinct and sometimes competing ethnic identities, values and beliefs. As the fair was being built in 1892 an economic depression was worsening and populist politics were on the rise, represented by the founding of the People's Party in 1892, encouraged by numerous political scandals revealing corruption and incompetence.

Whilst a stated aim of the fair was to bring the nation together, its planning had drawn attention to regional tensions. The notion of a World Fair commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America had gathered momentum since 1889. Numerous locations were set to compete for the honor, but Chicago was selected, ostensibly due to its representatives' ability to generate funds from private businesses at short notice whilst the likes of New York was embroiled in squabbles between different factions within the local bureaucracy and politics. The selection of Chicago was viewed as contentious at the time and there was considerable resentment from citizens of the historic East Coast cultural centers: New York, Boston and Philadelphia. These New England cultural elites were seemingly concerned by questions of American cultural identity as long as the answers acknowledged their own sense of cultural superiority. To counter such factionalism, the publicity department for the fair worked hard to build anticipation and support for the fair nationally before it opened, with states encouraged to organize funding drives for their own participation and committees made up of citizens to help select exhibits to represent their communities. The patriotism of the fair was further

communicated to the population at large through the ceremonies and pageants which announced its opening in May 1893.<sup>458</sup> According to the Director General, George Davis, the fair was “the national outgrowth of this nation’s place in history”.<sup>459</sup> The ceremonial dimension of the fair was not restricted to its site or the occasion of its opening. Citizens were encouraged to hold their own commemorations. The pledge of allegiance to the flag was one such ritual, initiated by the editors of *The Youth Companion*, which still helps to shape a common American culture today.<sup>460</sup>

In spite of the patriotic declarations and pageantry, a reading of the fair in materialistic terms is readily plausible, particularly because so many of the exhibits were concerned with displays of products as a barometer of the nation’s progress. The economic troubles of the period were in part caused by surpluses in production causing domestic prices to collapse, so the exposition was conceived of as an opportunity for American business to sell itself to new markets. This characterization is supported by the organization of the fair which was led and largely financed by businessmen, in a Western city which was expanding rapidly as a result of capitalist speculation and development. However, it is important to realize that for many Americans, particularly the New England, middle-class cultured readers of magazines such as *Century*, the materialism of the fair represented an embarrassing aspect of the nation and an obstacle to a different kind of metaphysical progress. Coverage of the fair tended to focus on the cultural aspects. When its commercial side was discussed, it was usually in negative terms. For the bourgeois cultural elites, the fair simultaneously represented the

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<sup>458</sup> Robert W. Rydell, “Rediscovering The 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition,” in *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World’s Fair*, Carolyn Kinder Carr, George Gurney, Robert W. Rydell, National Museum of American Art, and National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art: National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 28.

<sup>459</sup> Rossiter Johnson, ed., *A History of the World’s Columbian Exposition*, 4 vols, (New York D. Appleton, 1897). Vol 1, 295. Quoted in, Rydell, “Rediscovering The 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition,” 29.

<sup>460</sup> Rydell, “Rediscovering The 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition,” 29 -35.



spiritual sickness of American excess and its cure through elevating cultural standards. The cultural messaging of the fair, and particularly its all-encompassing patriotic tone cut through the cynicism and regional partisanship for people like Richard Watson Gilder, who wanted to project the fair as a model for civic refinement to his readers. Such refinement would help the nation transcend the corruptions caused by the materialism of the age, which were regular subjects of articles published in *Century Magazine*.<sup>461</sup>

### **The Art at the Fair**

Whilst the products on show in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, Machinery Hall and Electricity Building, excited viewers' consumer instincts with promises of a better tomorrow thanks to science, the art of the fair suggested more philosophical questions of progress. Art was everywhere at the fair. In the landscaping of the site, the numerous buildings, the sculpture and murals that decorated them, the entertainments on the Midway Plaisance and the ethnographical displays situated there. Set apart at the northern end of the park was the Fine Art gallery which housed thousands of works by American and foreign artists, and still more artworks were displayed in the Women's Building close by. Scholars have taken various thematic approaches when discussing the full plethora of visual culture of the fair, and these have helped to illuminate the complex and multifaceted nature of such an event.<sup>462</sup> However, the visual culture which excited the authors of articles for

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<sup>461</sup> For example, see Lyman Abbott, "The Pulpit for To-day," *Century Magazine*, August, 1888, 618-624.

<sup>462</sup> Examples include, Charlene G. Garfinkle, "Progress Illuminated: Two Stained Glass Windows from the 1893 Woman's Building," *Woman's Art Journal* 33, no. 1 (2012): 32-38. David Silkenat, "Workers in the White City: Working Class Culture at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 104, no. 4 (2011): 266-300. Regina Megan Palm, "Women Muralists, Modern Woman and Feminine Spaces: Constructing Gender at the 1893 Chicago World's Columbian Exposition," *Journal of Design History* 23, no. 2 (2010): 123-43. Rebecca S. Graff, "Dream City, Plaster City: Worlds' Fairs and the Gilding of American Material Culture," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16, no. 4 (2012): 696-716.

contemporary popular magazines was more constrained, focusing on the site's sculpture, decoration, pictures, landscaping and architecture.

The selection of architects for the site was carried out by invitation rather than open competition, and this helped to give the fair its stylistic continuity. The fair's steel framed exhibit halls were wrapped in a white-washed staff,<sup>463</sup> finished with beaux-art style embellishments which purposefully recalled the neo-classical architecture of modern Paris. The harmonious effect of the buildings was aided by the perspicacious adoption of standardized proportions, which meant that the buildings, although designed by different architects, appeared part of a general scheme, leading to the park's title, "The White City". The messaging conveyed by the architecture of the fair was consistent with its outward projections of American cultural progress. The neo-classical architectural language being employed situated the fair and America more broadly within the lineage of European cultural achievements, recently celebrated at the Paris fair in 1889.

The display of fine art at the fair was reflective of the regional tensions which impacted much of its planning more generally. The Department of Fine Arts was headed by Halsey C. Ives and his assistant Charles M. Kurtz. Ives was born in New York state and had trained as an artist before moving to St. Louis and helping to establish the School and Museum of Fine arts there. He was selected in large part due to his diplomatic skills, connections within the art world, and the prejudice that denied the position to a woman, Sara Tyson Hallowell, who was the initial preferred choice. Hallowell came from a prestigious Philadelphian family and had established an impressive career in her early twenties as an art curator and agent, well connected with artists and administrators across the country and in Europe. As a consolation Hallowell was made a deputy to Ives and organized the display of a hundred and thirty-one European works in American collections, a smaller sub-exhibition in the gallery, as well as the murals for the Women's pavilion. Charles M. Kurtz was a critic and curator, born in Pennsylvania but based in New York

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<sup>463</sup> Plaster of Paris mixed with hemp fiber.

where he studied at the National Academy of Design. He was responsible for organizing the display of contemporary American art, defined as art created after the 1876 Centennial Fair at Philadelphia. The display comprised of approximately one thousand two hundred paintings, sculptures, watercolors, prints, drawings and other forms of art. There was also a display of retrospective American art populated with approximately five hundred works made before 1876. The gallery building as a whole housed more than ten thousand artworks, of which approximately three thousand were American.<sup>464</sup>

Kurtz and Ives exercised considerable influence in the selection of works for the exhibition according to their own tastes. The cultural significance of the Eastern metropolises was reflected by the system for selection. Advisory Committees were appointed for New York, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, as well as European cities with high concentrations of American artists: Paris, London, Munich, Florence and Rome. The Juries of Selection were based in these locations, with a National Jury at Chicago set up to deal with the rest of American art outside of these locations. Beyond the general tensions of regional competition, there were disagreements over the constitution of these advisory committees. Thomas Wood, President of the National Academy in New York, led the objections to the appointment of the Advisory Committee there being selected directly by Ives and Kurtz. Wood contended that the committee should have been selected by the artists practicing in the city. However, Ives and Kurtz did not wish to delegate the selection through a process that Wood, in his role as head of the academy, would have been able to influence.

Kurtz in particular had strong opinions on what the American selection for the fair should look like, in accordance with his own preferences for the art created by members of the Society of American

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<sup>464</sup> Carolyn Kinder Carr, "Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art At The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," in *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, Carolyn Kinder Carr, George Gurney, Robert W. Rydell, National Museum of American Art, and National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art: National Portrait Gallery, 1993), 78.

Artists. The New York Advisory Committee was made up of Augustus Saint-Gaudens, J. Q. A Ward, Olin Warner, William Merritt Chase, Robert Swain Gifford, Eastman Johnson, H. Bolton Jones, and F. D. Millet (later substituted by Frederick Dielman and George Willoughby Maynard). All of these artists were members of the Society of American Artists except for J. Q. A Ward, who was a member of the academy. Chase was president of the Society at the time, and his selection combined with Wood's omission was a clear show of favoritism for the generation of artists that had broken away from the academy in 1877. This Advisory Committee was composed in order to return an agreeable Selection Jury that would put forward works that were in accordance with Kurtz's tastes. Even before the Advisory Committees were finalized in 1892, Kurtz had drawn up a list of works that he expected to be in the exhibition, for an illustrated guidebook to the fair he intended on publishing, titled *Official Illustrations from the Art Gallery of the World's Columbian Exposition*.

Ultimately Kurtz and Ives's strategy worked. The New York jury selected just over six hundred works for the Chicago exhibition of which two hundred and eighty-one were admitted without judgment, "on list" by Kurtz and Ives.<sup>465</sup> Their correspondence shows their maneuvering and the enmity they felt for the older and more conservative New York academicians, typified in the figure of Wood. Writing to Ives, Kurtz anticipated that the announcement of the final selections of the New York jury would be disputed by "the particularly resentful brethren," referring to Wood, William H. Beard and Albert Bierstadt amongst others who had raised objections previously, as well as "the rest of that pre-historic crowd".<sup>466</sup> A strong protest was raised by J. G. Brown, with the support of fellow painters, who argued on his behalf that the New York jury's selections were not representative of American art. William Merritt

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<sup>465</sup> Carr, "Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art At The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," 86.

<sup>466</sup> Halsey C. Ives to Charles M. Kurtz, January 19 and 23, 1893. Quoted in, Carr, "Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art At The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition," 86.

Chase retorted that the disagreement was “not strife between foreign and American ways of painting, but between the good and the bad—and only incidentally between the old and the new.”<sup>467</sup> Ever the diplomat, Ives smoothed the situation by accepting Brown’s paintings and suggesting to Kurtz in a letter that they offer one of the academy’s “old fogies” a place on the National Jury based in Chicago, as long as it was not Thomas Wood. J. G. Brown was subsequently appointed to the jury and the issue was considered resolved. Such episodes however represent minor victories for the likes of Brown and Wood. Kurtz spent considerable time organizing the hanging of the exhibition to highlight the works of artists such as Sargent, Eakins and Edmund C. Tarbell. The final list of paintings in the exhibition reveals that certain favored artists were allowed many more submissions than the supposed maximum of three per artist.<sup>468</sup> Artworks that generally reflected the latest European styles were favored as Ives and Kurtz were keen to assemble a collection that would compete with Europe and avoid a national embarrassment such as that of 1876 Centennial Fair, where much of the art by younger painters was rejected or “skied” in the display. The exhibition of 1893 therefore did much to establish a new canon of American art for the Gilded Age.

The American art at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition demonstrates the ascendant position of the Society of American Artists. Seventeen years previously the likes of Saint-Gaudens and Chase were insurgent figures with ambitions frustrated by the academy. Now they

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<sup>467</sup> *Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, March 5, 1893, 15. Quoted in Carr, “Prejudice and Pride: Presenting American Art At The 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition,” 87.

<sup>468</sup> William Merritt Chase exhibited five large paintings, Kenyon Cox exhibited twelve, Thomas Wilmer Dewing seven, Thomas Eakins ten, Robert Swain Gifford eleven, Alexander Harrison six, Childe Hassam five, Winslow Homer fifteen, George Inness fifteen, Eastman Johnson seven, John Singer Sargent nine, Frederic A. Bridgman had seven entries accepted, Dwight William Tryon fourteen, Charles Yardley Turner eleven, Elihu Vedder eleven, Gari Melchers seven, Julien Alden Weir eight, James Abbott McNeil Whistler six. Of these eighteen artists, only four had not studied in Paris, of which three (Gifford, Homer and Inness) were American trained. Chase trained in Munich. The rest had spent formative years in Paris. Seven had studied at the Academy Julian and five with Jean-Léon Gérôme. Following the strife caused by J. G. Brown’s objections he was allowed seven entries. Ives employed the tactic of killing with kindness to resolve individual’s battles in order to ensure that he and Kurtz won the war.

were appointed to management positions, with the power to direct the aesthetic quality of the American submission for an exhibition at one of the most significant international events hosted by America to date. These were the artists that Gilder's magazine had helped to promote throughout the late 1870s and 1880s, and Gilder like them had grown into a position of influence in step with his cultural status. Indeed, the administration of the fair was filled with persons that Gilder knew well, and in many instances had supported through the magazine. Edwin A. Abbey, Elihu Vedder, John Singer Sargent, Gari Melchers, Stanford White, Louis Comfort Tiffany, Walter Shirlaw, John P. Davis, Frank French, W. B. Closson, Mary Hallock Foote and Daniel Chester French were all on Advisory Committees and Juries of Selection for the fair, whilst John La Farge held a position on the New York Advisory Committee for the Retrospective Exhibition of American Art before 1876. Ives and Kurtz's preference for the European influenced art represented by the Society of American Artists in New York was a significant confirmation that Gilder and his associates had won the cultural war with the Academy that had begun in 1876. Gilder and his circle could no longer consider themselves part of the bohemian avant-garde, but were now squarely part of the consecrated avant-garde, necessitating a switch from an offensive to defensive, conservative cultural mindset.<sup>469</sup> The planning of the fair was in many ways a reflection of Gilder's personal networks and idealistic vision of a community of artists, administrators, architects, businesses and politicians working together in service to a public receptive to cultural leadership and education.

### Gilder, *Century Magazine* and the Fair

Gilder's artistic and cultural values can be inferred from his influences, friendships and principally via the art that he patronized and promoted in his magazine. His personal enthusiasm for the 1893

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<sup>469</sup> Given the financial success that came with part-owning and editing the nation's favorite monthly magazine, Gilder was arguably simultaneously inhabiting a position amongst the economic bourgeoisie.

exposition, and the coverage that was published in his magazine, provide important evidence of his perspectives when he and the magazine were at their most successful. Prior to the World's Columbian Exposition, *Century Magazine* published limited coverage of World Fairs. However, the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris did hold some interest due to the city's generally acknowledged significance as a beacon of cultural inspiration and model against which to measure American progress.<sup>470</sup> The Exposition Universelle was one of the most successful World's Fairs, attracting over thirty million visitors. The unveiling of the Eiffel Tower was a provocative statement of France's modernity, whilst the spatial organization and architectural grandeur of the exhibition halls around the Champs de Mars spoke of France's glorious past, cultural history and the supposed rationalism of its governance. Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer had been the magazine's correspondent for the 1889 Paris Exposition and wrote a glowing report which focused on the impressiveness of the architecture and the broader lessons that should be learned by America. The great success of the Exposition, according to Van Rensselaer, was the focus on Science and Art rather than trade: "it was a display of ideas rather than of things."<sup>471</sup> This statement was made with concerns in mind over the materialism which accompanied America's growing economic wealth. Van Rensselaer's review of the fair concluded with a half-exasperated plea to the American public to support its own artists, as the French had done.

Not talent is wanting to American artists, nor ambition, nor conscientiousness, but public appreciation. [...] If the public sees and dislikes your work, you may hope to change its heart. If it will not even look at it, what can you do? And yet there is so much today in American art that deserves to be looked at!<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> Page Knox has written that Gilder believed in the supremacy of French art. This was a commonly held view of the period and would have been reinforced by the French connections of many of his personal friends in the art world such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, William Crary Brownell and John La Farge. Page Knox, "*Scribner's Monthly* 1870-1881: Illustrating a New American Art World" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012), 69-134 and 303-369.

<sup>471</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "Open Letters: Impressions of the International Exhibition of 1889," *Century Magazine*, December, 1889, 316.

<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

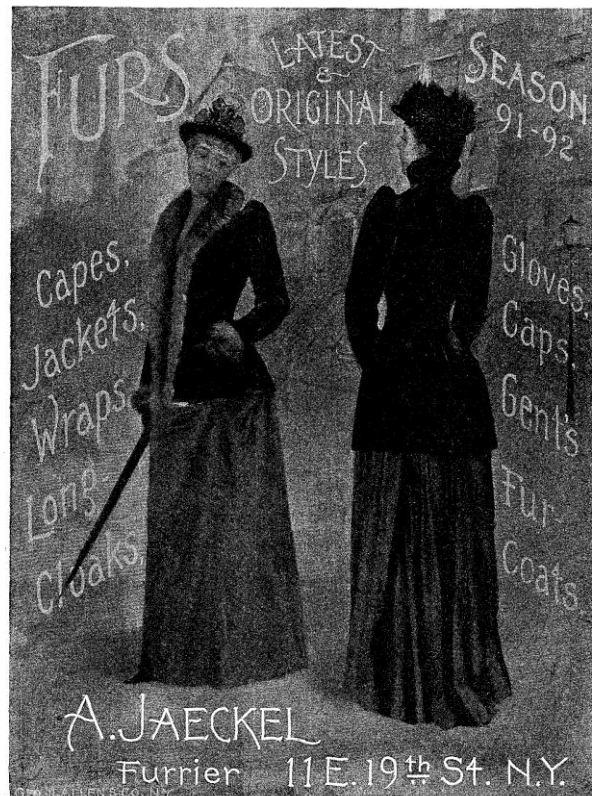


There had been concerns that the American art submission to the Exposition Universelle would repeat the embarrassments of 1867 and 1876, but most critics of the period who saw the exhibition agreed that the American displays were interesting, and in certain aspects showed that America had the promise to surpass French achievements.<sup>473</sup> Yet despite Van Rensselaer's determination that America should take up the spiritual lessons of the exposition, World Fairs, including that of Paris 1889, lived on in readers' imaginations through the advertisements of companies such as Bigelow Carpet Co., The Hammond Typewriter Co. and A. Jaeckel (fig.4.13) that filled an ever increasing portion of the front and back matter of each issue of *Century Magazine*. Ironically, America's appetite for material possessions was increasingly catered to by the advertising pages in popular magazines, *Century Magazine* chief amongst them.

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<sup>473</sup> Lois Marie Fink, "American Art at the 1889 Paris Exposition: The Paintings They Love to Hate," *American Art* 5, no. 4 (1991): 35-53.

## WEARING APPAREL



*Receiver of the Grand Gold Medal*  
PARIS EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE, 1889.

Catalogue on Application.

Figure 4.1. Advertisement for A. Jaeckel in front matter advertising section to *Century Magazine*, November 1891, 118.

The announcement of plans to hold a World Fair in America in early 1890, shortly after the closure of the Exposition Universelle, sparked the sense of competition with the Europe, and France in particular. This was especially acute with regards to the displays of fine art at the 1893 Fair. France staged the second largest display of art at the Chicago fair after America, who had strategically positioned the French and American galleries next to each other. The display was intended to reveal that American art was finally at a point whereby it could compete against the best that Europe had to offer.

The seriousness with which the magazine took the matter of the Exposition is evidenced in their printing of an article by Georges Berger,

the Director-General of the 1889 Paris Exposition Universelle.<sup>474</sup> This article is curious in its structure and tone, offering practical advice that was really only applicable to the organizers of the American exposition. Berger offered guidance on methods of display, architecture, budgeting, logistics, services, classifications, exhibitor rentals, import customs, and even the catalogue. The article was published to speak directly to those that would make decisions about the American exposition, to hold them to the challenge set by the Exposition Universelle, and to raise the expectations of the American public, most of whom had not seen the Paris Exposition, but none the less were made familiar through the articles and visual material published by the likes *Century Magazine*. The publishing of Berger's guidance sent a clear message that the forthcoming World's Fair mattered to the editors at *Century*.

