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**PRIMITIVISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE PORTRAITURE OF
ROBERT HENRI**

by

Margaret A. Stenz

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The
City University of New York**

2002

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Abstract

PRIMITIVISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE PORTRAITURE OF ROBERT HENRI

by

Margaret A. Stenz

Adviser: Professor William H. Gerdts

Robert Henri is widely known as the influential leader of the Ashcan School, who vigorously asserted that art should reflect real life, not the rarified atmosphere of the upper classes. While his students and colleagues painted the “realities” of life in New York City, however, Henri became fascinated with indigenous and peasant cultures encountered during his travels. This lifelong interest resulted in a large series of portraits of ethnic types: gypsies, *guitarreros*, and *toreadors* of Spain; Asians, Native Americans, and *Mexicanos* of California and New Mexico; the rural poor of Holland and Ireland.

This dissertation argues that the portraits are more than just records of the world’s human diversity. Rather, Henri chose his sitters not because they were ‘paintable types’, as many scholars have viewed them, but because they were representatives of premodern cultures which he admired for their authenticity, natural creativity, and communal societies. His primitivist philosophy paralleled

contemporaneous movements in Europe and the United States which sought in indigenous peoples and traditional folk cultures a unique national identity and a corrective to the alienation and overcivilization endemic to modern society.

Chapter One introduces major sociohistorical issues that affected American attitudes circa 1910, including cultural primitivism, nationalism, race, and ethnic tourism, as well as contemporary concepts of realism and typing. Chapter Two discusses Henri's Spanish portraits in the context of American stereotypes of Iberia and the search for self-identity promoted by Spain's "Generation of '98" in the face of impending Europeanization and loss of empire. Chapter Three examines Henri's Dutch portraits in relation to American preconceptions of the Netherlands mediated through art and history, the tourist industry, and Dutch-American immigration. Chapter Four focuses on Henri's pictures of Irish peasants as embodiments of national identity projected by Irish cultural nationalists and the Yeats/Synge literary revival. Chapter Five looks at Henri's portraits of native Americans in the context of primitivist modernism in Santa Fe and at his portraits of Chinese and Mexican immigrants painted in California. The chapter also examines Henri's philosophy on national identity and race as expressed in his 1915 *Craftsman* article "My People."

Acknowledgments

The process of writing a dissertation is often a long, arduous, painstaking, and especially solitary pursuit. Solitary not only because the writer must shun other attractions and distractions in order to focus on the subject, but mainly because few people within the writer's immediate circle of friends, family, and acquaintances could possibly find themselves interested in such specialized subject matter. And yet, the dissertation cannot be undertaken, let alone completed, without considerable help and support from friends, colleagues, and mentors.

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Introduction and Literature Review

As the influential leader of the Ashcan School, Robert Henri vigorously asserted that art should reflect real life, not the rarified atmosphere of the upper classes. Following his democratic dictates, Henri's students and colleagues painted the "realities" of life in New York City, such as boxing matches, vaudeville, street life, and immigrant culture. Beginning his career as a landscapist, Henri himself explored New York around 1900 in a number of Whistleresque city scenes. However, the main thrust of his career was portraiture, and he greatly preferred to paint the life and people outside New York. His fascination with indigenous and peasant cultures encountered during his travels resulted in a large series of portraits of ethnic types: Spanish gypsies, *guitarreros*, and *toreadors*; the rural poor of Holland and Ireland; and Chinese-Americans, native Americans, and Mexican-Americans living in California and New Mexico.

During his lifetime, Henri's reputation was based predominantly upon these portraits. Since his death in 1929, however, scholars have emphasized his activities as a teacher, arts activist, and leader of the Ashcan School. The portraits themselves, and especially the broader historical and philosophical issues they embody, have been largely ignored. My dissertation has been written to provide an analysis of Henri's portraits of working class and peasant folk, and to reinterpret

these works by reading them in the context of early twentieth century discourses on race, immigration, and national identity.

During Henri's lifetime and immediately after his death, evaluations of Henri's prolific and important career centered on his work as a portraitist. For example, monographs on Henri by William Yarrow and Louis Bouché and by Nathaniel Pousette-Dart, as well as the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1931 posthumous retrospective exhibition, all focused heavily on Henri's portraits of ethnic types, placing secondary emphasis on landscapes and commissioned portraits.¹ These works celebrated Henri as an astute observer of character, and a recorder, almost a cataloguer, of types from diverse races and nations. As a portraitist, Henri endeavored to capture the spirit of the race in the individual; in a seminal and oft-quoted 1915 article, "My People," he observed about his subjects that "all their lives are in their expressions, in their eyes, their movements, or they are not worth translating into art."² Henri's close friend, the art critic Mary Fanton Roberts echoed his statements in 1931 when she asserted that "after all, it is the people, individually, who create and express the nation and it is through Henri's

¹William Yarrow and Louis Bouché, *Robert Henri: His Life and Works* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921); Nathaniel Pousette-Dart, *Robert Henri* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1922); *Catalogue of a Memorial Exhibition of the Work of Robert Henri*, with an introduction by John Sloan (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931).

²Robert Henri, "My People," *Craftsman* 27 (February 1915): 467.

individual portraits that I feel he expresses the lives of the people he knew so well."³

The focus on Henri's portraiture as the main thrust of his career was abandoned by the next generation of art historians, including William Innes Homer and Bennard Perlman, who emphasized Henri's activities as a teacher, exhibition organizer, "revolutionary of realism," and organizer of The Eight.⁴ These scholars reconstructed the basic outlines of Henri's career by culling his diaries, correspondence, journals, and published statements; by gathering detailed information about his many works; by interviewing still living colleagues; and by collecting contemporary reviews of his work and exhibitions. Many of the early accounts provide interesting anecdotes relating to the bohemian personality of

³Mary Fanton Roberts, "Speaking of Art: The Henri Memorial Exhibition," *Arts and Decoration* 34 (March 1931): 44.

⁴On The Eight, see Ira Glackens, *William Glackens and the Eight: The Artists Who Freed American Art* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957); Mahonri Sharp Young, *The Eight: The Realist Revolt in American Painting* (New York: Watson-Guption, 1973); and Bennard Perlman, *The Immortal Eight: American Painting from Eakins to the Armory Show, 1870-1913* (Cincinnati: North Light Publishers, 1979). On Henri, see Alfredo Valente, *Robert Henri: Painter-Teacher-Prophet* (New York: New York Cultural Center, 1969); William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, rev. ed. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988; originally published in 1969); Bennard Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1984); Bruce W. Chambers, *Robert Henri, 1865-1929: Selected Paintings* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1986); Bennard Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1991). Also notable are Robert J. Kwiat's articles on Henri's humanistic values and his relationship to the Emerson/Whitman tradition in American thought; see Kwiat's "Robert Henri and the Emerson-Whitman Tradition," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 71 (Sept 1959): 617-36; and his "Robert Henri's Good Theory and Earnest Practice: The Humanistic Values of an American Painter," *Prospects* 4 (1972): 389-401.