As the details of the plans for the fair became known the magazine published articles that looked forward to the fair and encouraged Americans to take it seriously. Writing in the "Topics Of The Time" column for December 1891, the editors reminded readers that the nation was due to host

an exhibition which, instead of being local, or Western, or national, will be international in the largest sense of the term, and will be a demonstration of the country's first century of development that will be viewed with just pride by every American. [...] The time has more than come when all parts of the country should join hands to help the managers of the Fair, who have shown such energy and intelligence in its organization, to carry the enterprise to the full success which it merits.<sup>475</sup>

The support of a magazine like *Century* was significant and came as the details of the architectural plans were taking shape and key appointments were being made with regards to the advisory committees for the Fine Art displays. Ives and Kurtz had visited New York in the summer of 1891 to make approaches to artists that they were keen to

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<sup>474</sup> Georges Berger, "Suggestions for the Next World's Fair," *Century Magazine*, April, 1890, 845-851.

<sup>475</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: The World's Columbian Exhibition," *Century Magazine*, December, 1891, 312.

select for advisory positions, including many close acquaintances of Gilder such as John La Farge, Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Louis Comfort Tiffany. Building works were well under way by December of 1891 and the commissioning of Richard Morris Hunt and McKim, Mead and White, to create buildings in a beaux arts neoclassical manner surely met with strong approval from Gilder. As the aesthetic character of the exposition became more clearly defined, Gilder and *Century Magazine's* confidence and enthusiasm for the event increased. The magazine reassured readers that

Every effort will be made to secure in all departments of the exhibition the best expert service and the most complete displays possible. Especially it is believed that the electrical, art, and woman's departments will surpass all previous manifestations. All these will have magnificent buildings, and their displays will be in charge of people who have the highest qualifications for their work.<sup>476</sup>

Gilder even used the magazine to exert public pressure on state administrators to do their duty and support the exhibition. Again in "Topics Of The Time," Gilder took up the cause of American art at the fair, criticizing the "lamentable" efforts and underlining to those in power New York's leading role in delivering a display of which the country could be proud.

In architecture, painting, sculpture, stained glass, wood and other engraving, the metropolis of the country naturally leads all other cities; and if the means were not forthcoming for New York's department of art, then the art of the country itself would fail of its proper presentation at the World's Fair. The failure would be national.<sup>477</sup>

*Century Magazine* devoted particular resources to the coverage of the architecture of the fair. The magazine had shown increasing interest in issues of architecture, landscape design, city planning and

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<sup>476</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>477</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: New York and the World's Fair," *Century Magazine*, January, 1893, 473-474. See also a similar earlier plea in Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: The World's Columbian Exhibition," *Century Magazine*, December, 1891, 313.

beautification.<sup>478</sup> Gilder's friendship with Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer was a stimulating factor in this regard. Gilder also appreciated the significance of beautiful environments for the aesthetic health and progress of the nation at large, as a means of immersing the populace in art without them necessarily realizing it. This view was an application of Aesthetic Movement philosophy which received a boost as a result of the success of the Columbian Exposition's "White City," at a time when concerns over the conditions of the American city tenements were increasing.<sup>479</sup> This developed into the City Beautiful movement, a social reform through the arts movement that appealed to figures like Gilder, who had become increasingly involved in city planning issues, initially through his involvement with the Kindergarten Association and then through his work for the New York Tenement House Commission between 1894 and 1896.

Gilder had predicted that the architecture at the fair would exceed "in beauty as well as in extent anything of the kind ever seen in this country."<sup>480</sup> To capitalize on this opportunity *Century Magazine* commissioned Henry Van Brunt to produce a series of five articles published between May and October of 1892 providing a detailed, informed account of the main buildings and the decisions made with regards to the location and landscaping of the site. Van Brunt had trained with Richard Morris Hunt and had been based in Boston before moving his firm, Van Brunt and Howe, to Kansas City in the late 1880s to complete several commissions for the Union Pacific Railroad. His Romanesque and Gothic Revival architectural designs for public and commercial buildings characterized many of the new cities in the American West. A successful and versatile architect, Van Brunt had been

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<sup>478</sup> For example, see Richard Grant White, "Old Public Buildings in America," *Century Magazine*, March, 1884, 677-687. Albert Shaw, "Paris, the Typical Modern City," *Century Magazine*, July, 1891, 449-466.

<sup>479</sup> For example, see Washington Gladden, "Present-Day Papers: The Problem of Poverty," *Century Magazine*, December, 1892, 245-257. Lillian W. Betts, "Some Tenement-House Evils," *Century Magazine*, December, 1892, 314-315.

<sup>480</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: The World's Columbian Exhibition," *Century Magazine*, December, 1891, 312.

selected to design the Electricity and Wyoming Buildings for the Columbian Exposition (fig. 4.2).

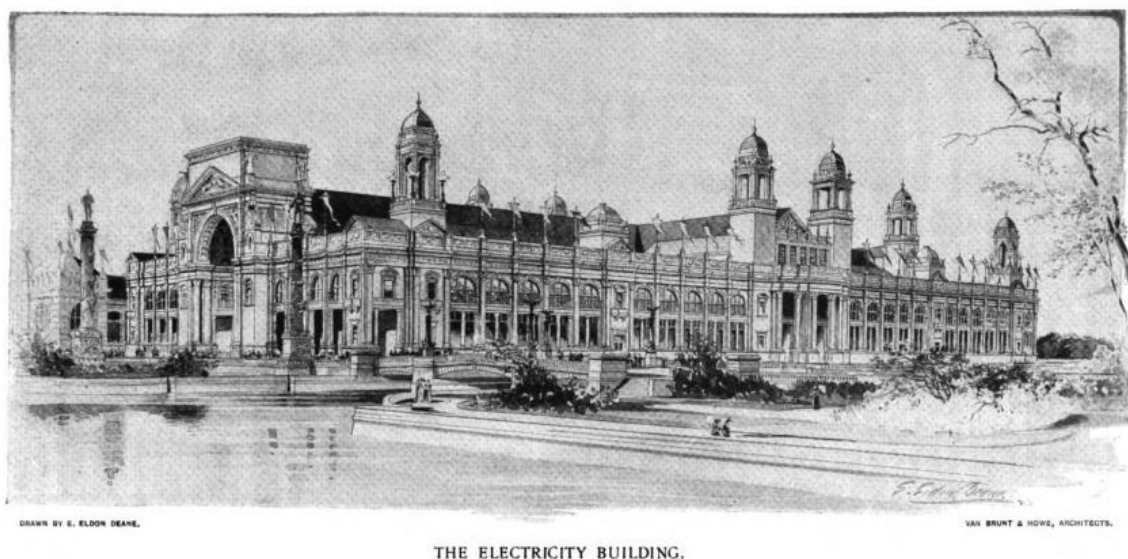


Figure 4.2. E. Eldon Deane, *The Electricity Building*, illustration to Henry Van Brunt, “Architecture at the Columbian Exposition. III,” *Century Magazine*, August 1892, 541.

Van Brunt’s articles provided the reader with practical descriptions of how the site and architects were selected, the logistical and climatic challenges caused by the location, as well as more academic portrayals of the architectural details of the different buildings and the site as whole, bringing to attention the visual references to other buildings, ancient and contemporary that were being made by the architects. The architecture of the fair was of a “uniform and ceremonious style [...] evolved from, and expressive of, the highest civilizations in history,— in which each [architect] could express himself with fluency,” in a style that was “distinctly secular and pompous, restrained from license by historical authority, and organized by academical discipline.”<sup>481</sup> According to Van Brunt, it was these requirements that promoted Roman Classical forms as the favored style for the architecture of the fair.

Although Van Brunt’s articles were mostly dry, he did express aspirations that the fair’s architecture would serve as an “object-lesson” for aspiring architects.

<sup>481</sup> Henry Van Brunt, “Architecture at the Columbian Exposition,” *Century Magazine*, May, 1892, 88.

There are many uneducated and untrained men practising as architects, and still maintaining, especially in the remote regions of the country, an impure and unhealthy vernacular, incapable of progress; men who have never seen a pure classic monument executed on a great scale, and who are ignorant of the emotions which it must excite in any breast accessible to the influences of art. To such it is hoped that these great models, inspired as they have been by a profound respect for the masters of classic art, will prove such a revelation that they will learn at last that true architecture cannot be based on undisciplined invention, illiterate originality, or, indeed, upon any audacity of ignorance.<sup>482</sup>

In further accordance with *Century Magazine's* aesthetic convictions, Van Brunt also saw the value in the curation of an architectural environment for the visiting public as a means to elevate national tastes more broadly. Quoting Matthew Arnold, Van Brunt acknowledged architecture's duty to interpret the metaphysical impetus behind the exposition, working in tension with the fair's baser attractions.

It is the high function of architecture not only to adorn this triumph of materialism, but to condone, explain, and supplement it, so that some elements of "sweetness and light" may be brought forward to counterbalance the boastful Philistinism of our times.<sup>483</sup>

It is unknown the extent to which Gilder was himself involved in the writing and editing of Van Brunt's articles, but this view of the purpose of the fair's architecture resonates strongly with Gilder's own aspirations. Marking the closure of the fair in October 1893, his "Topics Of The Time" editorial column concluded that

the greatest feature of the Exhibition is the architecture and the landscape-gardening, including in these all their sculptured and painted decorations and adjuncts. In these the deepest pleasure and the deepest instruction are to be found, as well as the largest and longest benefit to the country.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>484</sup> "Topics Of The Time: Do not Miss the World's Fair!" *Century Magazine*, October, 1893, 952.

The magazine's high-minded hopes for the positive benefits of the fair were most fully articulated in an editorial from October 1892, as the dedication ceremonies took place. The editors directly addressed the question that may have been posed by cynical or overly pragmatic Americans: What would the Columbian Exposition do for the people of America? In response, the editors predicted that the fair would show Americans the meaning of art and beauty, inspire the country's artists to nobler efforts, and affirm the citizens' faith in the long-term success of a democracy capable of such achievement. There was clearly a model that the article had in mind for what a World's Fair should and could be; The Exposition Universelle of 1889. This fair was effusively praised by the authors for its "artistic character," that went beyond the achievements of industry and science to produce a "triumph of beauty". Paris in 1889 had not only provided the blueprint for the World's Columbian Exposition, but had simultaneously provided an example of a modern society more broadly. According to the article, the triumph of 1889 had only been achieved because of the support and good taste of the people; a natural consequence of the art feeling that permeated all aspects of Parisian life: private, public, commercial, spiritual and secular.

Only in Paris could such a result be achieved. Only the most artistic nation in the world could have achieved it [...] How can we hope soon to see in America anything very different from what we saw at Philadelphia in 1876: a big industrial show, a triumph of commercialism and applied science, an exaltation of material wealth, where beauty existed only in certain collections almost altogether drawn from foreign sources, and where the desire for beauty, when it could be elsewhere divined, had been stunted by crude ignorance, limited by economy or deformed by the love of mere display, and stultified by the lack of any common ideal and the absence of any general scheme of arrangement and design? We are not nearly so artistic a people as the French.[...] The very progress we had made in art during the past fifteen years seemed to make a harmonious exhibition improbable, for it had been progress along many diverging paths, and had meant rather the



accentuation of artistic individuality than a growing concord in taste.<sup>485</sup>

*Century Magazine* acted as a point of cultural convergence, where the different strands of America progress in all aspects of civilization were presented to the public in a format that made the New World literally graspable. The editors hoped that the 1893 Exposition would be able to do something similar, in a spectacle that could speak to many more people than a magazine could ever hope to reach. By gathering the best art that the nation and the world beyond could produce before the American people, inspiration would be provided for society to progress beyond the corrupting pursuit of material wealth. The editors assured the readers that, according to the “most experienced judges,” the artistic quality of the forthcoming fair would “far surpass” that of Paris, in a large part because of the natural beauty of its Lake Michigan setting, and the “harmony of effect” created by its architecture.<sup>486</sup> The greatest benefit of the fair would therefore be the boost to American art for both artists and the public.

When we remember what a great impulse was given to the popular love of art by the collections shown in the exhibition of 1876, what may we not expect as a result of the stately, beautiful, and truly poetic panorama of art that will be unrolled before the eyes of the nation in 1893 ? It will show for the first time, to scores of thousands of Americans who have never traveled abroad and can scarcely hope to do so, what is the meaning of the word beauty, what is the significance of the word art. It will convince them, as nothing else but long and intelligent foreign travel could, that beauty is an enjoyable thing, that art is a thing worth striving for and paying for.<sup>487</sup>

*Century Magazine* predicted that the national importance of the fair would be “far more vital than its international effect,” and that the principal benefit would be to the public in the elevation of artistic

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<sup>485</sup> “Topics Of The Time: What the Columbian Exposition will do for America,” *Century Magazine*, October, 1892, 953-954.

<sup>486</sup> Ibid., 954.

<sup>487</sup> Ibid.

tastes.<sup>488</sup> Concluding their defense of the fair's significance to the nation at large, the editors explained that the public appreciation of art would ultimately benefit the stability of society more generally.

It will teach them [the public] the nature and value of art as nothing else could do. And it will affirm and increase their faith in those democratic institutions which once more, in a new field, have proved themselves capable of a magnificent, an unrivaled achievement.<sup>489</sup>

The impact of the aesthetic environment of the fair, created chiefly by its architecture, landscaping, setting, public sculpture and murals remained the lasting value of the event according to the magazine's editors in the years which immediately followed.<sup>490</sup>

As the fair drew closer the magazine published several articles on other aspects, from road building to the debate over whether it was correct that the fair should open on Sundays. Clarence C. Buel, an assistant editor for *Century Magazine*, provided his "preliminary glimpses of the fair" for the February 1893 issue. He repeated the previous statements that Chicago should be viewed as an architectural and cultural blueprint for the country. What was really striking according to Buel was the "infectious" "enthusiasm for art" found at the fair, not only through the qualities of its architecture but also the adornment of the site as a whole with bas reliefs, statuary and mural paintings.<sup>491</sup> As the fair opened to the public in May 1893 the magazine focused on the spectacle of the event. Gilder requested Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer to write a "frivolous" piece to lead that month's issue which provided practical advice to visitors of how best to experience what the fair had to offer.<sup>492</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Ibid., 955.

<sup>489</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "Topics Of The Time: "What the Columbian Exposition will do for America," *Century Magazine*, October, 1892, 955.

<sup>490</sup> "Topics Of The Time: The Services of Art to the Public," *Century Magazine*, September 1896, 791.

<sup>491</sup> Clarence C. Buel, "Preliminary Glimpses of the Fair," *Century Magazine*, February 1893, 615.

<sup>492</sup> Judith K. Major, *Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer: A Landscape Critic In The Gilded Age* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 150-151.

Her article spoke directly to readers like herself, privileged and cultured from the East coast. To these people, Van Rensselaer's advice was to experience the fair as cosmopolitan flâneurs and indulge in the sensations on offer. Her words seem to be laced with playfully provocative nods to the decadent attitudes that were pilloried by conservative New Englanders and other critics of aestheticism.

Of course there are dawdlers of an inferior sort, people who are simply stupid, and can enjoy nothing but doing and thinking nothing; and it makes no difference whether these go to Chicago or stay at home. But your true *flâneur* feels a genuine interest in one thing—his own capacity for the reception of such new ideas and emotions as may be received without exertion of any kind. He does not care for facts or objects as such, or for what they teach, but he does care for their momentary effect upon his eyes and nerves. He does not crave knowledge, but he delights in impressions.<sup>493</sup>

Van Rensselaer's article was illustrated with pictures by the French artist André Castaigne. His atmospheric views of the fair, focusing on the artificial illumination effects that were one of the most talked about features, furthered the impressionistic quality offered by Van Rensselaer's article (figs. 4.3 and 4.4). These views of the architectural sights added to the images of the fair that readers had previously received with Van Brunt's articles. These plans and illustrations helped to bring the visual qualities of the fair into a form of imagined reality for the readership and allowed them to experience vicariously the aesthetic atmosphere, selling the fair to the readership through the magazine's visual qualities, building their desire to go and see it for themselves (figs. 4.5 and 4.6).

Castaigne's artistic talents were employed again to illustrate another article about the fair, "Sights at the Fair" by the opera critic Gustav Kobbé (figs. 4.7 - 4.9). This article concerned the people, meaning the different types of Americans, that the visitor to the fair could observe. The article echoes Van Rensselaer's earlier piece, by casting the reader as a flâneur. The figure of the flâneur, the affluent urban male "stroller"

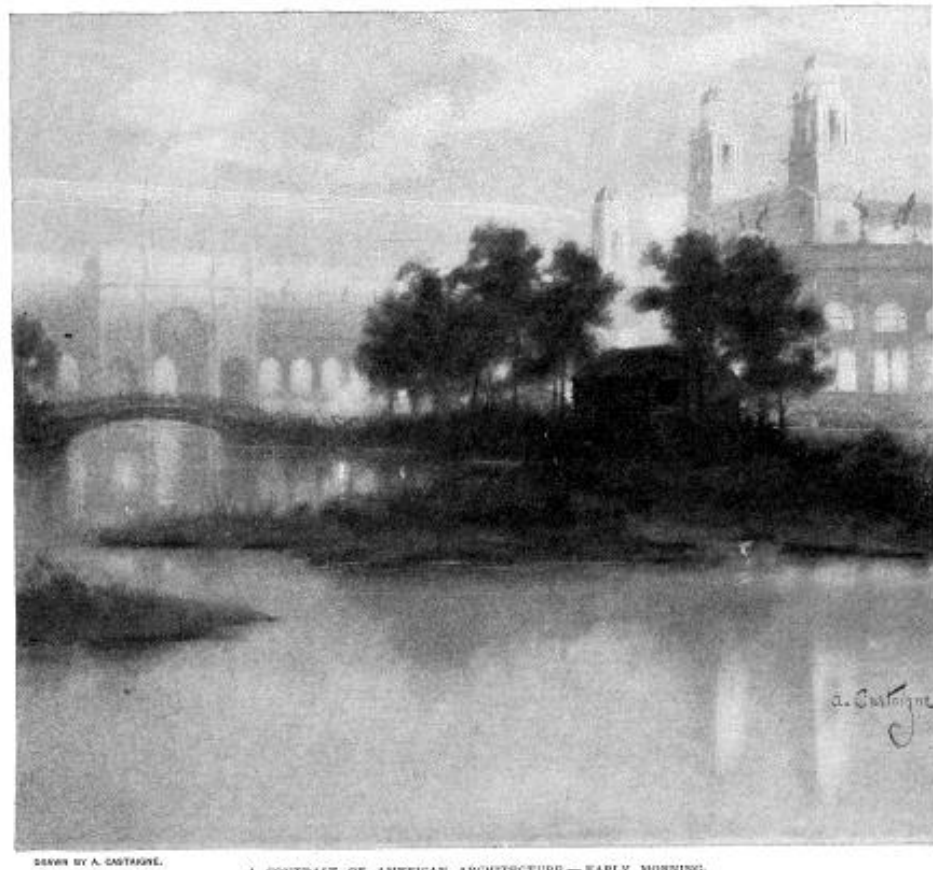
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<sup>493</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, May, 1893, 11.

observing the city and its inhabitants in a detached manner has been identified as an emblem of modernist experience.<sup>494</sup> Van Rensselaer's use of this term from nineteenth century French literature, and Kobbé's article on "people watching" both identify the authors and their intended audience as flâneurs, partaking in a perspective which distinguishes and affirms themselves as modern and cosmopolitan cultural elites. The tone, subject, perspectives and illustrations to these articles all provide an insight into the growing disparity between *Century Magazine* and its readership, and the rest of America. The editorial voice of the magazine continued to try and justify the validity of its perspectives by addressing itself to the nation as a whole and Gilder maintained his reputation for philanthropic patriotism until his death. Still, the articles mentioned above speak with a voice that is clearly rooted in the elite New England culture of New York. For them, Chicago, often mocked for being parochial and unsophisticated, was a source of curiosity and entertainment instead of erudition; what could the fair tell them about American art that they did not already know? The fair had confirmed the dominance of the aesthetic culture that Gilder and *Century Magazine* promoted. However, in the course of becoming the establishment voice and standing for something instead of opposing the status quo, the magazine was already starting to speak exclusively to a restricted, elitist, East Coast readership.