Henri and his friends and a wonderful flavor of the time, yet their analysis of actual art works is limited. Other accounts privilege Henri's pre-Armory Show work over his late career, and devote little attention to his portraiture. Thus, the two best sources on Henri's art, Homer's *Robert Henri and His Circle* and Perlman's *Robert Henri: His Life and Career*, are skewed toward Henri's early career and especially his stance as a "revolutionary" who saved American art from the influence of the staid academy. Both accounts rely on the idea of realist art as a particularly American style and as revolutionary because it asserts the raw truth of life rather than the idealized view promoted by academic art. However, both Homer and Perlman suggest that realism as an artistic style and a political strategy was basically outdated and outmoded with the invasion of European abstraction at the Armory Show. These seminal works have cast a long shadow over Henri scholarship. Henri is even today generally regarded as a charismatic teacher whose students surpassed him in talent and fame, and as a vanguard painter whose star quickly fell with the growing popularity and unquestioned dominance of modernist abstraction.

Henri's portraiture has taken a back seat to his evangelizing activities for American art for a number of reasons, foremost among them the longstanding self-imposed American inferiority complex regarding American art and culture in comparison to Europe. American art historians who wanted to stress the American aspects of American art necessarily emphasized Henri's call for a national school while downplaying his European influences and subject matter; by doing so they

could place Henri in an unbroken line of American realists from Copley to Homer and Eakins to the Ashcan School to the 14th Street School and Social Realism.⁵ For this paradigm to work, Henri's later portraits, which abandoned the dark, Manetesque realism of his early paintings, were sometimes seen as too aestheticized, too colorful, too modernist, and therefore too unAmerican. For other scholars, emphasizing Henri's anti-academic progressivism allowed them to assert American art's parallels with European avant-garde movements.

Recent studies have successfully reevaluated aspects of the art and exhibitionary practice of Henri and his circle. Rebecca Zurier and Robert Snyder's *Metropolitan Lives* celebrated Henri and the Ashcan School as recorders of urban life, regarding their paintings as windows into a vibrant and dynamic period in New York history; here, Henri was the leader of the Ashcan School, but Sloan, Bellows, Luks, Glackens, and Shinn were its stars. In H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry's comparison of American Impressionism and realism, Henri's early city subjects were included among the realist works and were viewed as truthful renderings of ugly and unpicturesque subjects. Both these studies focused on Henri's New York scenes and his pre-Armory Show activities, touching only briefly on his portraiture as a whole. In *Painters of a New Century*, Elizabeth Milroy examined the exhibition and public relations strategies of the

⁵Here I am thinking specifically of realist/formalist dichotomies asserted by Barbara Novak's *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1969) and Barbara Rose's *American Art Since 1900: A Critical History* (New York: Praeger, 1969).

organizers of The Eight. While she successfully subverted some longstanding views of this seminal exhibition, her focus was not on Henri's work *per se*, but the group's career strategies and reputation building vis à vis early group exhibitions.⁶

Among Henri scholars, Valerie Leeds addressed the dearth of information on Henri's portraits in her exhibition catalogues and essays, notably *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* and *Robert Henri in Santa Fe: His Work and Influence*, and most recently her dissertation, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest: His Work and Influence."⁷ *My People* traces the arc of Henri's career as a portraitist through his travels, identifies the date and subject for many previously unknown or understudied works, and elaborates on Henri's artistic models. Leeds's discussion of Henri's portraits has contributed much new factual information on Henri's subjects and the development of his career as a portraitist, but analysis and interpretation of these works was not one of her primary goals. Linda Jones Gibbs examined Henri's work in relation to broader intellectual movements. Her

⁶Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995); H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, *American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994); Elizabeth Milroy, *Painters of a New Century: The Eight and American Art* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991).

⁷Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Orlando, Florida: Orlando Museum of Art, 1994); Valerie Ann Leeds, *Robert Henri in Santa Fe: His Work and Influence* (Santa Fe: Gerald Peters Gallery, 1998); Valerie Ann Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest: His Work and Influence," PhD diss., City University of New York, 2000.

dissertation, "Robert Henri and the Cosmopolitan Culture of Fin-de-Siècle France," successfully reevaluated Henri's deep intellectual and philosophical debt to French naturalist literature, French anarchism, and other European sources, and thereby chipped away at Henri's reputation as a purely "American" and a primarily "realist" artist.⁸ Jones Gibbs has provided much food for thought in her reevaluation of Henri's career. However, her focus on the development of Henri's early career, before 1902, is limited in its discussion of specific works, particularly portraits.

Other scholars, especially art historians specializing in western American art, included Henri into their narratives of artists who ventured to paint the life and landscape west of the Mississippi.⁹ While these provide information on Henri's Santa Fe works, their main goal was to reinsert the art of the American west into the mainstream histories of American art. In contrast, other recent books and exhibitions reevaluated some long accepted myths of the west and thereby suggested new interpretations not only of Henri's Santa Fe portraits but of his portrait philosophy in general.¹⁰ For example, W. Jackson Rushing's *Native*

⁸Linda Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri and the Cosmopolitan Culture of Fin-de-Siècle France," PhD diss., City University of New York, 1999. Jones Gibbs's study expands on the ideas of "anti-realism" presented in Judith K. Zilczer's "Anti-Realism in the Ash Can School," *Artforum* 17 (March 1979): 44-49.

⁹See, for example, Patricia Janis Broder, *The American West: The Modern Vision* (New York: Little, Brown, 1984).

¹⁰Among these are Charles Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, and William Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe* (New York: Abbeville Press; and Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1986); William H. Truettner, ed., *The West as America:*

American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism

discussed Henri not so much as a realist but as one of a long line of American modernist artists who sought artistic inspiration in “primitive” cultures, in particular the natives of the American Southwest. His discussion of Henri’s works, though brief, dug below the surface for the meaning of Henri’s portraits of native American subjects, questioning long-held interpretations which took them primarily at face value.

The studies listed above have confirmed Henri as a significant force in the development of American art and have contributed greatly to the known information on this influential artist, yet only Rushing and Jones Gibbs have studied Henri’s works outside of the traditional methodologies of connoisseurship, artistic biography, and the realism vs. abstraction dichotomy. Inspired in part by Rushing and Leah Dilworth’s *Imagining Indians of the Southwest*, which examined the early twentieth century myth of the Indian as created by tourist agencies, anthropologists, collectors of Indian crafts, and modernist writers, this project aims to investigate an important and undervalued group of Henri’s works through an interdisciplinary lens, and to question long-held notions about Henri’s works by studying them within larger social and historical discourses.

Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920 (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press for the National Museum of American Art, 1991); W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); and Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996).

This dissertation recognizes several basic points. First, that Henri's ethnic portraits have been generally neglected in the Henri literature, which has heretofore focused mainly on his teaching, activism, and exhibition organizing. As a body, these works may perhaps present an inaccurate view of Henri's career, because they excluded the majority of his works which were arguably the basis for his reputation as a portraitist in the latter half of his career. Secondly, that the overemphasis on "realism" and "Americanism" in accounts of Henri's career has hindered deeper investigation of broader contexts underlying the production and reception of Henri's portraiture. The portraits have been interpreted as realistic representations of anonymous common people revealing Henri's sympathetic interest in humanity and people from all walks of life. This dissertation aims to put forth a more nuanced and complicated interpretation based on recent studies of visual culture—I would submit that Henri's "realist" style actually hides the more fictional aspects of his portraits, that his portraits do not necessarily portray an authentic view of his subjects but are rather constructed according to white Americans' widely held preconceptions about people from other races and nationalities.