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<sup>494</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, trans., Howard Eiland (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006).



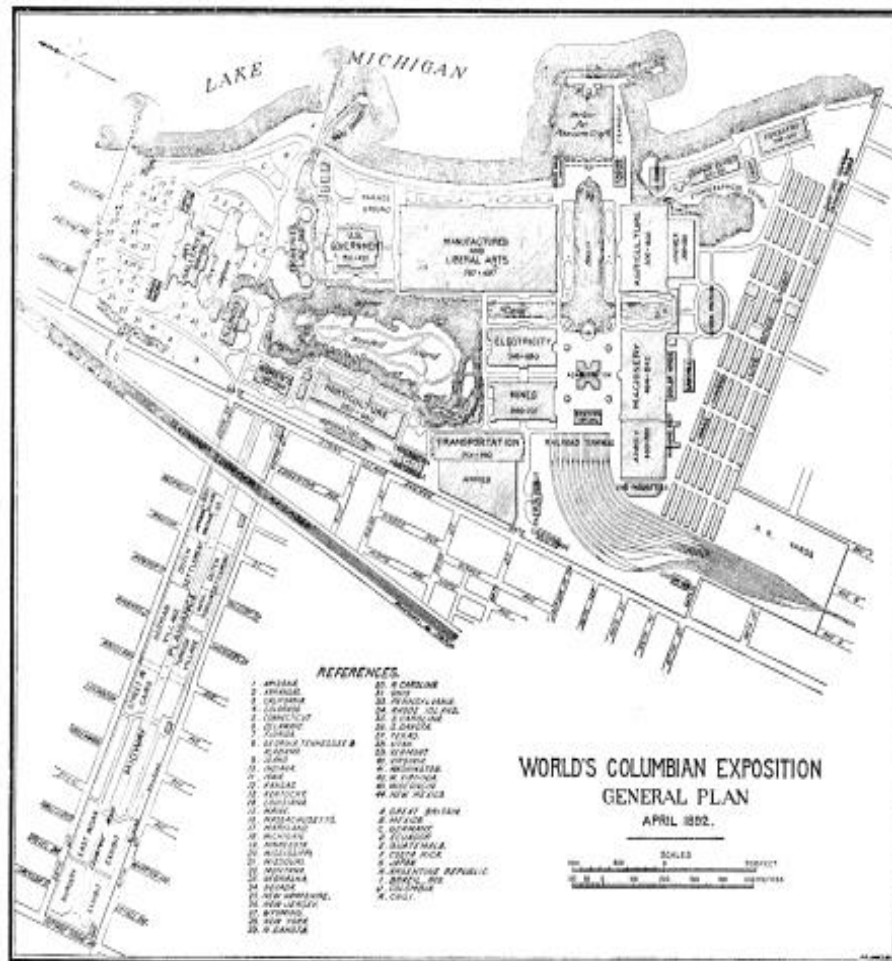
DRAWN BY A. CASTAIGNE.

A CONTRAST OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE—EARLY MORNING.

Figure 4.3. André Castaigne *A Contrast of American Architecture - Early Morning*. Illustration to Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, May, 1893, 7.







## ARCHITECTURE AT THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION.—II.



GROUP REPRESENTING THE FOUR CONTINENTS SUPPORTING THE GLOBE AND CROWNING THE CORNER PAVILIONS OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.

GROUP REPRESENTING THE FOUR CONTINENTS SUPPORTING THE GLOBE AND CROWNING THE CORNER PAVILIONS OF AGRICULTURAL BUILDING.

Without such appreciation, the work of the architect, although it may be eloquent and imposing enough to give even

to the most careless observers a certain indefinite impression of order, beauty, or grandeur, fails to convey to them the most essential part of the ideas which he has in mind to set forth. He needs this popular appreciation, not only as an encouragement, but as a corrective, and that he may bring himself into fuller and more perfect sympathy with the civilization which it is his duty to express.

Architecture and music alike have, in their highest developments, clearly defined qualities, which convey a delight of meaning to the capable eye or ear, but which, to the untrained mind, are nothing but inarticulate harmonies of form or sound.

In attempting, in the previous paper, to follow in outline the principles which controlled the designs of the Administration and Machinery buildings, it became evident that, before proceeding with the other buildings, it would be well to state, once for all, that in monumental

to the most careless observers a certain indefinite impression of order, beauty, or grandeur, fails to convey to them the most essential part of the ideas which he has in mind to set forth. He needs this popular appreciation, not only as an encouragement, but as a corrective, and that he may bring himself into fuller and more perfect sympathy with the civilization which it is his duty to express.

Figure 4.6. Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture at the Columbian Exposition, - II" *Century Magazine*, July, 1892, 385.



SPEECHLESS.



AN UNFRAMED PICTURE.



JUST FROM THE RANCH.



HARD TO PLEASE.

Figure 4.7. André Castaigne, *Speechless*, *An Unframed Picture*, *Just From The Ranch*, *Hard to Please*, illustrations to Gustav Kobbé, "Sights At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, September, 1893, 644, 645, 651, 652.





FROM THE TOP OF THE ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, LOOKING TOWARD MACHINERY AND AGRICULTURAL HALLS.

Figure 4.8. André Castaigne, *From The Top Of The Administration Building, Looking Toward Machinery And Agricultural Halls*, illustration to Gustav Kobbé, "Sights At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, September, 1893, 646.



THE TOP OF THE WOMAN'S BUILDING.

ENGRAVED BY H. HUBER.

Figure 4.9. André Castaigne, *The Top Of The Woman's Building*, illustration to Gustav Kobbé, "Sights At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, September, 1893, 648.

The writing about the fine art at the fair that was published in *Century Magazine* was strangely slow to appear. Van Rensselaer made

no real mention of it, although this was most likely because the hanging of the exhibition had still not been completed by the time she came to write her article in advance of the official opening to the public. In the same issue as Van Rensselaer's "At The Fair", William Lewis Fraser wrote a piece on the mural paintings, repeating many of the views previously discussed regarding the fair's usefulness as a model for prospective artists and architects and a stimulus to public appreciation for the arts. Fraser was also particularly enthused by the sense of allyship and cooperation amongst artists and architects from disparate parts of the nation that the mural decorations represented, probably owing to his position as art manager at *Century Magazine*, coordinating the creativity of artists and artisans. This example of artistic fraternity was however also an embodiment of the values espoused by the American Arts and Crafts Movement, a development of the Aesthetic Movement that received a significant boost in the wake of the Columbian Exposition's demonstration of the possibilities produced by an artistic community working cooperatively. This was a utopic vision of an American society dedicated to beauty above all things.

The art critic Royal Cortissoz wrote an interesting piece on the impressions of light and color in combination with the architecture at the fair's Court of Honor for the July 1893 issue. This article is striking in its description of the subject in formalistic terms that would have been quite opaque to readers who were not au fait with modern developments in art criticism. This is further evidence of the magazine's perspective becoming more exclusively directed towards a cultural elite with the education and experience required to comfortably understand Cortissoz's discussion on the "exquisite adaptation" of architectural classicism to a modern scene through the judicious use of "color and lightness", with reference to Bernini's colonnade at St Peter's in Vatican City and the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Royal Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1893, 333-334.

The most detailed discussion on the art displays at the Fine Arts Building appeared belatedly a year later in the July 1894 issue. The article was written by John C. Van Dyke, an art history professor at Rutgers College. Gilder had met with Van Dyke the summer previous whilst visiting the fair. The overlooking of Van Rensselaer may appear odd given the closeness of her friendship with the Gilders, but this may be explained by personal circumstances, as her only son, Gris, had been suffering with ill health with her in Colorado and eventually died in April 1894. Charles de Kay would also have been a seemingly obvious choice for such an article, given that he was the art critic at the *New York Times* and had written articles for *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine* many times previously. From the correspondence between Gilder and Van Dyke it appears that the latter was approached by Gilder to write the piece. Van Dyke had written one article for *Century* previously, on a Lotto portrait of Christopher Columbus, published in the October 1892 issue. Other than this his only previous experience of writing for a popular magazine was an article on the Art Students League of New York for *Harper's Monthly*, published in October 1891. It is probable therefore that his status suited him better for the task in the eyes of the magazine's editors, who would appreciate an "objective" academic appraisal of a national event over that of a New York critic, closely associated with particular factions within the New England art world.

The correspondence between Van Dyke and Gilder reveals that the author had initially offered "three or four papers without illustrations" to provide a precis of all the national contributions to the fair with the purpose of "showing modern tendencies and the current direction of painting". Van Dyke characterized Gilder's populist requirements in terms of tone: "I take it you do not care for the too critical or the too technical. What you wish is something "interesting" to all."<sup>496</sup> A letter from the following month shows that Gilder had curbed Van Dyke's

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<sup>496</sup> John C. Van Dyke to Richard Watson Gilder, July 31, 1893. *Century Magazine Letters 1870-1918*, microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C.

ambition for the project my commissioning only a “short article on painting at the fair”.<sup>497</sup>

Van Dyke returned the edited draft of this paper with a letter on October 9, 1893. The time elapsed between this date and its eventual publishing nine months later can be partly explained by routine delays caused by the acquisition and commissioning of illustrations required to accompany the piece. However, this does not satisfactorily account for such a long delay. It appears probable therefore that it ceased being a priority once the fair had closed, and the dust settled on the initial critical appraisals of the fair’s successes and failures. It is possible that Van Dyke’s article was disliked by Gilder and that the eventual publishing of it was a professional courtesy, but this is unlikely given that Van Dyke subsequently became a regular contributor to *Century Magazine*, including writing the notes which accompanied Timothy Cole’s series of twelve engravings after Old English Masters which ran between June 1897 and February 1900. Another possibility is that Gilder, like many other informed visitors to the Fine Arts building at Chicago, was left cold by the overall display because of a perceived lack of the newest and most interesting art from the European nations.

The letter from Van Dyke dated October 9, 1893 shows that Gilder had asked him to cut considerable portions and soften his critical tone.<sup>498</sup> The final article reads as a contemplation on the current state of art more generally, with critique of individual artists and works provided in brief terms as an afterthought at the end of the piece. Van Dyke subscribed to a conventional Hegelian interpretation of historical change; that the spirit of art had flowed from one nation to another through time and that the best art was that which most comprehensively reflected its “time, a clime, and a people.”<sup>499</sup> Whilst accepting of the superior standards of

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<sup>497</sup> John C. Van Dyke to Richard Watson Gilder, August 17, 1893. *Century Magazine Letters 1870-1918*, microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C..

<sup>498</sup> “I cannot think the original statements were too strong for truth, but you are probably right in thinking as much effect could be had by milder statements.” John C. Van Dyke to Richard Watson Gilder, October 9, 1893. *Century Magazine Letters 1870-1918*, microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C..

<sup>499</sup> John C. Van Dyke, “Painting At The Fair,” *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 439, 446.

artistic education available in Paris, Van Dyke was concerned that American art should retain a national character, and that the benefits of study abroad were counterbalanced by the risk of artists falling into the trap of mimicking foreign painters' styles and subjects, and therefore having nothing relevant to say regarding their own time and place. Although Van Dyke did not rate the overall exhibition very highly, complaining of unevenness in quality amongst the entries of other nations, his article is an interesting representation of a view point that had been espoused by critics since the late 1860s, when a marked increase in the number of American artists training in Europe occurred.<sup>500</sup> These were the same concerns that William Crary Brownell had raised in his articles for *Century* on the "Younger Painters of America" in 1880, discussed in the first chapter, and had become, at least in the mind of one reviewer for the *New York Daily Tribune*, hackneyed by 1893.<sup>501</sup>

Van Dyke offered equivocal judgement of contemporary French art and the impact of Paris on the art of other nations, chief amongst them America. Paris was:

at once the best and the worst art-center in the world, a crucible where all elements mix, all become alloyed, and yet all average up a respectable grade of amalgam. That which keeps it from hopeless debasement is the art genius of the French people <sup>502</sup>

Here Van Dyke echoed the emphasis placed on the artistic qualities of the people which had been a consistent concern for Gilder and *Century Magazine*. The public had an important role to play by recognizing good art from bad; that was to say art that had something to say about its time and nation, as opposed to art which merely parroted others' work. Academic narratives identify cosmopolitanism as a key feature of the modernist culture from the 1890s,<sup>503</sup> but the notion of a national school

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<sup>500</sup> Ibid., 439.

<sup>501</sup> "Art at the World's Fair. III.," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1893, 5.

<sup>502</sup> John C. Van Dyke, "Painting At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 440.

<sup>503</sup> For example see Peter Kalliney, *Modernism In A Global Context* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 59-88.

remained a key concept for Van Dyke, who expressed cynicism with regards to cosmopolitan artists.

The chief value of a nation's art, aside from its being good art, lies in its nationality, its peculiar point of view, its representation of a time, a clime, and a people. We shall never have any great art in America unless it is done in our own way and is distinctly American. We shall never be accounted great because of our doing something like some other people, nor by fashioning that which is best in others into an eclectic cosmopolitanism.<sup>504</sup>

Whistler and Sargent were both “brilliant under any circumstances”, but they could not be “claimed” by America “any more than London or Paris.”<sup>505</sup> Van Dyke’s coolness with regards to Whistler and Sargent was unusual amongst critics of the fine art display, and this may be explained by his being an art historian as opposed to a critic. The critical write ups of the fair in the *New York Times* and *Daily Tribune*, as well as the pieces on the fair written by Van Rensselaer and Cortissoz for *Century* previously mentioned, were sure to mention the display of works at previous exhibitions in Europe and the fair of 1889 in Paris.<sup>506</sup> They emphasized art’s internationalism, and of course promoted their own social status when referring to having seen works of art previously in Berlin, Paris or London. Van Dyke, with art history’s propensity for taxonomy, found difficulty with contextualizing the art of international artistic figures such as Sargent and Whistler.

His skepticism over the artistic power of Paris was however shared by many of the New York newspaper critics of the fair. A note at the end of Van Dyke’s letter to Gilder on his article stated that “It is the art fashion nowadays to attribute everything to Paris, but it is not always the truth.”<sup>507</sup> Whilst most acknowledged that France had put on a display with a high average quality in 1893, they were united in their assessment

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<sup>504</sup> John C. Van Dyke, “Painting At The Fair,” *Century Magazine*, July 1894, 446.

<sup>505</sup> Ibid.

<sup>506</sup> For example: “Art at the World’s Fair. III.,” *New York Daily Tribune*, June 19, 1893, 5. “Art Notes,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1893, 4.

<sup>507</sup> John C. Van Dyke to Richard Watson Gilder, October 9, 1893. *Century Magazine Letters 1870-1918*, microfilm, Archives of American Art, Washington D.C..

that the most exciting and original works were missing, and that the American selection more than held its own against the Salon painting which was yesterday's news. The *New York Times* quoted the American painter Edmund Tarbell stating candidly that,

On the whole, the only thing that makes you feel any respect for the French is the collection of French pictures owned in America got together by Miss Hallowell, which includes the finest picture in Chicago to-day – a painting of a rehearsal of ballet girls by Degas.<sup>508</sup>

The writer in the *New York Daily Tribune* saw the displays of Britain and France as equally underwhelming in their conservatism.

As England has repeated a Royal Academy in Chicago, so has France repeated in the same place a Salon of the Champs Elysees. That, as must be everywhere known by this time, is a very different thing from a Salon of the Champs-de-Mars.<sup>509</sup>

Reviewers agreed that the American and Scandinavian displays showed the most promise, and this was echoed by Van Dyke in *Century*. The American artists that he chose to single out for specific praise on the basis of their unabashed “Americanness” were Winslow Homer and George Inness (fig. 4.10).<sup>510</sup> Whilst Gilder and *Century Magazine* shared a deep appreciation for both of these artists, Van Dyke's singling out of two artists trained in America and regularly identified as displaying the strongest contemporary national characteristics in their art, is a clear indication that he held misgivings over the works of some of the “younger painters of America” who had been part of Gilder's circle since the 1870s. What was not said is often as important as what was. Van Dyke also failed to mention the most popular of the American works at the fair, Thomas Hovenden's *Breaking Home Ties* (fig. 4.11). He was joined in this snubbing by the majority of art critics who chose not to write about it despite its overwhelming success with the general public. This provides evidence of *Century Magazine's* aloofness from the artistic tastes and

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<sup>508</sup> “Art Notes,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1893, 4.

<sup>509</sup> “Art at the World's Fair. I.,” *New York Daily Tribune*, June 11, 1893, 14.

<sup>510</sup> John C. Van Dyke, “Painting At The Fair,” *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 446.

values of the general public by the 1890s; a separation that would continue to grow into the twentieth century. Hovenden's painting was popular because of its national and narrative quality. Sarah Burns has stated that popular aesthetics privileged story, rooted in place, over formal qualities, the privileging of which was associated with cosmopolitanism and the development of a new, pan-international artistic language for criticism.<sup>511</sup> This assessment largely holds true in the case of *Century Magazine's* coverage of the fine arts at the fair, but Van Dyke's article does provide a more nuanced perspective. Cosmopolitan aesthetics were not embraced by Van Dyke, who maintained an appreciation for national characteristics. However, he sought these principally in formal qualities; the danger of Parisian training, according to Van Dyke, was that it infected American artists' individual style and turned them into imitators. Van Dyke's perspective can be explained by him being an academic rather than a critic; the interesting question therefore is why did *Century* associate themselves with an art historian? The answer to this lies in Gilder's hope that the fair would prove to be a historic event, and that the knowledge of historic European art and the kudos of an academic writer was what was required to best contextualize the displays of fine art. The magazine was no longer trying to sell the new American art to an unfamiliar or skeptical public; the need no longer existed. All that was left was for this art to enter into the historical narratives of American culture.

The illustrations that accompanied Van Dyke's article were a strange, theme-less collection, perhaps in some way indicative of the display itself. Homer's *Eight Bells* (fig. 4.10) was joined by engravings after paintings from the Swedish, Dutch and Norwegian displays (figs. 4.12 – 4.14), which had impressed Van Dyke because of their national qualities. Yet the images of foxes and a grieving widower did not speak to artistic modernity. It appears that for Van Dyke and *Century*, narrative art was fine as long as it was foreign.

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<sup>511</sup> Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist*, 303.



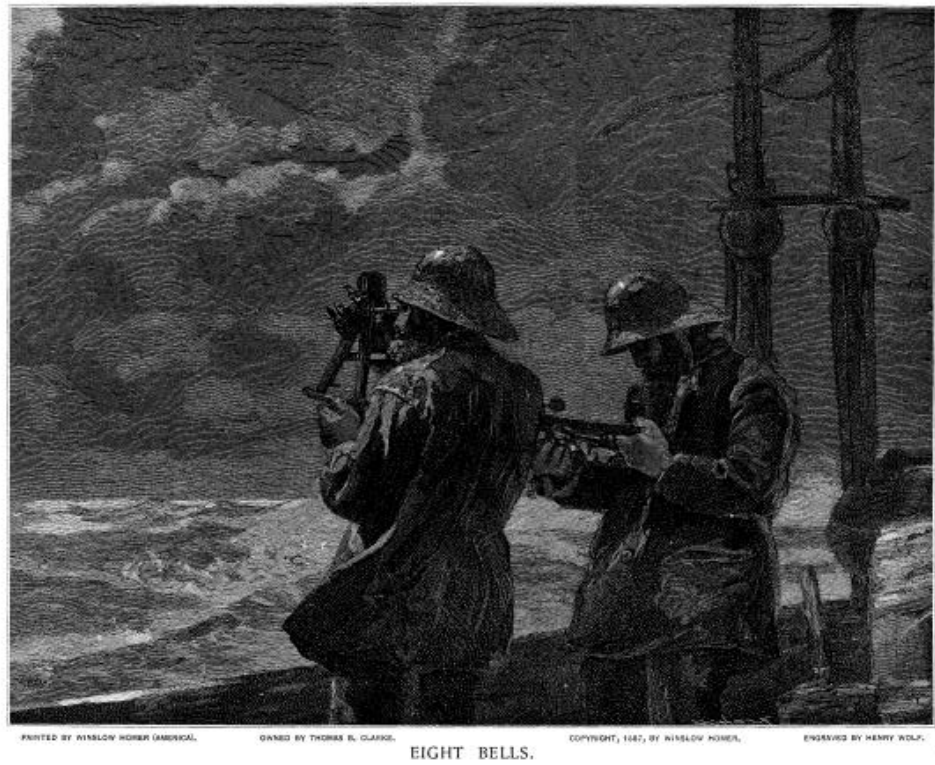


Figure 4.10. Winslow Homer, *Eight Bells*, engraving by Henry Wolf illustrating John C. Van Dyke, "Painting At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 445.

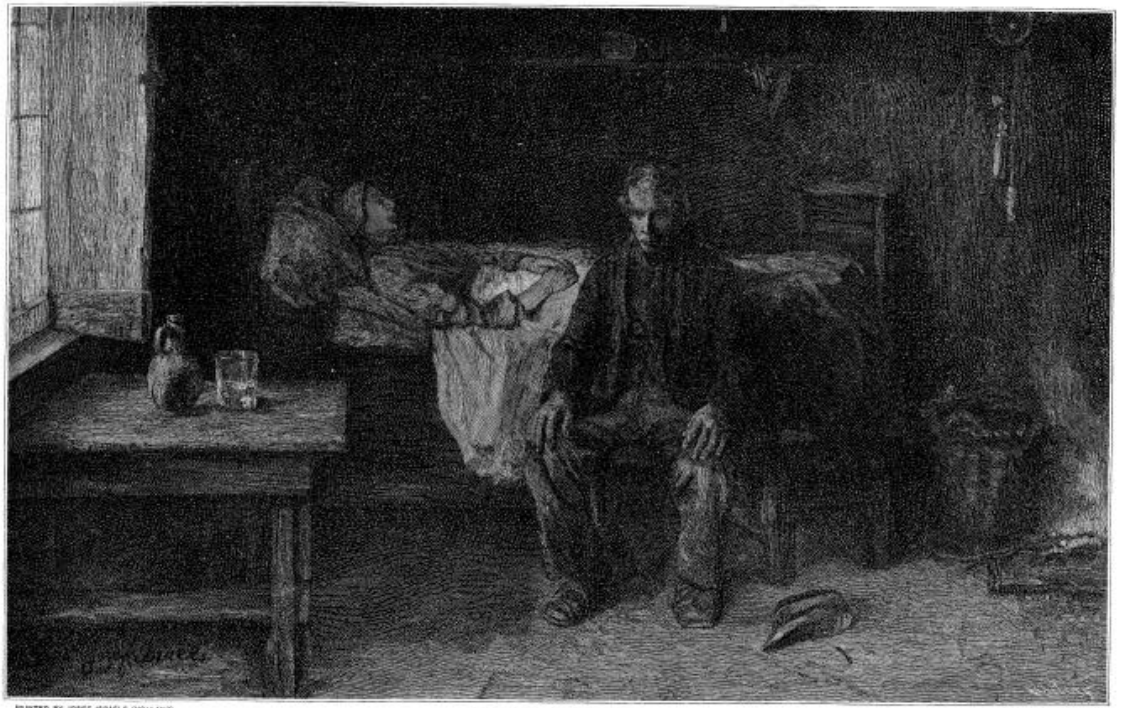


Figure 4.11. Thomas Hovenden, *Breaking Home Ties*, 1890. Oil on canvas, 132 x 184 cm, Philadelphia Museum Of Art.



Figure 4.12. Bruno Liljefors, *Foxes*, engraving by W. Miller illustrating John C. Van Dyke, "Painting At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 441.





PRINTED BY JOSEF ISRAELS (HOLLAND).

ALONE IN THE WORLD.

ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

Figure 4.13. Josef Israels, *Alone In The World*, engraving by Henry Wolf illustrating John C. Van Dyke, "Painting At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 443.

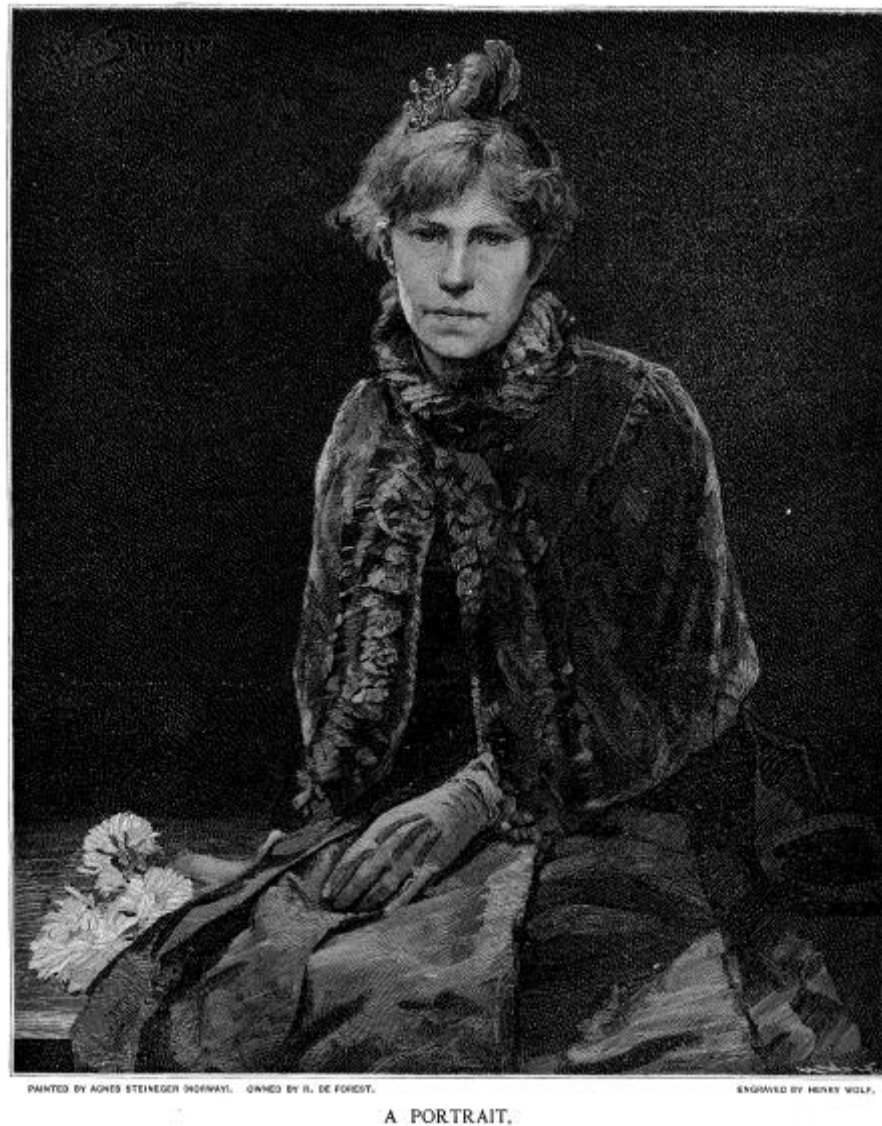


Figure 4.14. Agnes Steineger, *A Portrait*, engraving by Henry Wolf illustrating John C. Van Dyke, "Painting At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, July, 1894, 447.

Van Dyke's judgment on the art at the World's Columbian Exhibition was anticlimactic. The article gives the impression of a project that was curtailed part way through, and the correspondence between Gilder and Van Dyke indicates that the former was strangely unenthusiastic about it, despite the organization and composition of the display being a vindication of his personal tastes. The apparent lack of seriousness with which the event was taken by key European nations may account for this. It was also the case that Ives and Kurtz had purposefully favored works that were popular with critics and had exhibition pedigrees, and so there was little on show from America, France or Britain that Gilder had not seen already. A reviewer for the

*New York Daily Tribune* expressed the unimpressed attitude of many East Coast aesthetes:

Even European nations show nothing this year which is at all likely to give this country an impetus in the cultivation of artistic tastes such as we witnessed in the years following the Centennial.<sup>512</sup>

*Century Magazine* had also been publishing appraisals of many of the paintings that made up the American display of 1893 as part of their American Artists Series, and so readers were already familiar with many of the most noteworthy paintings at the fair, such as Alice D. Kellogg's *The Mother*, (fig. 4.15). The magazine's approach to covering the fair was mirrored by periodicals of similar quality. *Scribner's Magazine* also focused on the impression of the fair as an aesthetic experience and as an example for architecture, town planning and beautification, and chose to not focus on the display of fine art as much as one might expect.<sup>513</sup>

The 1893 World's Columbian Exposition should be viewed as the high point of the American Aesthetic movement, of which Gilder and his circle were important figures. The coverage provided to the fair in *Century* provides important evidence of the magazine's support and interest interdisciplinary artistic cooperation, town planning, landscape gardening, and architecture derived from European classicism. The coverage of the fine art displays is perhaps surprising in its muted enthusiasm, given that the display itself was heavily populated by the art that Gilder and his associates had championed for more than a decade, and that the American art display was, by general critical consensus, the equal if not the superior of France. But the aloofness of the critiques of fine art provides evidence that the magazine already saw itself in advance of national interests, and was looking globally, with regards to art during this period. The enthusiasm that Gilder had for what the fair

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<sup>512</sup> "Notes of the Fair," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 18, 1893, 16.

<sup>513</sup> Will H. Low, "The Art Of The White City," *Scribner's Magazine*, October, 1893, 504-512. See also Candace Wheeler, "A Dream City," *Harpers Monthly*, May, 1893, 830-845.

represented in his mind is confirmed by the two poems he wrote to mark the fair's opening and closing, titled "The White City" and "The Vanishing City" respectively (figs. 4.16 and 4.17). "The White City" repeats Van Dyke's cultro-historical explanation of art flowing from its birth in Athens, ever westwards, via Rome and the rest of Europe, to its current location at Chicago in 1893, where Greece flowered once more.<sup>514</sup> "The Vanishing City" underlined Gilder's aspiration that the fair's domes and "white imperial colonnade" would "endue The mind with beauty that shall never fade".<sup>515</sup> The sincerity of Gilder's romantic optimism is clear and an important consistent aspect of his character which sustained itself into his mature years. Yet in spite of this, the coverage is also indicative of a growing separation between conceptions of a genuinely national readership and the authors, editors and actual readers of *Century Magazine*. The social and political unrest caused by the economic troubles of the period in which the fair took place were erased from the record in *Century*, and the presence of the Midway Plaisance, with over a mile's worth of popular entertainment was dismissed as the place where the "most frivolous may disport themselves well".<sup>516</sup> The magazine was steadily becoming a limited concern that spoke most strongly to a generation of East Coast cultural elites that reached their generational peak in terms of cultural influence in the 1890s.

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<sup>514</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "The White City," *Century Magazine*, May, 1893, 22.

<sup>515</sup> Richard Watson Gilder, "The Vanishing City," *Century Magazine*, October, 1893, 868.

<sup>516</sup> Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, "At The Fair," *Century Magazine*, May, 1893, 10.



ENGRAVED BY HENRY WOLF.

SEE "OPEN LETTERS."

THE MOTHER, PAINTED BY ALICE D. KELLOGG.

Figure 4.15. Alice D. Kellogg, *The Mother*, engraving by Henry Wolf for *Century Magazine*, January, 1893, 467/ Part of the "American Artists Series".





"THE WHITE CITY."<sup>1</sup>

I.

GREECE was; Greece is no more.  
 Temple and town  
 Have crumbled down;  
 Time is the fire that hath consumed them all.  
 Statue and wall  
 In ruin strew the universal floor.

II.

Greece lives, but Greece no more!  
 Its ashes breed  
 The undying seed  
 Blown westward till, in Rome's imperial towers,  
 Athens reflowers;  
 Still westward — lo, a veiled and virgin shore!

III.

Say not, "Greece is no more."  
 Through the clear morn  
 On light winds borne  
 Her white-winged soul sinks on the New World's breast.  
 Ah! happy West —  
 Greece flowers anew, and all her temples soar!

IV.

One bright hour, then no more  
 Shall to the skies  
 These columns rise.  
 But though art's flower shall fade, again the seed  
 Onward shall speed,  
 Quickening the land from lake to ocean's roar.

V.

Art lives, though Greece may never  
 From the ancient mold  
 As once of old  
 Exhale to heaven the inimitable bloom;  
 Yet from that tomb  
 Beauty walks forth to light the world forever.

February 11, 1893.

*R. W. Gilder.*

<sup>1</sup> The Columbian Fair Buildings at Chicago have thus been named by Mr. H. C. Bunner.



Figure 4.16. Richard Watson Gilder, "The White City," *Century Magazine*, May, 1893, 22.





## THE VANISHING CITY.

### I.

ENRaptured memory, and all ye powers of being,  
 To new life waken! Stamp the vision clear  
 On the soul's inmost substance. O let seeing  
 Be more than seeing; let the entranced ear  
 Take deep these surging sounds, inweaved with light  
 Of unimagined radiance; let the intense  
 Illumined loveliness that thrills the night  
 Strike in the human heart some deeper sense!  
 So shall these domes that meet heaven's curv'd blue,  
 And yon long, white imperial colonnade,  
 And many-columned peristyle endure  
 The mind with beauty that shall never fade:  
 Though all too soon to dark oblivion wending,—  
 Reared in one happy hour to know as swift an ending.

### II.

Thou shalt of all the cities of the world  
 Famed for their grandeur, ever more endure  
 Imperishably and all alone imperled  
 In the world's living thought, the one most sure  
 Of love undying and of endless praise  
 For beauty only,—chief of all thy kind;  
 Immortal, even because of thy brief days;  
 Thou cloud-built, fairy city of the mind!  
 Here man doth pluck from the full tree of life  
 The latest, lordliest flower of earthly art;  
 This doth he breathe, while resting from his strife,  
 This presses he against his weary heart,  
 Then, waking from his dream within a dream,  
 He flings the faded flower on Time's down-rushing stream.

868

### III.

O never as here in the eternal years  
 Hath burst to bloom man's free and soaring spirit,  
 Joyous, untrammelled, all untouched by tears  
 And the dark weight of woe it doth inherit.  
 Never so swift the mind's imaginings  
 Caught sculptured form, and color. Never before—  
 Save where the soul beats unembodied wings  
 'Gainst viewless skies—was such enchanted shore  
 Jeweled with ivory palaces like these:  
 By day a miracle, a dream by night;  
 Yet real as beauty is, and as the seas  
 Whose waves glance back keen lines of glittering light  
 When million lamps, and coronets of fire,  
 And fountains as of flame to the bright stars aspire.

### IV.

Glide, magic boat, from out the green lagoon,  
 'Neath the dark bridge, into this smiting glow  
 And unthought glory. Even the glistening moon  
 Hangs in the nearer splendor.—Let not go  
 The scene, my soul, till ever 't is thine own!  
 This is Art's citadel and crown. How still  
 The innumerable multitudes from every zone,  
 That watch and listen; while each eye doth fill  
 With joyous tears unwept. Now solemn strains  
 Of brazen music give the waiting soul  
 Voice and a sigh,—it other speech disdains,  
 Here where the visual sense faints to its goal!  
 Ah, silent multitudes, ye are a part  
 Of the wise architect's supreme and glorious art!

### V.

O joy almost too high for saddened mortal!  
 O ecstasy envisioned! Thou shouldst be  
 Lasting as thou art lovely; as immortal  
 As through all time the matchless thought of thee!  
 Yet would we miss then the sweet piercing pain  
 Of thy inconstancy! Could we but banish  
 This haunting pang, ah, then thou wouldst not reign  
 One with the golden sunset that doth vanish  
 Through myriad lingering tints down melting skies;  
 Nor the pale mystery of the new-world flower  
 That blooms once only, then forever dies—  
 Pouring a century's wealth on one dear hour.  
 Then vanish, City of Dream, and be no more;  
 Soon shall this fair Earth's self be lost on the unknown shore.

THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1893.

R. W. Gilder.

Figure 4.17. Richard Watson Gilder, "The Vanishing City," *Century Magazine*, October, 1893, 868-869.

The following twenty years between 1893 and 1913, when this study concludes, was as tumultuous a period as any in American history, characterized by extremes and instability as different visions of the future came into increasingly regular conflict.<sup>517</sup> In the art world this manifested itself in the challenges to authority represented by groups of artists such as “The Ten” (1898), a group of American Impressionists disgruntled by their treatment by the Society of American Artists, and “The Eight” (1908), a group of “Ashcan” realist artists who depicted subjects and themes which highlighted the political and social troubles of the time. It is tempting to cast figures like Gilder and his magazine as part of an establishment that could not comprehend these challenges from this latest generation of bohemian avant-garde artists, and indeed there is a fair amount of truth to this. But the fact that a magazine such as *Century* did not enthusiastically promote the newest art does not mean that they were ignorant of it. Impressionism in America was discussed as early as 1879 in an article on Whistler by William Crary Brownell, and Impressionism as an international movement in art and music continued to receive coverage throughout the decades in the pages of the magazine, long before the establishment of “The Ten”.<sup>518</sup> Mention was also made of the art by Ashcan painters like John Sloan and Robert Henri in March 1905, three years before the exhibition of “The Eight”, and several prominent members of the Ashcan group including William Glackens, John Sloan and Everett Shinn worked as illustrators for

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<sup>517</sup> This period is often referred to as the Progressive Era by historians and is characterized by social and political activism and reform. Significant issues were caused by class and racial tensions as well as the suffragist movement. Technological innovation was expanding the horizons of nations and their people. A new world order was establishing itself politically, whilst businessmen and corporations pursued global visions. On the level of the individual, society was increasingly centered around the metropolis. Entertainment and culture as well as commerce were becoming inter-continental. The reasons for the volatility of this period are numerous and complex and are discussed in considerable detail in many significant histories including *The Age of Reform* by Richard Hofstadter (1955), *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870–1920* by Michael McGerr (2003) and *Rebirth of a Nation: The Remaking of Modern America, 1877–1920* by T. J. Jackson Lears (2009).

<sup>518</sup> Most notably in an article on Claude Monet who was considered the movement’s thought leader (September 1892).

popular magazines, complicating their relationship with this part of the cultural establishment (figs. 4.18 - 4.20). The magazine is still a valuable source for art historians interested in the artistic tastes and attitudes of an influential subsection of American society in the 1890s and 1900s, and their contributions to the cultural life of America during these decades should not be dismissed by scholars.