The main thrust of the dissertation, however, goes beyond a general revision of the Henri scholarship. Instead, it considers Henri's portraits of ethnic and national types in relation to broader social and political issues that marked the artistic discourse of Henri's day. Henri's portraits are essentially a catalogue of individuals and types from various races and nations (mainly Irish, Spanish, Dutch,

and Native Americans). Now is the time to interpret them in relation to the wider contemporary discourse on nationalism, primitivism, race, and ethnic tourism. As documents of cultural primitivism, the portraits celebrate peasant or indigenous cultures as antidotes to western society's increasing modernization and industrialization. As such, Henri's images, despite their realist claims to authenticity, reflect national and racial stereotypes, which were in widespread circulation in the early twentieth century due to a confluence of social and historical factors that resulted in an increased awareness of the diversity of humankind, racial differences, and questions about the character of American identity.

Chapter One introduces the interrelated issues that provide the main context for my reading of Henri's portraits and the contemporary attitudes they embody. First, it reevaluates the idea of Henri as a "realist" through a discussion of realism, portraiture, typing, and other representational practices. This chapter also introduces the key theoretical constructs which provide a framework for my reading, among them cultural primitivism, nationalism, scientific racialism, and ethnic tourism. Cultural primitivism involves the romanticization and mystification of pre-industrial or rural societies as an antidote to industrialization. Though this concept has deep roots dating to the sixteenth century age of discovery and the Romantic era's discontent with society, it was especially relevant to early twentieth century thinkers, including artists and writers, who were increasingly pessimistic about the "progress" of modern society. Concurrently, nationalistic movements in

the United States and Europe encouraged people within and without the country to identify and foster a national identity (and racial identity, for race and nation were often seen as one and the same), often in relation to the arts and culture, and usually incorporating some recognition of quickly disappearing “folk” traditions and rituals. Both positive and negative stereotypes resulted, but often the national or racial identity was necessarily oversimplified, objectified, and limited, rather than expanded to give a fuller, more rounded picture of a people. The search for national identity was especially significant in the early twentieth century because of mass migration, imperialism, and colonialism on an unprecedented scale, which instigated the close interaction of people of different nationalities, languages, and customs.

Because of imperialistic expansionism, industrialization, and the growth of capitalistic enterprises (with the corollary need to utilize the world’s natural resources), the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were distinguished for their enormous appetite to discover, catalogue, and collect every aspect of the natural world. One manifestation of this trend was a fascination with the diverse people of the world and their unique, hereditary traits, which began to be studied in ever more depth by anthropologists, ethnologists, archeologists, and other social scientists. The increasing ease of travel and the growing interest in other people and places also resulted in ethnic tourism, a phenomenon in which indigenous, peasant, or pre-industrial societies became themselves the object of tourism,

spectacles to be witnessed before their demise by people of more developed countries.

In the following chapters I examine Henri's portraits of anonymous subjects within this context. My study focuses primarily on the years 1900 to 1917, on the period during which he developed his basic philosophy of portraiture and his ideas regarding people of other nations and cultures. Chapter Two covers Henri's portraits of Spanish gypsies, beggars, flamenco dancers, and the like, which reveal American stereotypes of Spanish as picturesquely poor and quaintly backward or as colorful performers of national folk artistic forms. The portraits essentialize a Spanish national identity that reflected both contemporary American views of Spain colored by art, tourism, and the recent defeat of Spain in Cuba, and nationalist views held by Spaniards of the "Generation of '98," who celebrated Spain's Golden Era and folk traditions in an effort to reaffirm a unique national identity in the face of impending Europeanization and Spanish loss of empire. Chapter Three examines Henri's portraits of Dutch subjects and American preconceptions of the Netherlands as mediated through seventeenth-century Dutch art, the tourist industry, and Dutch-American immigration. Chapter Four focuses on Henri's pictures of Irish peasants as embodiments of Irish self-identity projected by Irish cultural nationalists and the Yeats/Synge literary revival. Chapter Five looks at Henri's images of native Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Chinese immigrants painted in New Mexico and California, and at Henri's oft-quoted article "My People," which expresses his philosophy regarding his many

diverse subjects. Reflecting the convergence of art, tourism, and ethnology in Santa Fe, these portraits form the culmination of Henri's ideas on race, national identity, and cultural primitivism. The diverse and strongly felt reactions to Henri's portraits betray the often xenophobic thinking of Americans in regard to immigration and American identity and the difficulty of defining race in visual images.

In the last decade, "whiteness" studies have explored the issues of race and social status, of the ways that different immigrant groups have inserted themselves into the American social fabric by distinguishing themselves from those of African heritage.¹¹ This dissertation will not engage this discourse because by all indications Henri himself was not directly interested in immigration and race as it pertained to American society. If anything, he believed that assimilation to a mainstream national culture, whether American or otherwise, produced only bland mediocrity. Rather, he sought out pure examples of national traits untainted by modernity and looked to the European and indigenous American past for examples of arts and cultural traditions that might rejuvenate American society.

¹¹Recent treatments of "whiteness" include David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1998); and the journal *Race Traitor* (founded in 1993).

Nor will this dissertation provide any detailed discussions of Henri's portraits of African-Americans. Though *Eva Green* (1907; Wichita Art Museum) and *Willie Gee* (1904; Newark Art Museum) are arguably two of Henri's most famous and iconic portraits, since they appear frequently in books and surveys of American art, they are in fact atypical. Yet, other than these two works, there are only four other known examples of African-Americans in Henri's work. Henri appears not to have been interested in African-American culture, probably for the same reasons he was not attracted to other assimilated American immigrant groups.

My study focuses on the works themselves as primary texts, supplemented by Henri's diaries and personal correspondence and contemporary evaluations of Henri's work. However, the main thrust of the dissertation is a reinterpretation of these works within a broader interdisciplinary context, grounded in recent sociological and historical studies on race, nationalism, immigration, primitivism, and tourism. In this sense, I bring together the important archival work of past art historians with studies which will illuminate the context and the broader motivations for the creation and reception of Henri's portraiture. These broader issues that I have found crucial to my interpretation of Henri's art, and the scholarly approaches to them, will be introduced in chapter one and applied where pertinent throughout the dissertation.

Chapter 1. Social and historical contexts

Over the years, numerous diverse and even diametrically opposed interpretations of Henri's portraits and his career in general have been put forth. In attempting to better understand his portraits, it is helpful to first dissect some of these basic approaches. The most popular approach to evaluating Henri's work is based on the idea of realism and documentation, wherein his portraits are analyzed in relation to their perceived accuracy as representations of certain people or a certain historical period. Other critics and scholars have introduced broader issues by discussing the symbolism of the portraits. For example, many critics in Henri's lifetime discussed his portraits as "types," meaning not specific individuals, but representatives of larger groups identified by shared and identifiable characteristics. Others discussed the portraits in terms of "character", a term that signified many things, including a sense of the sitter's individual personality, moral qualities, racial or national makeup, or even a reference to a role or performance, such as a character in fiction or plays. Implicit in comments that referenced "type" or "character" were commonly held notions about race, class, and nationality. Usually, these underlying beliefs did not need to be spelled out, because they were generally shared by most Americans of the era.