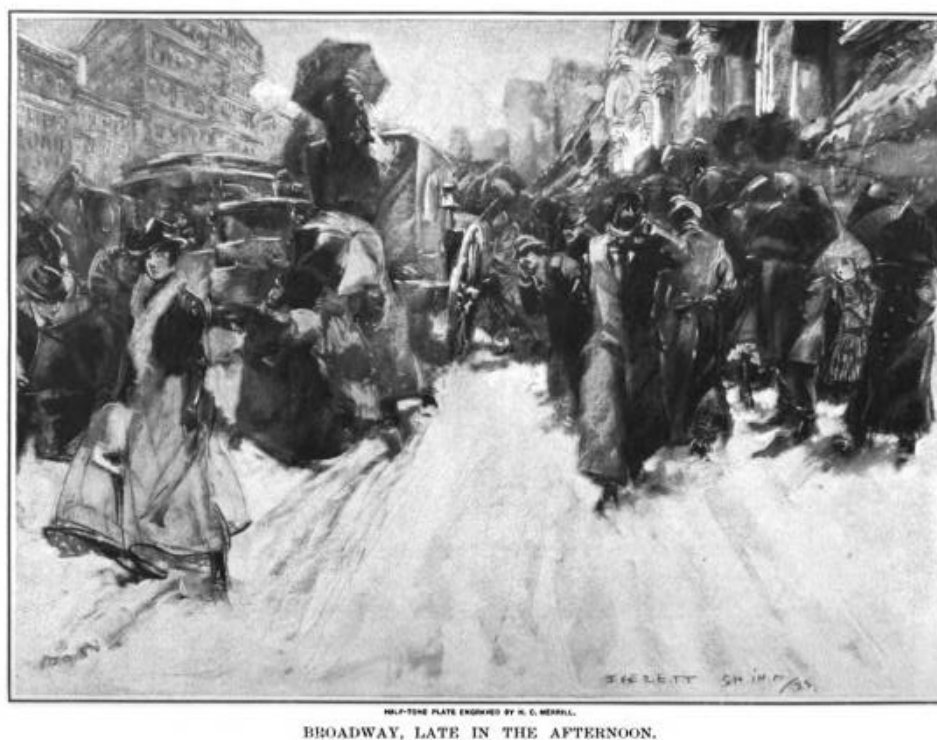


Figure 4.18. Everett Shinn, *Broadway, Late In The Afternoon*, illustration to “Four Midwinter Scenes in New York From Pastels by Everett Shinn,” *Century Magazine*, February, 1901, 522.

# MULLIGAN AND CASPAR

BY FREDERICK WALWORTH BROWN

WITH PICTURES BY JOHN SLOAN



HEY were about the most haphazard pair that ever consorted together since Noah's wonderful collection. Mulligan was Irish, six feet three long, with hair like a daub of red paint, and a face to stop the toothache. Caspar was probably Dutch, nine inches high, and built on the general lines of a snake. Mulligan was human, even if appearances were against him. Caspar was a dog, and a pup at that.

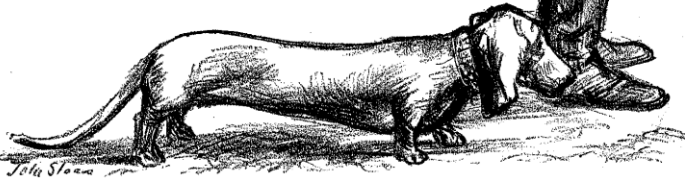
They loved one another extravagantly. Caspar slept on Mulligan's feet every night of his life, and bit him gently in the calf when he snored too loud. During the day he followed round so close to Mulligan's heels that they looked like a caricature of a centaur, or two sides of a perambulating right-angled triangle.

Mulligan, being Irish, was full of joyousness, while Caspar was never anything but solemn. I suppose this was due to his formation. He could n't cut capers as a pup should, for his legs never got more than four inches long. His legs always bothered Caspar. They were not long enough for a proper dog's, and they were n't quite short enough for a snake's. They were one of those unhappy mediums that are not good for much of anything. Caspar took seventeen steps to Mul-

ligan's one, and his tongue was hanging out at the finish.

The best part of it was that Mulligan paid four dollars for Caspar as a "sure-enough hound-dog." He had a "hound-dog" head right enough, and the fellow that sold him swore he came of blooded stock, and promised to send Mulligan his pedigree. At that time Caspar was about three inches high and a foot long, and while Mulligan thought he was a mite short on altitude, he reckoned his legs would stretch some later on; so he paid over his four dollars, and took him.

Caspar's legs did grow, but apparently his body had such a start



"THEY LOOKED LIKE . . . TWO SIDES OF A PERAMBULATING RIGHT-ANGLED TRIANGLE"

576

Figure 4.19. John Sloan, *"They Looked Like....Two Sides Od A Perambulating Right-Angled Triangle"*, Illustration to Frederick Walworth Brown, "Mulligan and Caspar," *Century Magazine*, August, 1908, 576.



ONE OF THE THOUSAND AND ONE CAFÉS ON THE BOULEVARDS OF PARIS

Figure 4.20. William Glackens, *One of the thousand and one cafés on the boulevards of Paris*, illustration for Theodore Dreiser, "Paris," *Century Magazine*, October, 1913, 913.

## Epilogue: The end of the “Gilder Age” and the Armory Show of 1913.

The International Exhibition of Modern Art staged by the Association of American Painters and Sculptors in 1913 was one of the most important exhibitions ever held in the United States. The exhibition toured New York, Chicago and Boston where audiences came to view the latest in modern art that both Europe and America had to offer. The exhibition’s historical reputation is, in a significant part, due to the contemporary press coverage of the event. Reviewers expressed their outrage at the “incomprehensibly” modern works of the Futurists and Cubists when the display was first opened to the public at the New York Sixty-Ninth Regiment Armory building, which led to the exhibition becoming known colloquially as “The Armory Show”. The extent to which Americans in 1913 were truly shocked by Cubist canvases is of course a matter of conjecture.<sup>519</sup> The amount of coverage the event received is surely

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<sup>519</sup> Michael Leja has considered the critical reaction to the Armory Show within a broader history of skeptical looking in the United States, drawing interesting connections to the publicity tactics and showmanship of P. T. Barnum. As both Mancini and Leja have noted, it was the titles of the more abstract works, most notoriously *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2*, which incited skepticism, ridicule and hostility amongst some viewers, rather than the appearance of the works themselves. Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 221-235. JoAnne Mancini, “One Term Is as Fatuous as Another’: Responses to the Armory Show Reconsidered,” *American Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (1999), 833-70. Avis Berman, “As National as the National Biscuit Company’: The Academy, the Critics, and the Armory Show,” in *Rave Reviews: American Art and its Critics, 1826 – 1925*, ed. David Dearing (London: University Press of New England, 2000), 131-144. Kimberly Orcutt, “Public Verdict’: Debating Modernism at the Armory Show,” in *Armory Show at 100: Modernism And Revolution*, eds. Marilyn Satin Kushner, Kimberly Orcutt et. Al. (New York: Giles in association with New York Historical Society, 2013), 267-274. Andrew Martinez, “A Mixed Reception for Modernism: The 1913 Armory Show at the Art Institute of Chicago,” *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies* 19, 1 Special Issue: One Hundred Years at the Art Institute: A Centennial Celebration (1993): 30-57 and 102-105. Dennis Raverty, “Marketing Modernism: Promotional Strategy in the Armory Show,” *Prospects* 27 (October 2002): 359-374. Sarah Burns, “Cubist Comedy and Futurist Follies: The Visual Culture of the Armory Show,” in *Armory Show at 100: modernism and revolution*, ed. Marilyn Satin Kushner and Kimberly Orcutt (New York: New York Historical Society, 2013), 345-359.



indicative that it was recognized as a significant moment in American art and the cultural history of New York by contemporaries, though some of the reviews, headlines and anecdotes of people fainting in front of canvases were hyperbole. Similarly, the manner in which the art on display impacted the course of American art history, and possibly Modern art more broadly, is a subject for debate that requires far more space than I have available in the conclusion of this thesis.<sup>520</sup> However, I would like to discuss the Armory Show in relation to its reception in *Century Magazine* because it concludes a history of the magazine as a force within American art, and also because it represents a point of view that is interesting to consider for historians of this period.

The magazine's perspective was that of an institution within the cultural establishment that had once seen itself as part of the revolutionary cause for American art. In the 1870s Gilder and his magazine were literally in the room when the Society of American Artists was born. He had lived to see his circle of friends and colleagues rise to the summit of cultural influence and popularity, even whilst his magazine started to decline in readership due to increased competition.

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<sup>520</sup> Milton W. Brown's *The Story of the Armory Show*, which was published for the fiftieth anniversary in 1963, at the height of American Modernism, was for many years the sole full-length account of the show and is partly responsible for establishing the narrative that it introduced Modern art to America and caused a cultural revolution. JoAnne Mancini has argued that art historical analysis has been colored by a "nostalgia" for the spirit of political and social revolution embodied by aspects of the event. JoAnne Mancini, *Pre-modernism: art-world change and American culture from the Civil War to the Armory Show* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 135. More recently there have been efforts to reconsider the show and highlight previously neglected aspects. The acquisition of the Walter Pach Papers in 1988 and the documentary material donated by Francis M. Naumann in 2011 to the Archives of American Art have proved generative to recent scholarship. JoAnne Mancini's scholarship on the Armory Show has been particularly helpful to scholars interested in questioning the received wisdom about the exhibition. The recent passing of the centenary in 2013 has provided timely opportunity for further reappraisals of the historical significance and legacy. Full length studies published to mark the centenary include *Walter Pach (1883-1958): The Armory Show and the Untold Story of Modern Art in America* (Laurette E. McCarthy, 2011), *The Armory Show at 100: Modernism and Revolution* (Marilyn S. Kushner, Kimberly Orcutt and Casey Nelson Blake, 2013) and, *The Modern Art Invasion: Picasso, Duchamp, and the 1913 Armory Show that Scandalized America* (Elizabeth Lunday, 2013). There was also the publication of a special issue of *The Archives of American Art Journal*, "The Armory Show at 100" (Fall, 2012).

The Gilded Age aestheticism that championed beauty above all things, and had characterized Gilder's life and work as editor of *Century Magazine*, had largely given way to new "Modern" impulses by the first decade of twentieth century.<sup>521</sup> The new art was diverse in its origins and approaches, but tended to offer striking social critique, attract publicity through purposefully controversial subjects and was increasingly conceptual and abstract or expressive in style. The editors were generally open-minded, and so the magazine's reaction to challenging art was rarely one of disgust or moral outrage. But Gilder did not sway with the breeze either. His artistic tastes were part of a broader personal philosophy indebted initially to Romanticism and then Aestheticism, which struggled to accommodate art that was purposefully un-aesthetic or cast light on the uglier faces of reality. The magazine that he edited had continued to uphold his world view and artistic tastes, publishing series such as "'The Century's' Series of American Artists," "Examples of American Portraiture" and Timothy Cole's engravings after "French Masters". The contemporary artists whose works were reproduced in these series (often in color), tended to be close associates whose works the magazine could gain ready access to, such as William Merritt Chase, Cecelia Beaux, Violet Oakley, John Singer Sargent and John White Alexander (figs. 5.1-5.4). Topics of city planning and aesthetic improvements to the urban environment continued to be popular, particularly articles written by the Bostonian poet and town planner, Sylvester Baxter.<sup>522</sup> The magazine also continued to support the careers of renowned illustrators such as Anna Whelan Betts, Frederic Remington and Maxfield Parrish, part of the so-called "Golden Age" of American illustration during the first decade of the twentieth century. The idealistic visions of the American West and Victorian interiors that these

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<sup>521</sup> I acknowledge the contested and sometimes problematic nature of the term "Modern". Here I mean it to be understood in the conventional art historical and museological sense: early twentieth century art movements which were considered avant-garde.

<sup>522</sup> For example: Daniel H. Burnham, "White City and Capital City," (February 1902), Sylvester Baxter, "The Beautifying of Village and Town," (April 1902), Sylvester Baxter, "Art in the Street," (March 1906). Baxter had fifteen articles published on topics of civic architecture and beautification between 1897 and 1908.



illustrators projected formed part of the elite bourgeois culture that new bohemian avant-garde groups like the Ashcan realists reacted against (figs. 5.5-5.7). The magazine still championed philanthropic giving to the arts, the establishment of new museums, and applied pressure to legislators for the causes of free art and better public support for artists.<sup>523</sup> *Century Magazine* continued to be a “magazine of art,” whilst assuming the role of an elder statesman within the seemingly ever-expanding field of American magazines. Gilder’s death did not change this, as he was succeeded by his close friend and deputy editor of thirty-six years, Robert Underwood Johnson, who continued his editorial policies. Surveying the contents of the issues published between 1900 and 1913 the historian can find plenty of material that provides interesting detail and texture to our understandings of this period. But what is missing is also interesting. The names of Picasso, Matisse, Gauguin, Bonnard and Van Gogh did not appear until 1913, when the magazine tried, with sincerity, to make sense of what they had seen at the Armory Show.

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<sup>523</sup> For example, “Topics Of The Time: “The Future of the Metropolitan Museum – Again,” (April 1905), “Topics Of The Time: A Luxury of the Poor: A Plea for Free Art,” (December 1905), Annie Nathan Meyer, “What American Museums are Doing for Native Art,” (October 1906), Leila Mechlin, “The Evans Collection in the National Gallery at Washington,” (December 1907), “Open Letters: President Roosevelt’s Services to Art,” (May 1909), “Topics Of The Time: An Oversight of Philanthropy,” (August 1909), “Topics Of The Time: Cynicism and the Tariff,” (September 1909), “Open Letters: A New Service of Congress to Art,” (May 1910), “Topics Of The Time: Syndicating Art for Smaller Cities,” (August 1910).

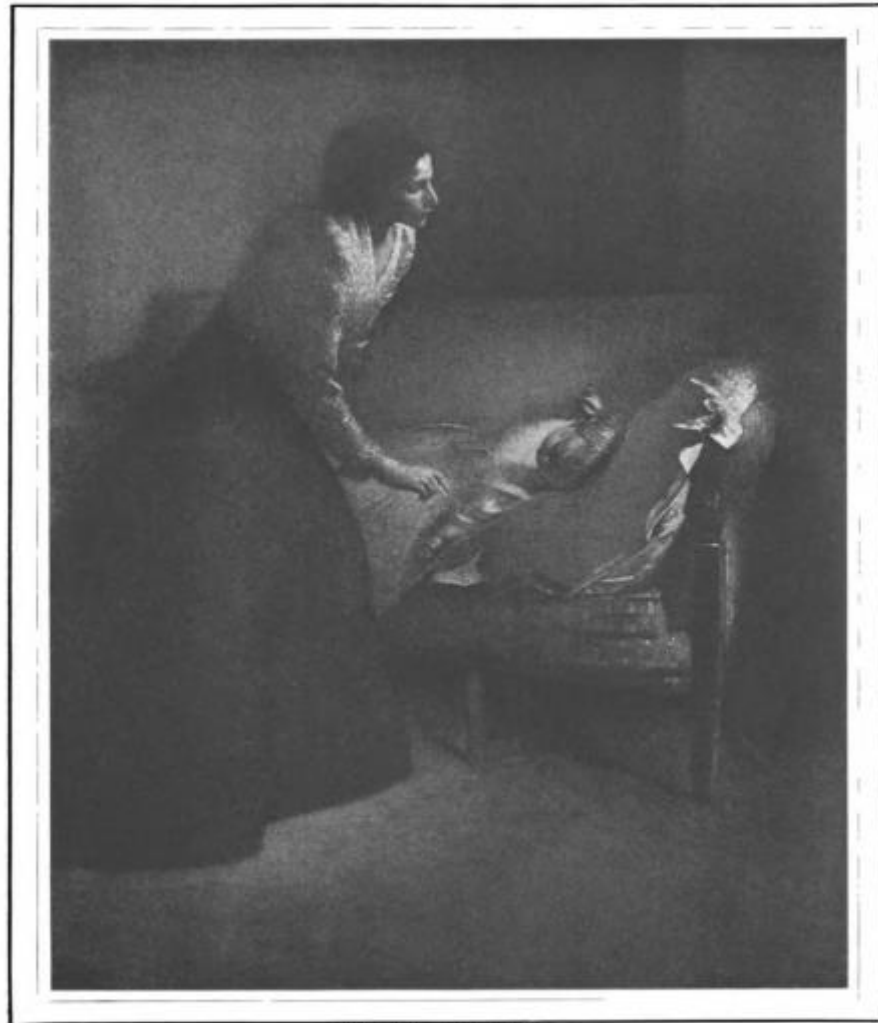


PORTRAIT OF ANNIE TRAQUAIR LANG  
FROM THE PAINTING BY WILLIAM M. CHASE  
THE CENTURY'S AMERICAN ARTISTS SERIES

Figure 5.1 William Merritt Chase, *Portrait of Annie Traquair Lang*. Color reproduction as part of "The Century's American Artists Series," *Century Magazine*, March 1913, 721.



Figure 5.2. Cecelia Beaux, *II. Mother and Daughter*, engraved reproduction as part of “Examples of American Portraiture” series, *Century Magazine*, September 1900, Frontispiece.



Half-tone plate engraved by H. Davidson

A MOTHER

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN W. ALEXANDER

THE CENTURY'S AMERICAN ARTISTS SERIES

Figure 5.3. John White Alexander, *A Mother*, engraved reproduction as part of "The Century's American Artists Series," *Century Magazine*, February 1906, 633.