This dissertation focuses primarily on the underlying contexts of Henri's artistic philosophy and his viewers' responses to his portraits of common

anonymous people, specifically the search for national identity and contemporary ideas of nationalism; the attraction to other cultures, particularly folk, “primitives”, peasants, and other pre-industrial cultures as a counter-culture critique; as well as commonly held notions of race, based both in the social sciences and in ideas of nationalism. Broadly understood concepts of nationalism, cultural primitivism, and scientific racialism clearly informed popular attitudes of Henri’s day, but they were often muddled together, reflecting the era’s tendency to wildly speculate, for example, about race, nation, and culture. While today we make a distinction between race and culture—meaning human traits that are based on either genetics or heredity vs. traits and traditions that are socially conditioned—the scientists and pseudo-scientists of Henri’s day viewed them as inherently inseparable. In this chapter, I will attempt to introduce some of these concepts as they were understood by Henri and his contemporaries, and in so doing illuminate some of the contexts which informed both Henri’s portrait production and the common interpretations of his portraits both during Henri’s lifetime and after.

Realism reconsidered

The realist paradigm is by far the most popular approach to the interpretation of Henri’s work. At its most fundamental level, realism in painting concerns itself with mimesis, with an accurate recording of physical data objectively perceived by the senses. Unconcerned with the beauty of the object depicted, the realist artist desires to reproduce the object as seen, with its many

unique flaws and blemishes, rather than smoothing out the defects in order to make the image more pleasing to the eye. In nineteenth century European art, realism acquired the mantle of a political statement, and was related to the idea of contemporaneity, of depicting the daily life of one's own time, even at its most mundane or sordid. Famous examples include Baudelaire's exhortation to French nineteenth-century painters that "il faut être de son temps" (echoed by later American critics, such as Sadakichi Hartmann, who declared that artists should "reflect the sights and scenes of our own times"¹) and Gustave Courbet's credo that he never painted an angel because he never saw one. Additionally, some historians of American art have deemed realism to be the defining characteristic of American painting. In this framework, Henri is viewed as part of a long tradition of American realism, alongside painters John Singleton Copley, Charles Willson Peale, Winslow Homer, Thomas Eakins, William Harnett, and John Peto and writers Walt Whitman and William Dean Howells.²

Henri's brand of realism, in particular, is usually associated with a desire to frankly and honestly portray the world around him. A commonplace in the

¹Sadakichi Hartmann, "A Plea for the Picturesqueness of New York" (1900) in *The Valiant Knights of Daguerre*, ed. Harry Lawton and George Knox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 57.

²Barbara Novak, *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1979). This basic concept of realism as a fundamental quality of American art is echoed by other historians of American art, such as Robert Hughes (*American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* [New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997]).

narratives of the Ashcan School is Henri's insistence on the reconnection of art with life. Thus, in contrast to his contemporaries, the American Impressionists and the academic painters, Henri and the New York realists were committed to the mundane aspects of everyday life; to the working classes, not the wealthy; to the "gritty" and ugly rather than to the picturesque and idealized; to the democratic, not the elite, aspects of American life; to the energy and dynamism of the teeming metropolis, not to the gentility, refinement, and contemplation of rural retreats; to the natural expression of the body and the emotions, not to the intellect and the "higher life"; to the robust and virile rather than to the effete esthetic. The realists have long been associated with an interest in social and political issues, especially the problems of urban society, that the American Impressionists and modernists avoided tackling. They are further distinguished by their interest in current events; immigrants and the working classes; mass media and popular culture; and a tendency to mix social and political ideas with art. They are often compared to the realism of literary contemporaries Stephen Crane and Theodore Dreiser. While the Impressionists' escapist canvases avoided the strife and competition endemic to modern industrial society and the threat to social order and homogeneity posed by immigration, strikes, religious crisis, and class frictions, the realists' revolt against genteel tradition in their frank depictions of immigrant and working class life amounted to an inversion of the accepted class hierarchy. The realists' dark palette and vivid, spontaneous brushwork, adapted from Edouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Gustave Courbet, and Honoré Daumier, as well as

from their Old Master sources Diego Velázquez, Frans Hals, and Rembrandt van Rijn, was intended to proclaim their modernist stance and to emulate the perceived psychological insight of their idols; to the realists' detractors the dark colors corresponded to their paintings' dark subject matter, and earned them epithets such as "the Black Gang", "the Depressionists," and "art insurgents."³

While scholars disagree on certain aspects of Henri's realism (for example, Weinberg believes Henri and the Ashcan realists had a fondness for "editorializing and muckraking," while others emphasize the artists' deliberate separation of art and politics), Henri's career has nonetheless been tightly circumscribed by the discourse of American Progressive Era realism.⁴ Most commentators agree that his

³For comparisons of American realists and Impressionists, see H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, *American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), especially 3-13; Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 220-90; and Hubert Beck, "Urban Iconography in Nineteenth-Century American Painting: From Impressionism to the AshCan School," in *American Icons: Transatlantic Perspectives on Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century American Art*, ed. Thomas W. Gaehtgens and Heinz Ickstadt, Issues and Debates Series (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1992): 319-47. Other significant treatments of Henri within the paradigm of urban realism include Shi, *Facing Facts*, 251-72; and Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia M. Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995). Additionally, see Rebecca Zurier, *Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911-1917*, with an introduction by Leslie Fishbein (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), for a focus on the political imagery of artists such as Sloan and others peripherally connected to the Ashcan School.

⁴Weinberg, Bolger, and Curry, *American Impressionism and Realism*, 4-5.

career flourished between 1900, the year he moved to New York from Philadelphia, and 1913. America's entry into World War I and a national preoccupation with more pressing problems essentially ended the Progressive Era; the Armory Show and the arrival of European modernism ended American realism.

Reflecting this historical and theoretical framework, Henri's works are popularly assumed to represent a correct, authentic, and unmediated view of his subjects. Patricia J. Broder's comments are typical: Henri's "basic philosophy" was "that art must be a record of life—the daily life of average people, not great moments of history or epic deeds or heroes." Portraits such as *Tesuque Papoose* (figure 1.1), she asserted, are a "realistic representation of a Pueblo child."⁵ Similarly, many discussions of Henri's portraits emphasize character and psychological insight, and hence, realism and authenticity, as a fundamental quality of Henri's portraiture. These interpretations are often supported by primary documentation, for descriptions of Henri's first hand experiences with his subjects furthers the portraits' role as records of specific human beings and as unique individuals.

While the realist paradigm helps illuminate the Ashcan School's early New York scenes, its focus on a short ten to fifteen year period in the artists' long careers limits its use as an explanation for their careers as a whole, and moreover, muddles many of the more important issues informing Henri's portraits. For

⁵Patricia Janis Broder, *The American West: The Modern Vision* (New York: Little, Brown, 1984), 29, 43.

example, discussing Henri's and Sloan's activities in Santa Fe, J. J. Brody noted that while they may have tackled social realist subject matter in New York, they conveniently avoided those unpleasant subjects while in New Mexico.⁶ Moreover, Henri's increasing concern with color and aesthetic issues after 1910 lessens somewhat the viewer's identification of portrait with "reality," or at least with the dark palette generally associated with realism. Further, fact or documentation-based interpretations such as Leeds's, Homer's, or Perlman's deemphasize and even ignore the sociohistorical context of the creation and reception of Henri's portraits and his use of his sitters as symbols of larger concepts.

Other scholars have argued that Henri is less a realist than popularly believed, and that in any case realism need not entail strict truth to nature. Linda Jones Gibbs and Judith Zilczer found that Henri was more interested in reproducing the metaphysical than the phenomenological aspects of his environment. Henri Bergson's vitalism, they suggested, inspired Henri to capture the spirit of the individual rather than details of his or her outer appearance. Realism focuses on perception; in contrast, Henri, privileged sensation and feeling.⁷ Following Leo Tolstoy's writings, he believed art to be primarily a means

⁶J. J. Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), 91.

⁷Linda Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri and the Cosmopolitan Culture of Fin-de-Siècle France," PhD diss., City University of New York, 1999; Judith Zilczer, "Anti-Realism in the Ash Can School," *Artforum* 17 (March 1979): 44-49.

of communication of ideas and feelings rather than facts.⁸ Therefore, Henri never intended his paintings to be taken at face value; rather, the viewer is meant to read behind the physical facts. His anti-positivist stance appears throughout *The Art Spirit*, a compilation of his teachings on life and art. "Low art is just telling things; as, There is the night," Henri wrote. "High art gives the feeling of the night. The latter is nearer reality although the former is a copy. . . . Reality does not exist in material things. Rather paint the flying spirit of the bird than its feathers."⁹

⁸On Henri's use of Tolstoy, see Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri," 150-57.

⁹Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*, comp. Margery Ryerson (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1923; reprint, New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 265. Other revisions and modifications of Henri's realism have been suggested recently. For Rebecca Zurier and Robert Snyder (*Metropolitan Lives*, 58-62), Ashcan "realism" was in actuality mediated by some type of aesthetic artifice, based on visual tropes derived from the mass media and other preconceived notions of what real life was like, rather than on actual experience. Thus, Henri and other Ashcan School painters constructed seemingly realistic portrayals of New York life that merely reflected popular attitudes and stereotypes. Necia Gelker ("Transcendental Modernism, 1908-1917: America's Tradition of the New and the Revolt Against the Hobgoblin of Little Minds," Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 1996, 177-82), while recognizing Henri's realist style, categorized him as an early twentieth-century modernist for his revolt against the genteel tradition and his synthesis of many traditional and European ideas to create a new American esthetic. Sloan biographer John Loughery argues that Ashcan realism was not "an examination of crushing social forces" as was the realism of Crane, Dreiser, Norris, Sinclair, Riis, or Hine, and that there were as many 'real' views of the city "as there were individual temperaments through which that experience could be filtered"; see John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 91-94.

The function of portraiture

The shifting degrees of realism or “anti-realism” in Henri’s portraits, and the various meanings of these terms, have contributed to the multiple interpretations of his works. Additionally, as portraits first and foremost, they inherently contain multiple levels of meaning. The oscillation between mimesis and authenticity on the one hand, and symbol and metaphor on the other is an inescapable component of portraiture.

As visual images, portraits work in several ways simultaneously. Above all, a portrait is a visual representation of the sitter, a descriptive record of the sitter’s features: What do I look like? Second, a portrait aims to represent the sitter’s interiority, his or her character, moral or intellectual qualities, and identity as a person: What am I like? Who am I? While the sitter’s physical attributes are easily recorded by the artist and perceived by the viewer, inner character is conceptual and must be expressed symbolically, usually through known social codes and conventions. As a third component, a portrait is primarily a work of art, a “deliberate allusion to the original [the human subject] that is not a product of the viewer’s interpretation but of the portraitist’s intention.”¹⁰

These three basic elements of portraiture parallel three general types of interpretations applied to Henri’s portraits. Some insist on the portrait as a realistic

¹⁰Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 7. My discussion here on the functions and interpretations of portraiture is based on Brilliant, *Portraiture*, 7-15.

representation of an individual as they appeared to Henri. Others maintain that Henri's portraits actually record individual "character" and show "psychological insight" into the person's thoughts, ideas, and life. Still others have viewed Henri's portraits primarily as works of art wherein Henri's own impression of the sitter as expressed through color, paint application, and design, or his use of art historical sources takes precedence; the identity of the sitter is incidental. A fourth function of portraits relates to symbolic value: the sitter as a representative of a "type" or a larger group and the sitter as a metaphor for larger ideas and ideology.

While I address each of these strategies for reading Henri's portraits, the primary focus of this dissertation is their symbolic value as types, for I am concerned with the portraits as social documents that recorded and embodied the significant attitudes and debates of the era. In order to dissect the multiple and diverse meanings of Henri's portraits for him, for his contemporaries, and for later generations, then, we can ask several pertinent questions. How "realistic" are Henri's portraits, either in execution or in concept? How did they serve as records of the physical appearance of Henri's sitters? What messages about his subjects did Henri intend to communicate to viewers? What strategies did viewers use to try to untangle the various messages embedded in the portraits? What stereotypes, preconceptions, and biases are embodied in the pictures and in viewers' responses to them? Instead of searching for a definitive reading of Henri's portraits, an examination of their multiple meanings reveals how the portraits themselves are

more than mere documents of individual appearance, but rather embodied important social issues of Henri's era.

Naturalism and the romanticization of the poor

One of the basic tenets of the Henri scholarship is the artist's firm belief in the necessity of art reflecting real life, that ugliness could be equated with honesty and aliveness, that the drama and chaos of urban life reflected true living, and that the poor and working classes made better subjects for painting than the wealthy. As early as 1908, for example, John Gibbons Huneker noted that paintings by Henri and his colleagues often depicted "the ugly, sordid, or commonplace. . . they are often harsh, crude, or raw."¹¹ George Luks echoed that "a child of the slums will make a better painting than a drawing room lady gone over by a beauty shop"; and Henri student Helen Appleton Read noted that "life seemed . . . to flow stronger and fuller in Bowery Bars and riverfront alleys than in the Knickerbocker Hotel or in the fashionable streets of the upper east side, and the woman who wrapped her baby in a tattered shawl was, by this same reasoning, a more poignant symbol of maternity than one who could afford to buy her layette at the Lilliputian Bazaar."¹² As Matthew Baigell has concluded, Henri and his Ashcan

¹¹ John Gibbons Huneker, "Eight Painters: First Article," *New York Sun*, February 9, 1908, 8.

¹² Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri," 144; Helen Appleton Read, introduction to *Robert Henri and Five of His Pupils: A Loan Exhibition of Paintings* (New York: Century Association, 1946), n.p.

colleagues “found poor people to be . . . happy in their poverty and innocent of the responsibilities of wealthier people.”¹³

As Jones Gibbs has argued, these ideas flourished in late nineteenth century European thought, particularly naturalism and anarchism, which celebrated the poor and working classes as a counterpoint to bourgeois society. Henri’s sympathy with oppressed humanity, his tendency to picture the poor and working classes, and his bohemian disdain for bourgeois life found their inspiration in the writings of such artists and thinkers as Marie Bashkirtseff, Leo Tolstoy, Emile Zola, Guy de Maupassant, Honoré Balzac, Champfleury, Petr Kropotkin, Mikhail Bakunin, all writers he became familiar with as an art student in Paris in the 1890s. Bashkirtseff’s diaries, a best seller around 1887, for example, contained numerous accounts of her observations of Paris street life, particularly the poor and ethnic types. She raved over the chance to draw Spanish “gypsy types,” preferred the “ugly” to the beautiful, and preferred “wild” and “expressive” faces over those of “well brought-up children.” Tolstoy’s anti-elitist beliefs that art should be accessible to all translated into his preference for the lower classes: “the range of feelings experienced by the powerful and rich . . . is far poorer, more limited, and more insignificant than the range of feelings natural to working people.”¹⁴ Likewise,

¹³Matthew Baigell, *A Concise History of American Painting and Sculpture*, rev. ed. (New York: Icon Editions, 1994), 197.