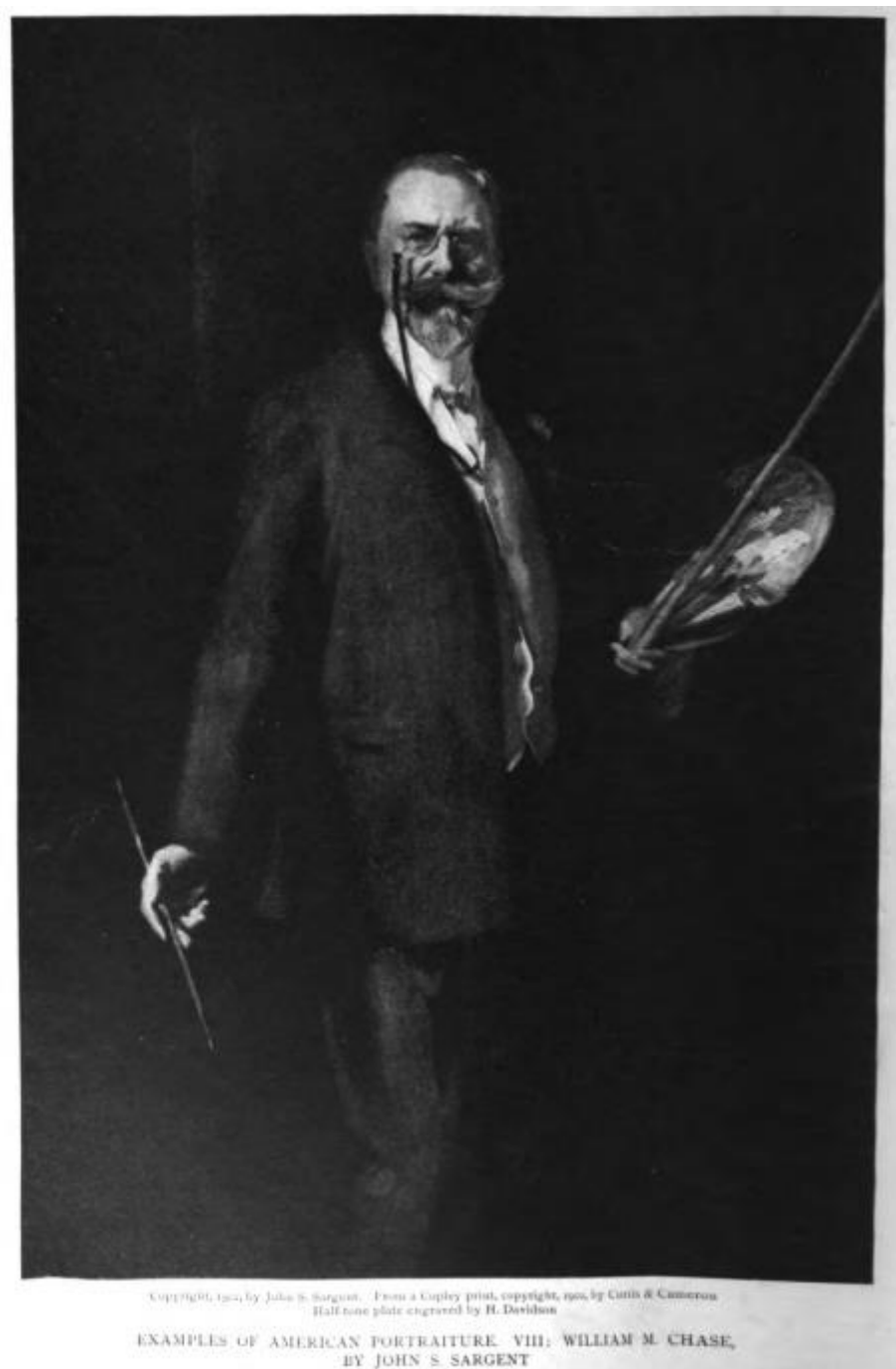
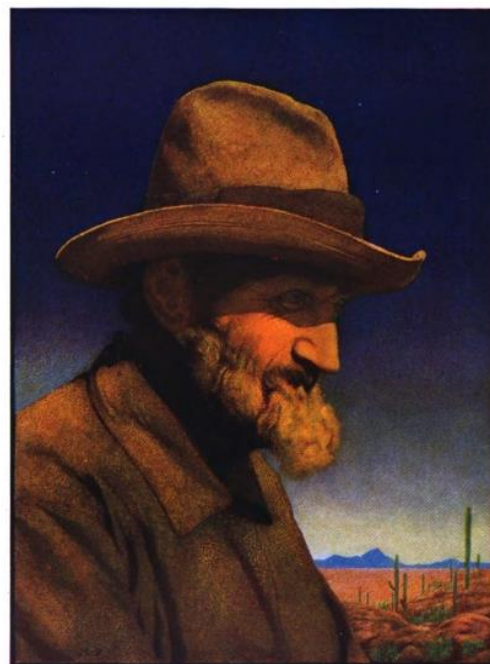
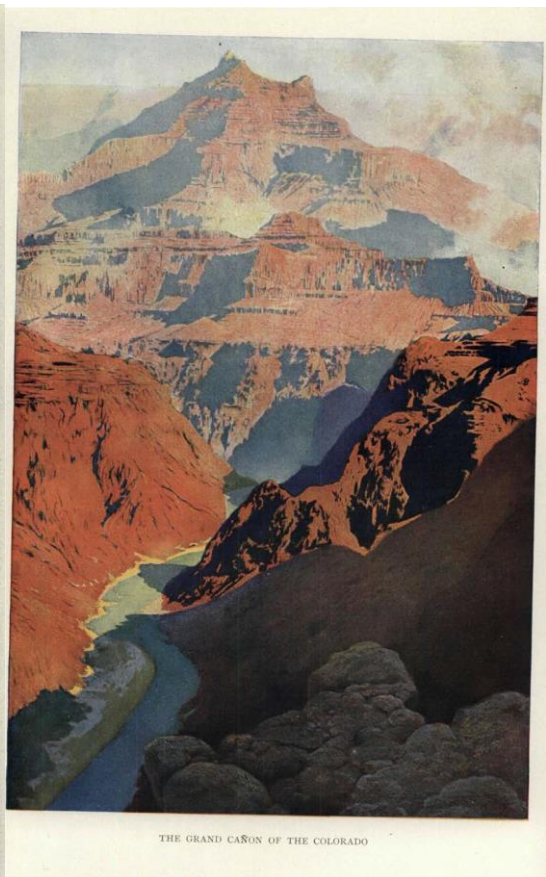
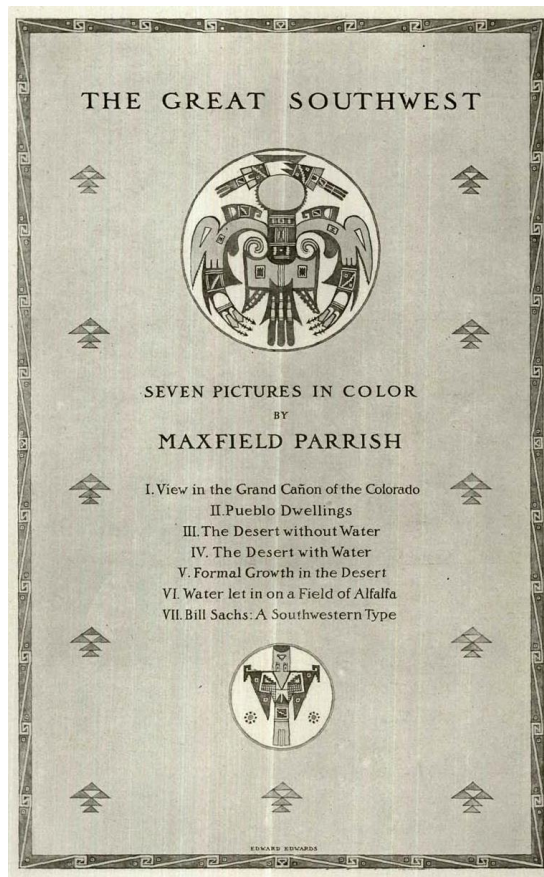


Figure 5.4. John Singer Sargent, *William M. Chase*, engraved reproduction as part of “Examples of American Portraiture” series, *Century Magazine*, March 1903, Frontispiece.



BILL SACHS  
THE FLYING DUTCHMAN  
An often held up stage-driver  
of the old days

Figure 5.5. Maxfield Parrish, *The Grand Canyon of the Colorado*, and, *Bill Sachs: The Flying Dutchman*, color reproductions as part of "The Great Southwest: Seven Pictures In Color by Maxfield Parrish," *Century Magazine*, November 1902, front matter.





HALF-TONE PLATE ENGRAVED BY H. C. REYNOLDS  
IN THE DESERT—DON GOMEZ AND HIS LANCERS AT THE OCHOA SPRING.

Figure 5.6. Frederic Remington, *In The Desert – Don Gomez And His Lancers At The Ochoa Spring*, illustration to, Frederic Remington, “A Desert Romance: A Tale of the Southwest,” *Century Magazine*, February 1902, 529.



Color drawing by Anna Whelan Betts

THE DUET

Figure 5.7. Anna Whelan Betts, *The Duet*, color reproduction in *Century Magazine*, October 1904, Frontispiece.



The Armory Show ran from February 17 to March 17 1913, during which time it was viewed by tens of thousands of visitors and caused something of a sensation within the New York press. *Century Magazine's* responses to the exhibition ranged from the highly supportive to the dismissive and ridiculing. The general opinion of the editors with regards to the Modern art movements on display was not positive, but still the magazine maintained its broader position of offering support to any effort that attempted to stir art feeling amongst the American public. Not only this, a close reading of the criticisms that were published in the magazine reveal a persistence with the aspirations for art to play a role in the positive reform of American society, that had been a leit motif in the its arts coverage throughout the previous decades.

The first article published in *Century Magazine* that discussed the new art from Europe was titled "The Post Impressionist Illusion," written by Royal Cortissoz.<sup>524</sup> As the title suggests, Cortissoz was highly skeptical of the new "movement". However, the source of his antipathy, more than the actual art on show, was the "cant" which came from the avant-garde's critical supporters.<sup>525</sup> Cortissoz was concerned that the "unrestrained venting of partisan opinions [...] had so distorted [the show] as to render it unintelligible to the public." He therefore resolved to consider the new art "regardless alike of its acolytes and its equally furious opponents" on behalf of the *Century's* readership.<sup>526</sup> Cortissoz's complaint about a lack of restraint in the expression of opinions is ironic given the caustic nature of the criticisms in his article. For Cortissoz, the only mystery surrounding Cézanne's paintings lay in the "fuss that has been made over them, as over the tablets of a new evangel." The impacts of Van Gogh's egotism had yielded "disastrous" results in spite of a few "lucky hits", and

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<sup>524</sup> Cortissoz was a savvy art critic, known for his conservatism, writing in the *New York Tribune*. He had contributed several articles to *Century Magazine* since 1893, when he wrote the article on the Court of Honor at the World's Fair, mentioned in the Fourth Chapter.

<sup>525</sup> Royal Cortissoz, "The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century Magazine*, April 1913, 806.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

Picasso and Matisse were accused of peddling “a kind of Barnumism”.<sup>527</sup> Cortissov was concerned that the criticism that supported the avant-garde was insincere in its terms and logic, with a “touch of mumbo-jumbo” in even the most helpful of explanations that was meant to dupe the public.<sup>528</sup> Whilst acknowledging that Picasso, “the great panjandrum of the Cubist tabernacle,” was “credited with profound gifts.” Cortissov posed the rhetorical question,

Why does he not use them? And why must we sit patient, if not with awe-struck and grateful submissiveness, before a portrait or a picture seemingly representing a grotesque object made of children’s blocks cut up and fitted together? This is not a movement, a principle. It is unadulterated “cheek.”<sup>529</sup>

Cortissov’s critique was as much about the words of critics as it was about the artworks, but he still impressed upon the reader his own status as a professional critic, by emphasizing his knowledge and experience when referring at various stages to the defense of Post Impressionism by Roger Fry, criticisms written by John La Farge and John Singer Sargent, as well as the first exhibition of Post-Impressionist works held at the Grafton Galleries in London in 1910, and the Italian Futurist exhibition staged at the Bernheim-Jeune gallery in Paris in 1912. The important point being made was that Cortissov’s rejection of Post Impressionism was not due to provincialism or ignorance but was more metaphysical; he doubted its sincerity and the clarity of its ultimate aims. The lively character of Cortissov’s article has meant that it has often been quoted in the historiography of the Armory Show as a representation of the bourgeois establishment that *Century Magazine* embodied. However, it would be unfair to characterize the magazine’s response wholly on the basis of Cortissov’s opinions.

The personal response to the new art at the Armory Show from editors was similarly negative, describing the crowds’ amusement at the “eccentricities, whimsicalities, distortions, crudities, puerilities, and

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<sup>527</sup>Ibid., 808-811.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 811.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 812.

madnesses". However, they still acknowledged that the exhibition had been a success with regards to public attendance, describing it as a "succès de curiosité" rather than a "succès de scandale".<sup>530</sup> Most interestingly, however, were the reasons the editors offered for their rejection of Modern art's claims to have transcended the artistic principles of the past.

while art is not a formula, nor even a school, it is subject, whether in painting, sculpture, poetry, architecture, or music, to certain general principles tending to harmony, clarity, beauty, and the stimulus of the imagination. [...] The exploitation of a theory of discords, puzzles, uglinesses, and clinical details, is to art what anarchy is to society.<sup>531</sup>

The insistence upon art's purpose as an agent for beauty and the allusion to societal anarchy when such principles are foregone strongly recalls those guiding principles that had inspired so much of the magazine's content with regards to the visual arts under Gilder's leadership. Like Cortissoz, the editors were concerned that the extreme canvases of the Armory Show were a sort of joke at America's expense, but they placed their trust in the sagacity of the American public.

One can fancy the laughter over the absinthe in many a Latin Quarter café [...] at learning that their monstrosities, which have exhausted the interest of Paris, have been seriously considered by some American observers. [...] But he laughs best who laughs last, and we believe that Americans have too much sense of humor not to see the point of this colossal joke of eccentricity, or to endure its repetition.<sup>532</sup>

It is perhaps fanciful to read too much into the words of this editorial column and their continuities with Gilder's guiding attitudes, but it is a poignant coincidence that the May 1913 issue in this article was published was the last with Robert Underwood Johnson as editor. Johnson, who had come into conflict with the magazine's management as

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<sup>530</sup> "Topics Of The Times: Lawlessness In Art: The Exploitation of Whimsicality as a Principle," *Century Magazine*, May, 1913, 150.

<sup>531</sup> Ibid.

<sup>532</sup> Ibid.

they tried to change its financial fortunes, left the magazine for which he had worked for forty years to pursue his literary and political career, eventually serving as Ambassador to Italy between 1920-21. His departure from *Century Magazine* represented the end of an editorial vision that had started with Gilder, and that he had shared in for the twenty-eight years that they had worked together.

The legacy of such an extended and distinguished period of management proved impossible to shake off, as much as the magazine's new management and the editor, Robert Sterling Yard, tried to update the format to reflect changes within the periodical market. However, as the magazine struggled to adapt to the new demands of journalism and literature, it maintained its aesthetic reputation for fine illustrations and informative coverage of all things artistic. A year after the Armory Show they published a round table collection of essays to discuss the virtues and detractions of this "revolution against settled standards."<sup>533</sup>

The first essay, titled "Is Our Art Distinctively American?" was written by John White Alexander, the president of the Academy of Design in New York. Alexander had once been an illustrator for *Century Magazine* at the start of his career and had since established himself as a successful society painter in the general manner of John Singer Sargent or Cecelia Beaux. He had been a favorite artist amongst the management of the magazine, and a personal friend to the Gilder family. As the representative of the American artistic establishment, Alexander had reason to be fearful of the Armory Show's consequences but was still careful to appear even-handed in his criticisms. Alexander did refer to a few (unnamed) works as "wholly indefensible," but still sought to harmonize the newest movements as a collective within the history of

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<sup>533</sup> The Editor (Robert Sterling Yard), "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 825. This format of presenting responses from expert voices for and against in equal measure, was a well-established approach to coverage of current and contentious debates from the editors of popular periodicals and was employed for the debates about the new school of engraving discussed in chapter two. In this instance *Century* published five articles under the collective title, "The Transitional Age in Art" in the April 1914 issue. The contributors were John White Alexander, Edwin H. Blashfield, Ernest Blumenschein, Walter Pach and, Jay Hambridge and Gove Hambridge.

American art by drawing comparisons between the Armory show's organizers, the American Association of Painters and Sculptors, and the Society of American Artists. "The creation of this society did for its day very much the same service that the Independent Exhibition has done for ours [...] and the freshness of the note it struck was quite as much an innovation and a breaking-away from accepted convention."<sup>534</sup> Alexander noted that the once rebellious Society of American Artists had eventually been absorbed by the Academy, and suggested that the "extreme" art of this new avant-garde would soon cease to shock the public. Like the exhibition's organizers, who had claimed that their aims were in the interest of American art, Alexander realized that the "reactions against the academy's sober and restrained methods" were "inevitable, [...] necessary and very much to the interest of both the academy and those who, for want of a milder term, we must call rebels."<sup>535</sup> Alexander's article in *Century* supported the Armory Show's organizers' ambitions to provide an opportunity for young artists to exhibit and sell their works, and, significantly, to provide an outstanding opportunity for the education of the general public in the contexts of contemporary art, both domestic and foreign. This second aspect provided a means by which the public display of the European avant-garde's excesses could be justified to figures like Alexander and the magazine's management.

Edwin H. Blashfield was the other establishment voice who was asked to contribute to *Century*'s roundtable debate on the Armory Show. Blashfield was also an artist and contributor to the magazine who had been in the orbit of Gilder's social circle and had benefitted from fulsome praise in *Century Magazine*, including in William Lewis Fraser's article on the decorative mural painting at the 1893 World's Fair in the May 1893 issue. Blashfield's article, titled "The Painting of To-day," expressed his personal antipathies towards the new art movements that had been

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<sup>534</sup> John W. Alexander, "The Transitional Age in Art: I. Is Our Art Distinctively American?," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 827-828.

<sup>535</sup> Ibid. On the aims of the Armory Show according to its organizers see Laurette E. McCarthy, "Armory Show: New Perspectives and Recent Rediscoveries," *Archives of American Art Journal* 51, no. 3/4 (2012): 28 -31.

exhibited, but he was reluctant to give a free rein to his opinions, instead choosing to turn the discussion towards what the publishing of opinions should seek to achieve for American art. Blashfield stated his concern that the critics' opinions which were unconditional in their praise or denigration were "so easily accomplished," and were "hurtful" and "bewildering to the public."<sup>536</sup> He excused himself from such a charge by claiming that his opinions were widely held, and therefore represented a "common sense" approach; one which would find sympathy with the layman readership of popular magazines. Blashfield noted that

it is of little importance what I or Mr. Advanced Progressive may love or hate. The important, very important point is, does the expression of our love or hate do harm? Does it retard the general knowledge and appreciation of art? Does it hinder development?<sup>537</sup>

There was a patriotic concern for the effects that the show might have on American art and its public amongst the more conservative critics, and this paternalistic tone was appropriate to titles like *Century Magazine*. Writers like Blashfield and Alexander shared a common belief in the importance of a certain type of criticism to the American art world; a criticism which had a duty to find the positive in all things, support the academies and museums, and make the case for the benefits of the visual arts to the skeptics and politicians.<sup>538</sup>

There were strong advocates for the avant-garde amongst American art critics, but these were less well represented in the popular periodical press. These writers tended to belong to a younger generation who conceived of criticism in different ways. Gilded Age criticism, which had in part been developed by *Century Magazine* during its most successful period, had been characterized as didactic and concerned with the altruistic promotion of American art and its institutions above all else. Subsequent generations sought to continue the impetus provided by critics like Clarence Cook and Van Rensselaer towards a more

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<sup>536</sup> Edwin H. Blashfield, "The Transitional Age in Art: II. *The Painting of To-day*," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 837.

<sup>537</sup> Ibid.

<sup>538</sup> Mancini, "One Term Is as Fatuous as Another," 848-849.

professional, individualistic style of criticism. This criticism concerned itself increasingly with the appraisal of art objects, and the analysis of art in metaphysical terms as objects for private, personal contemplation and appreciation. The intended audience for this type of criticism was necessarily more restricted, but this was a price worth paying in the eyes of many practitioners, who appreciated the greater esteem that professionalism brought.<sup>539</sup>

“The Painting of To-Morrow” by the painter Ernest Blumenschein was one of the more moderate accounts in support of the Modernists’ aims, published as part of the *Century’s* discussion about the Armory Show, as a companion piece to Blashfield’s article. In it, Blumenschein described his own conversion to artistic Modernism in a manner that evoked a degree of mysticism. He drew attention to the new freedom that the alternative aesthetics represented to someone who “had always vaguely felt the bit in [his] mouth.”<sup>540</sup> Blumenschein brought to the public’s attention the precarious position of the Modernist artist, who must face “derision,” “contempt” and, “a diminished income” for their “courage to be different from our fellow-sheep.”<sup>541</sup> This heartfelt appeal to the sympathy of the *Century’s* readership seems incongruous with the arrogance that had been associated with Modernist criticism and artists by critics like Royal Cortissoz, and was perhaps pitched to appeal to the readership’s broader concerns for the overall health of American art and its artists.

The counterbalance to John White Alexander, president of the National Academy, was an article written by the artist and critic Walter

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<sup>539</sup> Harold Perkin has written interestingly on the subject of the professionalization of the middle classes within an English context in the late Victorian period, a societal shift characterized by the acquisition and display of intellectual training and expertise as a means to establish social hierarchy. This offers clear insight into the motivations of critics in the American context during the same period, particularly those who, like Cook and Van Rensselaer, relied on criticism for financial survival and were sensitive to societal prejudice against them, whether true or imagined., Harold James Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society : England since 1880* (London: Routledge, 1989).