¹⁴Marie Bashkirtseff, *Journal of Marie Bashkirtseff* (1890) and Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art* (1896), quoted in Jones Gibbs, “Robert Henri,” 137, 156.

Champfleury, Zola, Maupassant, and other French naturalists believed that sincerity and authenticity in emotions, behavior, and speech were more prevalent in the lower ranks of society. Though Henri's influences were multiple and varied, these writers were early and seminal influences on Henri's personal and artistic philosophy, and proved to have enduring impact throughout his career.

Similarly, many of Henri's early paintings link him to the naturalists' interests in poor and working class people. Like many of his idols, such as the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage, Henri spent several summers in rural France in the 1880s and 1890s, where he painted the simple life of the Breton peasants. These early Brittany peasant scenes allied him with other European and American painters of his generation who took peasants and rural life as their primary subject matter. Among these were Alexander Harrison, the leader of the American expatriates in France and a regular at Concarneau, who critiqued Henri's paintings his first summer there, as well as Lowell Birge Harrison, Charles Sprague Pearce, Daniel Ridgeway Knight, Elizabeth Nourse, Walter MacEwen, and Gari Melchers.¹⁵

Extremely popular in the late nineteenth century French salons, naturalist peasant themes became readily associated with academic training and traditional artistic careers. Naturalist painting's objective rendering of facts, its reliance on photography, its standardized, impersonal attitudes, its sentimentalism, and its emphasis on narrative, however, were at odds with Henri's beliefs in vitalism and

¹⁵On naturalism, see Gabriel P. Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism: The Naturalist Impulse* (New York: Abrams, 1992).

anarchism and his aim to express life itself, rather than mere external appearances.¹⁶ Yet the main philosophical thrust of the movement--the attraction to the "ugly" side of life and the idea of the poor, especially traditional rural folk, as a nostalgic alternative to overly civilized bourgeois society--exerted a strong pull on Henri throughout his career.

In fact, the mystification of the peasant, often connected with nationalist sentiments, was a theme that characterized the work of numerous artists around the turn of the twentieth century. Numerous examples of this trend abound, from the Germans Otto Modersohn, Fritz Overbeck, Hans am Ende, and Paula Modersohn-Becker, who formed the Worpswede community in the 1890s, to Scandinavian artists such as Anders Zorn who painted Swedish folk traditions, to Vassily Kandinsky and other Russian artists who identified with Russian folklore. Additionally, in the United States, Henri's Ashcan colleagues, such as Sloan, Luks, Jerome Myers, and others sought a natural frame of mind in the former European peasants, now New Yorkers, of the Lower East Side. Henri himself found his peasants in Spain, Ireland, Holland, and New Mexico.

Henri scholars have tended to lump his portraits of common people together in one group, as types outside the mainstream, "unspoiled" by

¹⁶Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri," 352. Numerous other modernists also found this to be a problem, and it helped contribute to the waning of naturalism by 1900. Moreover, the patronage for peasant scenes was lacking in the United States, as figure painting and landscapes reflecting American themes were more desired by collectors; see Weisberg, *Beyond Impressionism*, 274.

contemporary society, as people who manifested the dignity and vitality of the human race. For example, Homer maintained that Henri was interested in the individual above all: “they fascinated him as human beings, not because they were quaint, picturesque subjects that would attract American buyers.”¹⁷ Yet when we survey the different individuals catalogued in Henri’s portraits, we must reflect on Henri’s selection process. Why these particular subjects? What attracted Henri to them? Was Henri truly interested in the unique qualities of each individual sitter, or did he choose them for more symbolic reasons? If so, what qualities in each did Henri want to capture and to communicate to his audience?

Cultural primitivism and modernism

When we examine Henri’s portraits of anonymous subjects as a group, it becomes clear that the large majority depict individuals of less developed, traditional, or “primitive” segments of society: Dutch fisherman, Irish peasants, Spanish gypsies, Mexican-American peons, and native Americans. As a group, these portraits typify one of the defining aspects of modernism: the Euro-American primitivistic desire to appropriate the authentic life of the “other” as a counterculture critique. As compared to naturalism, an artistic and literary movement circumscribed by a specific style and time period, primitivism is a broader manifestation of discontent with the modern era, a discursive formation

¹⁷William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, rev. ed. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988), 241, 244.

posed against what is seen to constitute civilization from a given standpoint. As Arthur O. Lovejoy posited, cultural primitivism is “the discontent of the civilized with civilization, or with some conspicuous and characteristic feature of it. It is the belief of men living in a relatively highly evolved and complex cultural condition that a life far simpler and less sophisticated in some or in all respects is a more desirable life.”¹⁸

As a broader discourse, cultural primitivism has long been an inherent feature of modern Euro-American intellectual thought. From at least the sixteenth century on, European contact with other cultures and greater knowledge about Europe's own past provided an outlet for discontent with contemporary society among many disaffected European artists and writers. For the public at large, however, progress was usually viewed in terms of cultural evolution or as the course of empire, and defined almost exclusively in favorable terms. Any less civilized peoples who got in the way of the onward march of progress were viewed as expendable. In this popular view, the natives of the American continent, for example, were ruthless, pagan savages, or at best as bad stewards of the land, and therefore possessed few if any redeeming values. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, the closing of the American frontier, the end of the Indian wars and the restriction of most native Americans to reservations, imperialism (which brought white Americans and Europeans in contact with primitive tribes in the Phillippines,

¹⁸ Arthur O. Lovejoy and George Boas, *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1935), 7.

Africa, and other remote lands), and rapid industrialization and urbanization forced mass migrations and emigrations of people from rural to urban centers, causing many to ponder the implications of this large-scale societal transformation. What was being gained? What was being lost? Henri's counterculture critique was manifested in his many paintings of poor and working class subjects from peasant and preindustrial cultures, subjects whose authenticity and fullness of life could provide a model for the reform of American society, which many viewed as overcivilized, repressive, and stifling.

Henri's primitivistic outlook seems to me to be the primary guiding force behind his portraits, and is the main topic of this dissertation. Yet Henri has generally been left out of the many recent discussions on art and primitivism, primarily because these studies have concerned themselves almost exclusively with abstraction and formal experimentation. Robert Goldwater's seminal 1938 study *Primitivism in Modern Art*, for example, traced the multiple and diverse ways that Western artists "borrowed" visual forms and aesthetic principles from "primitive" peoples, particularly from Africa, Oceania, or other remote and exotic places, to produce a new aesthetic language for western art. Primitivists such as Paul Gauguin, Pablo Picasso, the Fauves, Der Blaue Reiter, and Die Brücke, to name but a few, were characteristically inspired by "primitive" art to tap into their savage instincts and primordial impulses in order to transcend their academic training and

contemporary mindset.¹⁹ In these histories of modernist primitivism, the focus is clearly on form above content, and on the use and appropriation of “primitive” art forms to subvert or reinvent the European classical tradition. As Kirk Varnedoe admitted, “primitivism in modern art often has no grounding in textual information on the societies that produced the tribal objects it admires. It operates on the notion that what the Grebo mask tells us has a validity independent of, and not inferior to, what the Grebo mask maker might say, or the field reporter describe.”²⁰

Henri as cultural primitivist

Henri’s many written statements—letters, interviews, published articles—make clear that he valued his sitters primarily as representatives of societal traditions and lifestyles which he admired. In particular, he was most attracted to isolated rural areas where people practiced traditional folkways; lived in

¹⁹The standard sources on primitivism in art include Frances S. Connelly, *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art*, enl. ed. (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1986); Colin Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art* (New York and London: Thames and Hudson, 1994); Kirk Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard: What Makes Modern Art Modern* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990); William Rubin, ‘Primitivism’ in *20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and Modern*, 2 vols. (New York: Museum of Modern Art), 1984; and Gill Perry, “Primitivism and the ‘Modern,’” in Charles Harrison et al., *Primitivism, Cubism, and Abstraction* (New Haven and London: Yale Open University, 1993).

²⁰Varnedoe, *A Fine Disregard*, 210-11, 213.

communally based, egalitarian societies; made their living from the land; and expressed individual and communal values through spiritual beliefs and artistic productions passed down through the generations. In contrast to modern European and American society, which was based on capitalism, materialism, industry and technology, empiricism, individualism, institutionalized religion, and formal education, Henri valued peasant and preindustrial cultures for their ancient mystical and spiritual beliefs, their self-sufficiency and resourcefulness developed in response to demanding environmental conditions, their natural artistic talents which touched all aspects of their daily lives, their resistance to the norms of mainstream society, and their collective or community-based orientation. For Henri, these traditional societies, which existed largely outside of mainstream society, represented a cure for the ills of modernity, because they could restore earlier values and customs that were obliterated by modern industrial society.

In Holland, he preferred not bustling Amsterdam but the villages of Volendam and Haarlem, where the Dutch wore traditional costumes, supported themselves primarily through farming and fishing, and lived a generally happy life in a classless, democratic society. "The [Dutch] are neither rich nor poor. They are thrifty. They are good natured. They smile always," he wrote. Though he appreciated the design and the artistry of their traditional costumes, and greatly admired their rich artistic tradition, based in Frans Hals, Rembrandt van Rijn, and other seventeenth century painters, he found the Dutch a little too even-tempered to enjoy life to its fullest. "They are at that even balance that makes perhaps easy

lives for them but lives devoid of any of those richnesses which a greater range of feeling makes possible."²¹

Henri sought authenticity, direct engagement with life, and full expression of feelings, emotions, creative impulses, and natural instincts. Spain provided more of the hotheaded, freedom-loving, passionate, and impetuous characters he sought. In Madrid, Henri immersed himself in Spanish culture, which was rooted in ages old pastimes and folk traditions. Though the financial and governmental capital of Spain, Madrid was at that time viewed as quaint and backward with respect to other European capitals, and the Iberian peninsula, isolated by the Pyrenees from the rest of Europe, had largely been left out of the industrialization and modernization that dramatically changed the rest of the continent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Spain, Henri reveled in longstanding traditions, such as bullfights, flamenco, and Seville's Holy Week, with its long processions of bizarrely costumed celebrants. He was particularly drawn to the gypsies, whom he admired for their anti-materialist lifestyles and for their sense of freedom and passion for life, in spite of their poverty.²²

²¹Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, August 11, 1907, Robert Henri Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven (hereafter cited as Beinecke), box 16, folder 387.

²²The gypsy would become one of Henri's most persistent themes, both in Spain and later. He even found gypsy subjects in such unlikely locals as Ogunquit, Maine, La Jolla, California, and Santa Fe, New Mexico, and even compared his Mexican sitters to gypsies. While gypsies were a natural subject in Spain, where national traditions are deeply rooted in gypsy tradition and folklife, Henri was

Visiting Ireland in 1913, Henri found little appeal in the slum-filled, sooty cities of Queenstown, Cork, and Limerick, and instead delighted in the fresh air and traditional life of the country villages of counties Mayo and Connemara. There, largely untouched by modern civilization, the people practiced ages old methods of fishing and farming. Despite conditions of extreme poverty and deprivation, they appealed to Henri for their creativity, imagination, naive superstitions, collective economy, and a lifestyle tied intimately to the rhythms of nature. Significantly, Henri's appreciation of the Irish peasant echoed a similar recognition by the middle-class Anglo-Irish intelligentsia, who appropriated them as symbols of Irish cultural nationalism.

In New Mexico, Henri became associated with the burgeoning artist colonies of Santa Fe and Taos, which were quickly becoming popular refuges for America's disaffected urban intelligentsia, especially artists, writers, and folklorists. For these visitors, life in Santa Fe and Taos revolved largely around the local native American populations, whose ancient communal traditions, spiritual beliefs, ceremonial performances, architectural styles, and artistic productions offered an inspirational alternative to the hectic pace of urban life. Henri's visit to Santa Fe was encouraged by the anthropologist Edgar L. Hewett, the founder of the Museum of New Mexico and the director of the Archaeological Institute of America's School of American Research in Santa Fe, a linchpin in the development

deeply influenced by the French naturalist and realist artists' fondness for gypsies as a metaphor for the bohemian anti-bourgeois lifestyle.

of the city as a major southwestern tourist destination through his promotion of anthropology, art, and tourism, all of which depended on a mythification of local native American peoples and their lifestyles.

Cultural nationalism

Clearly Henri's subjects appealed to him because of their shared potential as counterculture critique and as models for the rejuvenation of modern society. They were not simply individuals who appealed to Henri as humans, but rather as sitters from specific countries who were meant to embody specific national characteristics. To be sure, Henri scholars have long acknowledged the specific national or racial origins of his sitters, but this information was incorporated primarily on a factual level, to supply more background details about the portrait, the sitter, or Henri's interaction with them, or as a means to evaluate the truthfulness or accuracy of the portrait itself as a depiction of a person from a specific time and place. Yet, if we are to understand the symbolic value of Henri's portraits, over and above any potential authenticity or "realism" they may represent, the issue of national identity emerges as significant because it reflects important and widespread attitudes of Henri's day regarding people of various races and nationalities and their relation to Americans and American identity specifically. Moreover, for Henri and many of his contemporaries, these people offered not only a viable alternative to modern society, but a means of national reinvigoration through a reconnection with a more vital and glorious past.

Just as cultural primitivism was at bottom a reaction to the perceived ills of modern society, so also was late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century nationalism primarily a product of modernism. According to historian Eric Hobsbawm, the idea of “nation” was new in nineteenth-century Europe. Around 1900, the nation became equated with governmental structure and centralized bureaucracy, which replaced previous views of the nation as merely a group of people with shared social characteristics, such as language, climate, local economies, and local traditions. With this shift in emphasis, the need for a distinct and identifiable national identity increased dramatically, mainly as a response to the onrush of modernity and unprecedented migrations which forced drastic social changes and social stratifications, and brought strangers in close contact with each other, “none, as yet, with the habits and conventions of coexistence.”²³

While many nationalist movements incorporated political goals primarily, such as the formation of a representative state for the community to gain equal representation in government, or in anti-colonial or anti-imperialist aspirations for national independence by peoples under foreign political or economic domination, others included or were comprised primarily of a cultural component. A significant element of cultural nationalism is the identification of national identity with longstanding local traditions and ethnic traits. In the face of increasing modernism and industrialization, which caused or even forced people to aspire to or conform

²³E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992): 109.

to a homogenized capitalist European culture, nationalist leaders often looked to the past, locating identity in traditional practices and sites which differentiated their country from others, even as these customs were quickly disappearing. During this period, then, the search for national identity corresponded to the concurrent trend toward anti-modernism and cultural primitivism in its belief that the retention of preindustrial and preliterate societal traditions would offset the perceived ills of progress, such as loss of distinct identity, alienation, and disruption of social patterns, networks, and communities.