<sup>540</sup> Ernest L. Blumenschein, “The Transitional Age in Art: III. The Painting of To-Morrow,” *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 847-848.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.



Pach, who was one of the organizers of the Armory Show. His article, titled, “The Point of View of the “Moderns”” pitched itself towards an assumed conservative and skeptical readership, revealing of the magazine’s reputation at this time. Pach attempted to downplay the extreme reputation of Modern art by pointing out that the term “modern” is relative, and that all establishment favorites including Constable and Delacroix had at one time been considered Modern art. He assured the reader that all important evolutions in art history were met with consternation from critics who complained that changes in style were grotesque or extreme, or even symptomatic of some more fundamental societal sickness. Quoting the establishment voice of Ruskin, Pach claimed that all art must “invent or perish”, and that the exponents of the new artistic movements were merely the latest in a long line of artists who had chosen the former.<sup>542</sup> The remainder of Pach’s essay continued in a similar vein, contextualizing and explaining the Post-Impressionist art movements as the continuation of a process of European artistic evolution. Representations of the physical world had developed with the passing of Classicism into Romanticism into Realism, before reaching their scientific objectivity in Impressionism. The next step, according to Pach, was art that reflected the internal workings of the mind and soul.<sup>543</sup> In this aspect, the greatest exponents of Modern art were following the path set before them by the masters of art history.

The changes brought about by the Post Impressionists and the Cubists are in large measure referable to the ideas existing in Cézanne and (Odilon) Redon, and traceable even in the early masters; for in all ages there have been minds so great that they anticipate the future, and seem at moments to have had an intuition of the truths to which later men give complete expression.<sup>544</sup>

Pach’s article provides us with evidence of the sincerity of his aims to educate the public about the new art and contribute to the efforts of

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<sup>542</sup> Walter Pach, “The Transitional Age in Art: IV. The Point of View of the “Moderns”” *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 851.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, 851-852.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, 860-861.

cultural institutions like *Century Magazine* to promote art to the public, acknowledging that the American public remained a significant part of the equation for future American artistic success. Pach's article also provides a clear impression of how *Century Magazine* was viewed by the new artistic generation at the center of the recent developments: as a conservative pillar that needed to be convinced that change was historically justifiable and part of a gradual process.

The final instalment of the "The Transitional Age in Art" round-table series that *Century* published in the wake of the Armory Show was titled "The Ancestry of Cubism," written by the painter and dynamic symmetry theorist Jay Hambidge and Gove Hambidge. This was an article written in the didactic tradition popular with Gilded age periodicals like *Century Magazine* and would not have been out of place as one of the explanatory pamphlets that the organizers sold at the Armory Show to try and explain the new art to the public. The generously illustrated article traced the roots of Cubism back to the early beginnings of art, starting with "Egyptian Cubism," and proceeding to show how Cubism as a function of traditional design methods could be seen, or superimposed onto art and craft throughout the ages, with the examples provided being Dürer, geometric vases, contemporary fashionable hats, and the compositions of Giotto, Raphael and Villard de Honnecourt. The authors reassured the public that Cubism derived from traditional studio practices, and that whilst it represented an attempt to "break completely the grip of realistic art," it was still "at bottom not radical, but blindingly, haltingly conservative."<sup>545</sup> The article referenced and reproduced images from articles in *L'Art et Les Artistes*, and *Deutsche Kunst und Dekoration*, helping to impart an academic air to the article. Little is known of Gove Hambidge, but Jay Hambidge was another popular illustrator employed by *Century Magazine*, who delivered lectures on Ancient and Classical art (fig. 5.8).<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>545</sup> Jay Hambidge and Gove Hambidge, "The Transitional Age in Art: V. "The Ancestry of Cubism," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 869-870.

<sup>546</sup> "Form In Greek Art," *New York Times*, November 9, 1902, 4.

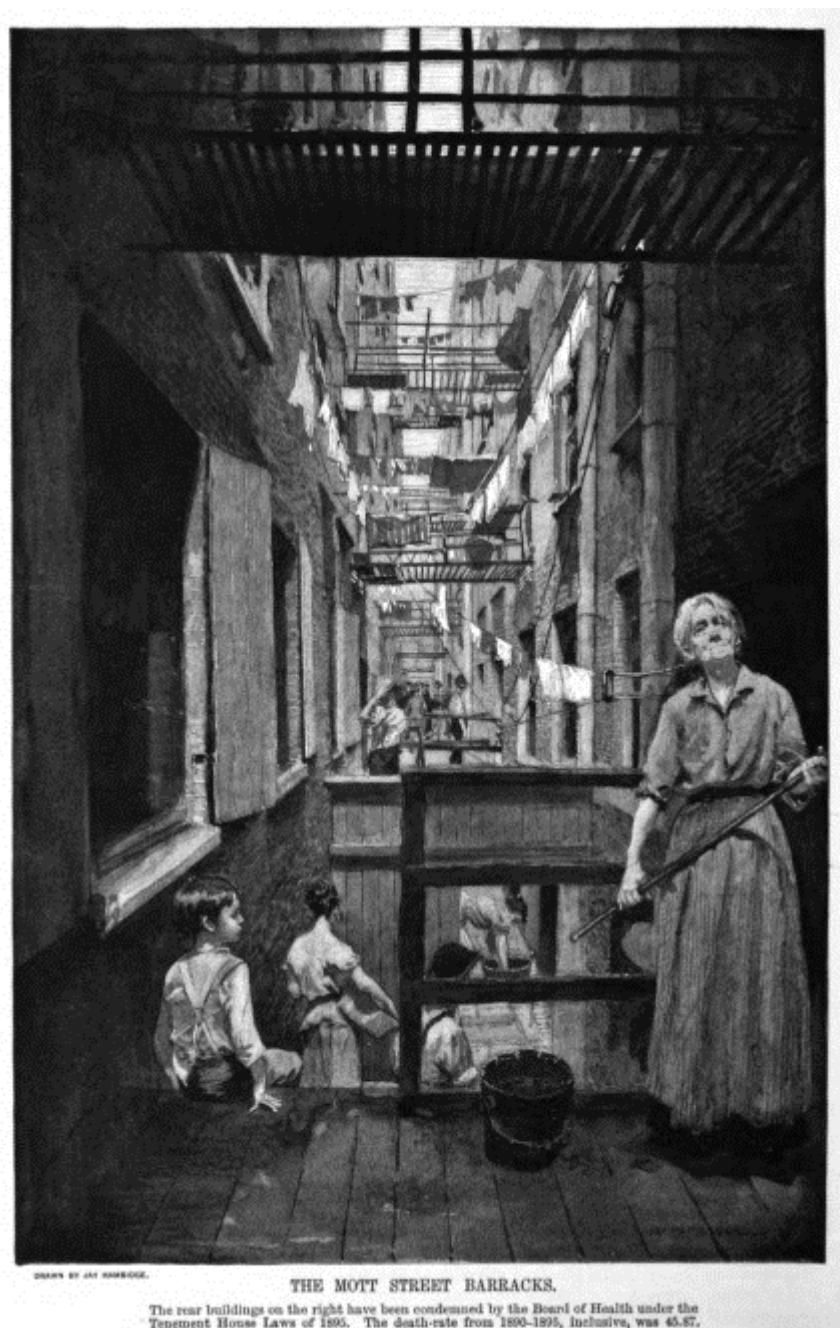


Figure 5.8: Jay Hambidge, *The Mott Street Barracks*, illustration for Jacob Riis, "Light In Dark Places: A Study of the Better New York," *Century Magazine*, December 1896, 246.

Taken as a whole, the series of five articles which appeared in the April 1914 issue of *Century* represent an exemplary treatment of the Armory Show in a popular Gilded Age periodical context. The authors would certainly have had strongly differing views on art, and the articles themselves do disagree in milder terms. But there is a consistency in how each article presents itself to the readership. It is interesting that *Century* did not publish an article by one of the more outspoken

professional modernist critics such as Charles H. Caffin, Henry McBride, or Forbes Watson, but instead went to practicing artists associated with the show.<sup>547</sup> This suggests that there was still a desire to publish expert opinion, but a distrust of the new generation of professional critics whose aesthetic preferences the magazine did not share. The practical nature of the contributors appealed to the readership of *Century Magazine*, who may not have had a particularly profound understanding of Modern art, but would have been receptive to an artist who was willing to speak plainly, rather than a theorist or activist who wrote in opaque terms. Whilst it is true that the editors were not enthusiastic with regards to Post-Impressionist styles, and the magazine did partake in a share of the ridicule aimed at the Armory show (fig. 5.9), it should be remembered that the skepticism and dislike for Modern art was not due to social conservatism or ignorance. Articles such as John White Alexander's were phlegmatic in its acceptance that new generations will test the standards, as the Society of American artists that Gilder had supported had once done. The main point of worry and contention was that the new art's aims fundamentally differed from those which came before and threatened to dismantle the progress that America had made under the guidance of figures like Richard Watson Gilder and *Century Magazine*. The new art made decisive breaks with the past in its apparent rejection of beauty as a purpose. In so doing, it was not clear what role if any Modern art could play in the reform of public spirit, particularly as much of this art seemed unwelcoming and aloof to the public. This core belief in art's purpose and utility for the good of the whole nation, more than any details of style, was the principle that prevented *Century Magazine* from embracing this artistic change. However regardless of the editors' skepticism, a greater service to the readership was still paid in the form of the numerous

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<sup>547</sup> Caffin was arguably the senior modernist critic at the time of the Armory Show, an initiate of the Stieglitz circle who held positions as art critic for *Harper's Weekly*, the *New York Evening Post*, the *International Studio*, and the *New York American*, and previously at the *New York Sun* between 1901 and 1904. McBride joined the *New York Sun* as an art critic in 1913. Forbes joined the *New York Post* as art critic in 1912. Although Caffin was already well-established by 1913, all three experienced enhancements to their reputations in the wake of the Armory Show.

illustrations provided, many obtained from photographs owned by Alfred Steiglitz. These images of works by Picasso, Matisse, Duchamp, Stella, Davies, Luks, Henri, Alexander, Cézanne and a number of other significant artists, put the debates about the future of art in the hands of the public and trusted them to decide on the merits or otherwise of this new “Transitional Age in Art” (figs. 5.10-5.21).

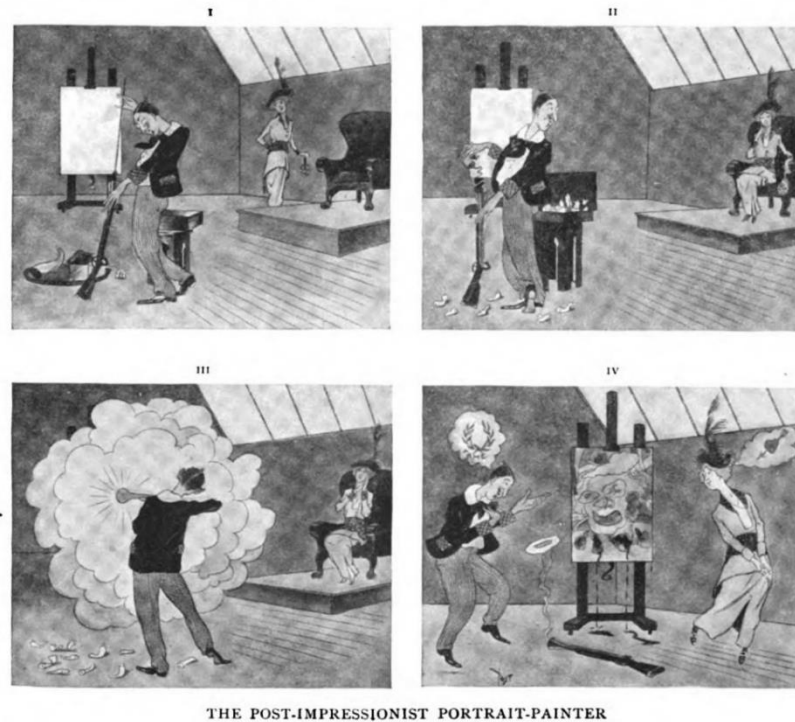
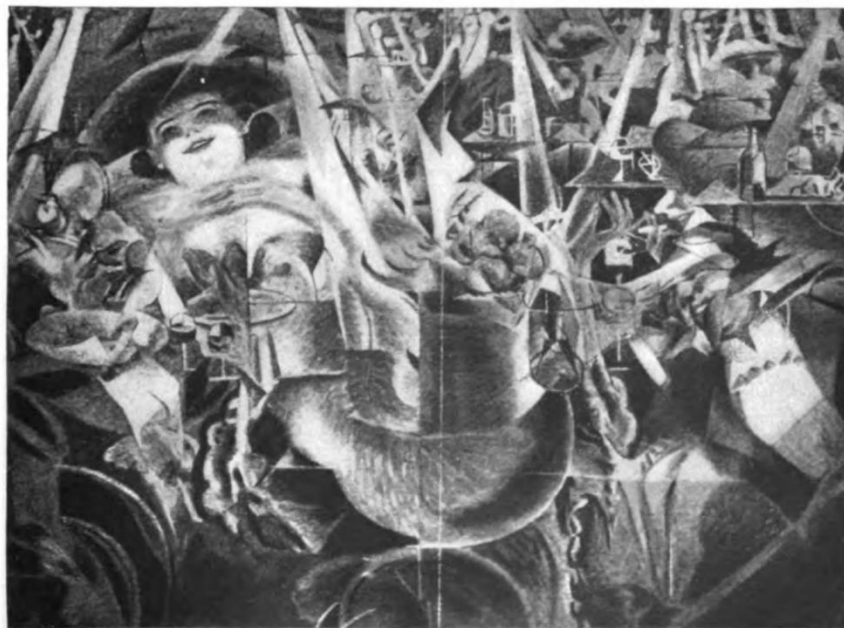


Figure 5.9. “The Post-Impressionist Portrait Painter” (Cartoon) by Post, *Century Magazine*, September, 1914, 797.



A BALL AT ARLES  
FROM THE PAINTING BY VINCENT VAN GOGH

Figure 5.10. Vincent Van Gogh, *A Ball At Arles*, reproduction for Royal Cortissoz, "The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century Magazine*, April, 1913, 806.



"LAUGHTER." A FUTURIST IMPRESSION OF A RESTAURANT SCENE  
FROM THE PAINTING BY UMBERTO BOCCIONI

Figure 5.11. Umberto Boccioni, *Laughter*, reproduction for Royal Cortissoz, "The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century Magazine*, April, 1913, 807.



From a photograph owned by Alfred Stieglitz

LANDSCAPE

FROM THE PAINTING BY PAUL CÉZANNE

Figure 5.12. Paul Cézanne, *Landscape*, reproduction for Royal Cortissoz, "The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century Magazine*, April, 1913, 808.





From a photograph owned by Alfred Stieglitz

**PORTRAIT OF A MAN**

FROM A DRAWING BY PABLO PICASSO

Figure 5.13. Pablo Picasso, *Portrait of A Man*, reproduction for Royal Cortissoz, "The Post Impressionist Illusion," *Century Magazine*, April, 1913, 815.

## Examples of Modern Tendencies



"THE MIRROR"

FROM THE PAINTING BY ROBERT REID

This illustrates the influence of the intensely modern decorative spirit in Robert Reid's portraiture, although the painter has not developed it to an extreme point. The background is as much a part of the painting as is the portrait.

Figure 5.14. Robert Reid, *The Mirror*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 829.

"NORTH RIVER"  
FROM THE  
PAINTING BY  
GEORGE W. BELLINGS

This canvas shows  
the tendency of this  
painter, even in his  
earlier work, to  
express by  
bold eliminations  
and swift brush-work  
the energy  
and freedom of  
nature and  
the life of places  
where men toil with  
their hands. What  
one sees  
and feels at a  
first glance is what  
Mr. Bellings puts  
on his canvas.



Figure 5.15. George Bellows, *North River*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 834.



"NUDE DESCENDING A STAIRCASE"

FROM MARCEL DUCHAMP-VILLON'S CELEBRATED CUBIST PAINTING  
Described on page 863.

Figure 5.16. Marcel Duchamp, *Nude Descending A Staircase*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 852.



© Detroit Publishing Co.

"STUDY IN TONE"

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN W. ALEXANDER

Mr. Alexander's portraits have qualities that make them tell as mural decoration, whether they are hung on the wall of a private room or in a large public exhibition. His modeling is usually flat, his outline definite and significant, and his color schemes are simple and carefully balanced.

Figure 5.17. John White Alexander, *Study In Tone*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 841.



"BATTLE OF LIGHTS, CONEY ISLAND"

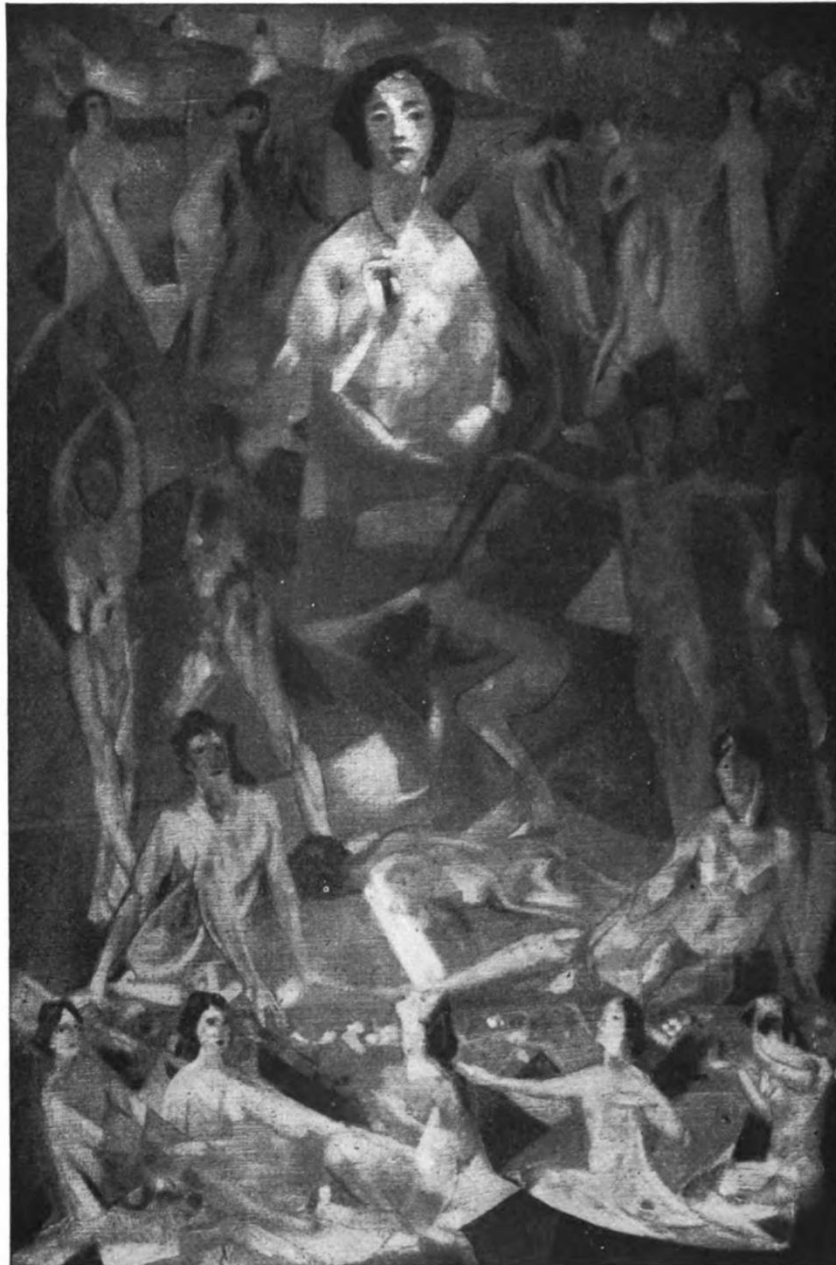
FROM THE PAINTING BY JOSEPH STELLA

This painting, which in all probability is the last word in modernism, is a daring interpretation of the artist's impression of the dazzling light, the noise, the confusion, and the ceaseless motion of Coney Island. It represents an attempt to express the brilliance and the dynamic energy of modern life so evident in America. The artist believes that the static traditions and conventions of the past must be abandoned before art can reflect the changing material conditions and theories on which a new civilization is being founded.

He has evolved a style of his own from various elements in the modern movement. Had he merely represented the physical appearance of the American fiesta, he believed that he could not have given the rhythm of the scene, which transforms the chaos of the night, the lights, the strange buildings, and the surging crowd into the order, the design, and the color of art.

Figure 5.18. Joseph Stella, *Battle of Lights, Coney Island*, color reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 853.



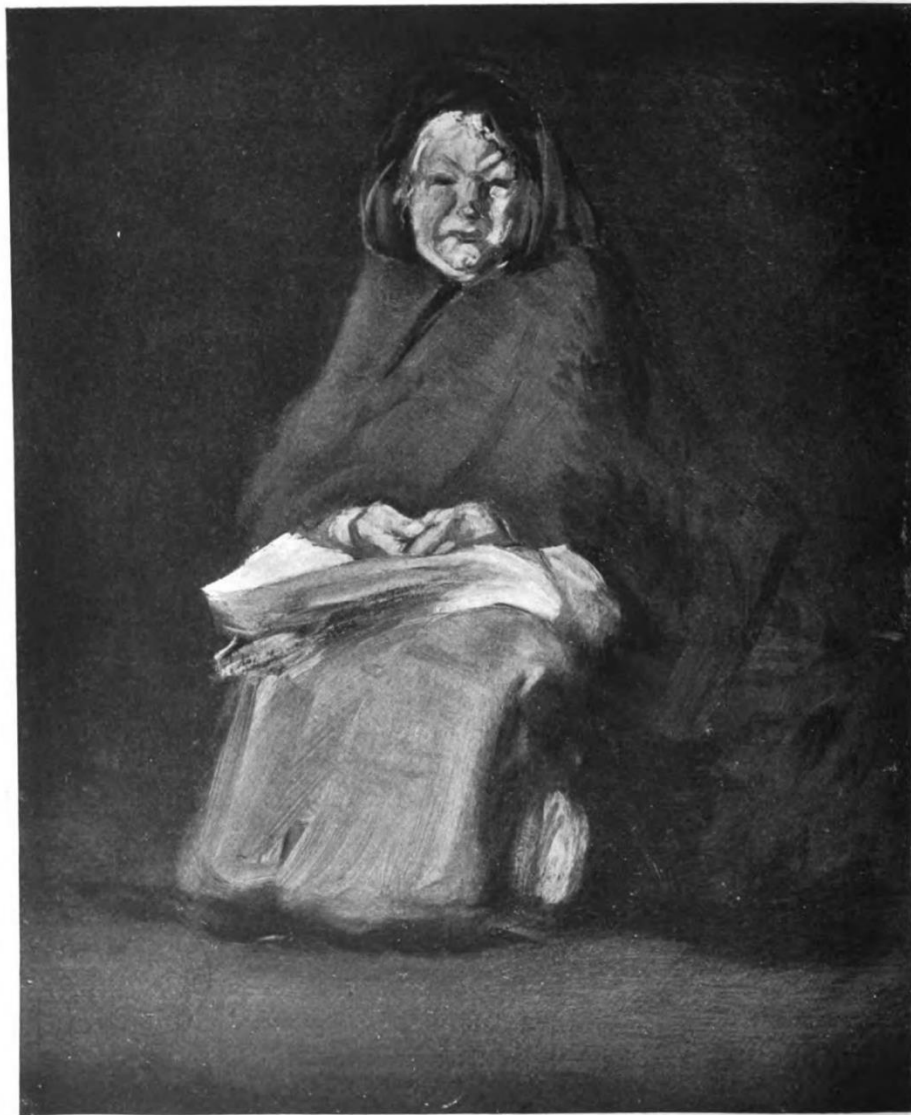


## II. "THE GREAT MOTHER"

FROM THE PAINTING BY ARTHUR B. DAVIES

The organization of this picture recently painted by Mr. Davies fulfils the promise to be noted in his composition of the last few years. His scope has widened; his handling of the figure, far from suffering any loss of the beauty he has made peculiarly his own, has gained. His Cubist tendencies are readily discernible.

Figure 5.19. Arthur B. Davies, *The Great Mother*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 856.



I. "PORTRAIT OF AN OLD WOMAN"

FROM THE PAINTING BY GEORGE LUKS

This portrait of an old woman was painted by Luks several years ago. It is a vigorous work, and shows the painter at the beginning of the development of the remarkable style shown in the next painting.

Figure 5.20. George Luks, *Portrait Of An Old Woman*, , reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 857.





"LAUGHING GIRL"

FROM THE PAINTING BY ROBERT HENRI

Robert Henri's portraits are in a modern style that derives somewhat from the Spaniards. The backgrounds usually are dark, the forms are broadly defined by masses of dark and light, and the handling is swift and sure.

Figure 5.21. Robert Henri, *Laughing Girl*, reproduction for "The Transitional Age in Art," *Century Magazine*, April, 1914, 861.

## Conclusion

The previous chapters have shown the ways in which Richard Watson Gilder was able to appropriate his popular magazine for his own cultural aims. Gilder and his magazine are well known within the history of American art thanks to Gilder's proximity to many of the most influential artists of the period and the magazine's reputation as an important innovator in the realms of illustration and criticism. I have presented the narrative of Gilder and the magazine through new critical themes, derived from Gilder's social and cultural context, contributing to the existing scholarship in several important ways.

The study of Gilded Age art history in sociological and economic terms has produced some thought-provoking scholarship.<sup>548</sup> Paul DiMaggio's work on the roles that institutions and other formal social structures have played in the formation and evolution of high culture in nineteenth-century Boston has been very useful to subsequent research.<sup>549</sup> Museums, schools, galleries and clubs are tangible manifestations of the network of social connections that make up an art world. Studying these institutions and how they act in relation to the art world helps us to understand the appearance of various phenomena as well as significant and wider reaching art historical changes. The development of a mass visual culture, accelerated by the substantial increase in illustrated periodicals in America, was a highly significant development in American art's history that helps to explain its evolution. The most popular and long-lasting titles such as *Scribner's Monthly*/*Century Magazine* were able to exert significant influence in this regard

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<sup>548</sup> Frances Pohl, "Framing America: A Social History of American Art," *American Art* 16, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 10-12. Peter Temin, "An Economic History of American Art Museums," in *The Economics of Art Museums*, ed. Martin Feldstein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 179-194. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (eds), *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, (New York: Routledge, 2019). John Ott, *Manufacturing the Modern Patron in Victorian California: Cultural Philanthropy, Industrial Capital, and Social Authority* (New York: Routledge, 2014). Matthew N. Hannah, "Networks of Modernism: Toward A Theory of Cultural Production" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2015).

<sup>549</sup> Paul DiMaggio, "Cultural entrepreneurship in nineteenth-century Boston: the creation of an organizational base for high culture in America." *Media, Culture & Society* 4, no. 1 (1982):33-50.

because of the size of their operation and their generally bourgeois, culturally influential readership. I have therefore considered popular literary magazines as another form of institution acting with agency within a cultural economy. Richard Ohmann has previously conceptualized nineteenth century magazines in predominantly materialistic terms as *magasins*, establishments positioned at the interface between culture and economics, “selling culture” to a growing middle-class.<sup>550</sup> *Scribner’s Monthly/ Century Magazine* was a willing and effective participant in the marketing of high culture to an aspirational readership; but I have argued that this view is too limited and fails to account for the numerous ways in which the magazine advanced the paradigm for a popular literary monthly magazine. *Scribner’s Monthly/ Century Magazine* was a complex, multifaceted operation whose motivations and aspirations regularly went beyond financial incentives thanks to the idealism of its management. It shared characteristics not just with shops and department stores, but also with those art world institutions identified by DiMaggio; as a type of museum, a gallery, a club and a school. The magazine’s role within this cultural economy was complicated and nuanced. It sold, curated, marketed, practiced and taught high visual culture.

I have presented a social art history, with an emphasis on class consciousness and competition by focusing on the personality, relationships and circumstances of Richard Watson Gilder.<sup>551</sup> Study of the social class context of the magazine and Gilder has been a guiding impetus throughout my research. I have approached the topic of class through Pierre Bourdieu’s framework for understanding cultural change at the societal level through an identification of the social dynamics of a

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<sup>550</sup> Richard Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class At The Turn of the Century* (London: Verso, 1996).

<sup>551</sup> Alan Wallach has reminded scholars of American art of the potential for expressly Marxist interpretations of history, with a focus on themes of class, ideology and capitalism which leverage their accompanying Marxist intellectual histories. Alan Wallach, “On The Social History of American Art,” in *A Companion to American Art*, eds. John Davis, Jennifer A. Greenhill, and Jason D. LaFountain, (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 71-84.

cultural field. This approach allowed for a nuanced discussion of the motivations guiding the magazine and Gilder. Viewed within the context of Bourdieu's conception of a cultural field, Gilder in the 1870s is understood as the product of his *habitus*, to use Bourdieu's lexicon, a member of the cultural bourgeoisie whose cultural capital outweighed his economic capital. His work at *Scribner's* and his marriage to Helena de Kay elevated his social and cultural standing, but the relative lack of political and economic power meant that he and his wife were identified as part of the bohemian avant-garde in New York in the 1870s, a position that they eagerly embraced. This was discussed in my first chapter, which considered Gilder's early history, personality, marriage and home in establishing him as an important figure within New York's Gilded Age culture who directed *Scribner's Monthly's* aesthetic trajectory. The chapter concluded with discussion of how Gilder and the magazine promoted the newly formed Society of American Artists in their battles with the National Academy of Design in New York, and why this support was mutually beneficial to their statuses within the cultural field.

The material and societal circumstances of the period<sup>552</sup> helped bring about dramatic changes that saw the bohemian avant-garde artists of the SAA become part of what Bourdieu terms the "consecrated avant-garde", replacing the artists of the so-called "Hudson River School" who had taken the American wilderness and rural life as their models. This was replaced by new cosmopolitan art which eschewed straight forward narrative and acted as a signifier of cultural attainment through its aesthetic qualities. This art catered towards a professional, urban, cultural bourgeoisie by responding to their class anxieties and aspirations.<sup>553</sup> With the assistance of Gilder and his magazine this new art rose to a position of high-cultural hegemony substantiated at the 1893

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<sup>552</sup> The increase in financial power of corporations, particularly in New York, professionalization of the middle classes and the urbanization of the population. These can all be considered quintessential markers of late modernity.

<sup>553</sup> Alan Wallach, "Aestheticizing Tendencies in Hudson River School Landscape Painting at the Beginning of the Gilded Age," in *New York: Art and Cultural Capital of the Gilded Age*, eds. Margaret R. Laster and Chelsea Bruner (New York: Routledge Research in Art History, 2019), Kindle Edition.

World's Columbian Exposition. The exposition as the embodiment of Gilder's cultural vision for the nation was the subject of my fourth chapter. I discussed how the event appealed to Gilder's patriotism and belief in the usefulness of art, and how his magazine's coverage reflected his hopes and expectations for what good (his) culture could do for the development of the nation. I have also explained how some of the coverage and illustrations spoke to the readership as *flâneurs*, detached modern observers of the public, and that this is strong evidence that the magazine was by this point speaking directly to a geographically and culturally determined subsection of society that had solidified in the course of the past two decades.

Contextualizing Gilder's career in sociological terms helps to offer clarity on how he fits into Gilded Age culture and its art history. The ways in which this was expressed through the pages of *Scribner's Monthly* and *Century Magazine* is the subject of my middle two chapters. My second chapter discussed the problems which the popular literary magazine as a cultural product posed to someone with the high cultural aims and tastes of Gilder. The mass market magazine as a medium complicates the social history by confounding Bourdieu's neat bifurcation of the cultural realm into subfields of restricted and mass market cultural production which attend to the desires of distinct classes. The magazine as physical object was a product of modern large-scale manufacture, marketed and sold to a broad audience mostly constituted by bourgeois readers. Yet Gilder's cultural tastes and much of the magazine's aesthetic character reflected those of more restricted social audiences, with the requisite cultural and educational capital to appreciate it. For a portion of the readership the magazine was aspirational in its cultured tone and a tool of class emulation, which Bourdieu identifies as the engine behind changes in cultural tastes. The tension between the medium and the message was generative for much of the magazine's innovation regarding the visual arts. It helps explain Gilder's efforts to bridge the cultural gap by publishing didactic subjects and criticism and the publicity that was given to movements to democratize the arts. This was discussed in the

rest of the second chapter, in which I presented a purposefully varied selection of the ways in which the magazine, under Gilder's direction, sought to generate an appreciation for art in the wider populace, and significantly how these varied efforts were related to each other, brought together by the editor's broader cultural ambitions for his magazine, and the nation. I have argued that part of Gilder's motivation for these often expensive and complicated interventions was his sense of "critical patriotism" which can be used to form a link between the magazine's sustained engagement with art and Gilder's involvement with socially progressive and philanthropic causes, for which he was perhaps best known during his own lifetime, and which has hitherto been left unconnected to his aesthetic attitudes and work at *Scribner's Monthly/Century Magazine*.

Gilder's personal journey from the "bohemian avant-garde" to the "consecrated avant-garde" and as a member of New York's cultural elite was reflected in the careers of many of the artists that he befriended and to whom he offered promotion. This was a theme taken up by my third chapter in which I analyzed how some of Gilder's significant friendships and professional associations with figures such as Clarence Cook, John La Farge and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer helped to shape his cultural perspectives and provide mutually beneficial advancement. It touched upon the history of professionalization amongst writers and critics and contextualized Gilder's artistic tastes in the Art's and Crafts and Aesthetic movements. I have extended Page Knox's analysis of Gilder's spiritual view of art and suggested how his elite aesthetic philosophy was justified to his patriotic and democratic instincts through the ideas of Matthew Arnold, whom he knew and admired, and was an acknowledged influence on many of his associates, perhaps most consequentially William Crary Brownell and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer. Gilder's accomplishment as an editor of a popular and profitable magazine elevated him and his circle within the cultural field of New York City. He was able to exchange this cultural capital for social and economic progression and so his success in these regards weakened

the dynamic tension between the mass-market medium and the high-cultural message that had sparked so much of his magazine's early innovative arts coverage. Increasingly the magazine became a signifier of establishment, New England cultural attitudes. By the 1890s it was created by, represented and was consumed by the same cultural elite.

My contribution to the scholarship on Gilder and *Scribner's Monthly/Century Magazine* has been art historical and sociological, but there are further opportunities for important research on these topics, particularly with regards to the connections between literature, art and culture that magazines such as *Century* embody. These magazines were originally compilations of popular fiction and poetry, and Gilder himself was, at least in his early years, fundamentally a man of literature, who became comfortable discussing art through his marriage and experiences working for the magazine. There is potential therefore for studies that can give equal weight to both aspects and demonstrate the cross pollination of American art and literature that took place in the offices and pages of popular magazines. My research has added to the collective knowledge of Gilder's associations with important figures within the art world, but of course there remain many other connections that I have not had space to develop. Charles Eliot Norton was a significant mentor to Gilder and our understandings of the cultural exchanges between Boston and New York during this period would be richer for scholarship which focused on this relationship which is detailed in the correspondence between the two held in the archives related to both men. The archival holdings also record Gilder's close personal friendships with Cecilia Beaux and Mary Hallock Foote, both of whom would be interesting case studies to consider how magazines opened-up fresh opportunities for artists, and female artists in particular. In a similar vein, the artistic career of Helena de Kay Gilder is sadly overlooked. Jennifer Bienenstock's unpublished manuscript and PhD thesis from 1983 on the Society of American Artists remains the most comprehensive scholarship on this important figure in the New York art world of the late 1870s. The locations of her works are not well documented, and it would require



patient investigation to establish their current whereabouts. If this could be achieved it would produce some important additions to the historical record and possibly shed fresh light on the early years of the Society of American Artists and the teaching career of John La Farge, as well as the attitudes of Richard Watson Gilder and the art content of his magazine. A further aspect of Gilder's personal and intellectual history that invites analysis is his family connections, particularly his sister Jeanette Leonard Gilder and brother Joseph Benson Gilder. Richard had helped his sister establish *The Critic* magazine in 1881, and it was edited by both Jeanette and Joseph Gilder. This magazine was not intended as a popular periodical in the mold of *Scribner's / Century* but as a predominantly literary, unillustrated magazine similar in tone to the *North American Review*.<sup>554</sup> *The Critic* covered many of the aesthetic cultural issues that I have referred to in relation to *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* but directed from the outset to a self-confidently cultured readership, and would potentially offer an interesting point of counter balance to Gilder's more populist efforts in *Scribner's / Century*.

Whilst I have focused on Gilder as the most compelling force at *Century Magazine*, there were other significant figures that would be interesting for future research. Alexander Wilson Drake, the art superintendent, was an author and talented artist in his own right credited with attracting much of the artistic talent to the magazine. He was also a renowned collector, and several catalogues exist providing a glimpse of his extensive interest in paintings, Japanese prints, glass and ceramics from America and England, metalwork, textiles, jewelry and other objets d'art that filled his home in a typically aesthetic manner.<sup>555</sup> William Lewis Fraser, who joined the magazine in the early 1880s as the art manager to assist Drake is another important figure on whom very little has been written or researched. Scholarship on Fraser would add

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<sup>554</sup> The Boston based brahmin magazine edited by James Russell Lowell, Charles Eliot Norton and Henry Adams.

<sup>555</sup> A few photographs of his home were printed as part of a limited-edition book by Drake titled, *Three Midnight Stories*, published by The Century Co. in 1916 and distributed to family and friends in commemoration of his death.

interesting insight into the commercial operations of a successful magazine of the period in relation to art, artists and the art market.

One of the pathways that my work opens up is for future studies focusing on other magazines and editors that will help to flesh out this sociological framework for understanding Gilded Age artistic culture.<sup>556</sup> Another neglected aspect of *Scribner's Monthly/ Century Magazine* was their connections with similar publications in France and Britain. The magazine was read in Britain and was successful enough to justify the opening of a company office in London and the printing of an English edition. Research that brought to light the similarities and contrasts with popular illustrated periodicals in Britain and France during 1870-1910 would add a much-needed element of international context and contribute to the scholarship on trans-Atlantic artistic exchanges during this period, and more broadly further the internationalization of scholarship on historic American art subjects.

My research engages with the wider debates on the formation of Gilded Age and material culture and affirms the validity of social approaches to art history. I have presented an example of an interdisciplinary approach that has applications for both American art history and periodical studies. My ambition for this thesis has been for it to make a contribution to the growth of a subfield of scholarship based upon mass-market magazines which continues to discuss questions of methodology, presentation, content and social and economic networks, deepening our appreciation and understanding of cultural changes in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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<sup>556</sup> *Harper's Monthly* and *Scribner's Magazine* are two similar titles that deserve recognition and study. Extending the time frame, the so-called "ten-center" magazines represent fruitful opportunities for study as periodicals whose popularity amongst the general public surpassed the achievements of *Century Magazine* and *Harper's Monthly*. Their use of more journalistic forms of art coverage and cheap color illustrations and reproductions of art works is of particular significance to scholars interested in the economics of the art world and the development of a mass-visual culture in America. Titles such as *Munsey's Magazine* and *McClure's* are both freely available in internet archives and represent a significant opportunity for future scholarship.

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