John Hutchinson's definition of cultural nationalism as a program of moral regeneration is particularly relevant to understanding the primitivist philosophy of Henri and his like-minded contemporaries.²⁴ According to Hutchinson, cultural nationalists view the nation as a distinctive civilization, which is the product of its unique history, culture, and geographical profile. More than just a political unit or a government body, the nation is seen as a cosmology, a creative force, an organic being. Because the nation's recent decay could be attributed to inner degeneration, excessive rationalism, or excessive dependence on the state bureaucracy, its future revitalization depended on a resurgence of energy achieved by returning to the creative life-principle of the nation. The national identity, which sought to reunite the different aspects of the nation—traditional and modern, agriculture and

²⁴John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), excerpted as "Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration," in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith, Oxford Readers (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122-31.

industry, science and religion—was in continuous evolution and could only be grasped as a *gestalt*.

For this reason, Hutchinson claimed, cultural nationalism is a product of the intelligentsia, of historical scholars, folklorists, and artists, who seek the national destiny and the authentic purpose of the nation by rediscovering and recovering the “mythic” patterns of “the people”, including a migration story, a founding myth, a Golden Age of cultural splendor, a period of decay, and a promise of regeneration.²⁵ The source of the nation’s creativity is located in the people, each of whom is regarded as an artist-creator, and the great artists are those who create out of the collective experience of the people. Thus, cultural nationalists resisted the inherent bureaucratic drive “that seeks to impose a mechanical uniformity on living cultures” and viewed the nation as a spontaneous social order that “cannot be constructed like a state from above but only resuscitated from the bottom up.” Or in other words, “the glory of a country comes not from its political power but

²⁵While Ernest Gellner (*Nations and Nationalism* [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983], 57-61) saw cultural nationalism’s reassertion of traditionalist values as a “defensive response by educated elites to the impact of exogenous modernism” on existing social orders, Hutchinson viewed it as a way to integrate the traditional and the modern on a higher level, in order to “catapult the nation from present backwardness and divisions to the most advanced stage of social development.” On the role of the intelligentsia in cultural nationalism, see also Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London and New York: Penguin, 1991), 91-98.

from the culture of its people and the contribution of its thinkers and educators to humanity.”²⁶

Artisanal products as markers of racial and national identity

The concept of national identity as a “moral regeneration” and as a guiding force in helping to sort out and possibly ameliorate the chaos of modernity is a dominant aspect of Henri’s portraiture. In fact, as we shall see, the majority of Henri’s portraits are intended as embodiments of nationality through the portrayal of national character and folk practices. In Henri’s portraits, costume, music and dance, sport, celebrations and rituals, as well as artisanal products and material culture are all used as implicit or explicit symbols of national identity.

Costume, or the art of dress, was, for example, commonly celebrated in Henri’s era as “a distinguishing mark of a nation’s personality.” Linking costume to heredity and cultural factors, Spanish writer Isabel de Palencia declared that Spain’s types of regional dress were not only very different and distinct, but more important, costume was “singularly expressive of the racial influences which have brought to bear upon it.”²⁷ Confirming the importance of costume in national

²⁶Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration,” 124. Anthony Smith also sees the need for national traditions and legends to the social disruptions caused by modernity; see chapter 8, “Legends and Landscapes,” in Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford and Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 174-208.

²⁷Isabel de Palencia, *The Regional Costumes of Spain: Their Importance as a Primitive Expression of the Aesthetic Ideals of the Nation* (London: B.T. Batsford,

identity and its popularity with outsiders, countless tourist guides supplied illustrations and notes commenting on the peculiarities of local dress. Some, like L. Higgin's *Spanish Life in Town and Country* merely captioned photographs of individuals in local costumes as "peasants"; others like Palencia's supplied numerous details on local and regional customs.²⁸ Similarly, paintings by Spanish painters Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida and Ignacio Zuloaga that recorded regional customs and regional dress were widely praised for their "ethnographical fidelity": Zuloaga, Christian Brinton wrote, "was reading Spanish types and traits closer and deeper than they had been read for a least a century."²⁹ Echoing this tendency to link costume with national identity, Henri painted a number of portraits of a Segovian peasant girl in local dress, flamenco dancers wearing the white face powder and fringed shawls typical of their region, native American children adorned in ceremonial costumes, and Irish peasant children wearing homespun fabrics. These exotic costumes not only signified his sitters' status as "other" and

1926), 9-10.

²⁸L. Higgin, *Spanish Life in Town and Country* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906).

²⁹Christian Brinton, *Modern Artists* (New York: Baker and Taylor Company, 1908), 251, 254. Brinton's comments typified those of other critics of the era who celebrated the expression of national character in painting in reaction to more generalized French-European style. Similar national revivals took place in other European countries at this time; see, for example, Michelle Facos, *Nationalism and the Nordic Imagination: Swedish Art of the 1890s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

set them apart from American mainstream culture that prized mass-produced clothing, but also identified them with their particular national and ethnic heritage.

For Henri and others of his generation, these national customs were admired because they were believed to be thoroughly integrated into daily life, and as such were an organic and authentic expression of the spirit of the people. Irish peasant clothing, for example, reflected not only function, but it was made by hand using natural materials available to its makers, in this case, wool and natural dyes. Similarly, the Irish bardic tradition, or the Irish tendency toward poetry, storytelling, and imaginative discourse, was not learned through formal education, but was passed down through the generations in close-knit, family-oriented communities. Native American arts traditions, such as ceremonial dances and weaving and pottery traditions, were seen as equally authentic expressions of the spirit of a people. "Here in the pueblos of New Mexico," Henri wrote, "the Indians still make beautiful pottery and rugs, works which are mysterious and at the same time revealing of some great life principle which the old race had. . . . They have art as a part of each one's life. The whole pueblo manifests itself in a piece of pottery."³⁰

It is no coincidence, then, that Henri's portraits depict common, ordinary people, including peasants, fishermen, gypsies, farmers, and other members of the lower classes, for cultural nationalism concerned itself primarily with the traditions

³⁰Henri, "Letter from New Mexico," in *The Art Spirit*, 187-88.

and artistic expressions of “the people”, or the “folk”, those people who had been the least tainted by industrial society but who, ironically, were also in danger of being eradicated by the onrush of modernity.³¹ Among modern nations, Nelson Graburn has written, there is an “almost universal proclivity . . . to collect and display the art of their present and past minority peoples as symbols of their national identity.”³² Nationalism, then, was a form of cultural primitivism, in that it proposed to salvage the best and most enduring traditions of the people and incorporate them into the new, modern society, thus creating an amalgam of old and new that superseded both.

Nationalism in American art: calls for a national school

Henri scholars have long acknowledged his nationalist outlook. However, Henri’s ideas, as elucidated in correspondence, interviews, and published writings, have been linked not to his paintings, but to his pedagogical and exhibition practices, as well as to his general anarchist philosophy. He distrusted government, institutionalized religion, and formal education as rigid and ossified, therefore

³¹Nelson H. H. Graburn (“Introduction,” *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], 3-4) defined “primitives” as “members of a recently conquered group,” as “previously autonomous peoples who had been overrun by the colonial powers.” “Folk” was defined as people “of the long-familiar ‘lower classes’ of complex societies”, ie. peasants. The idea of the “folk” or of the “people” was created in the nineteenth century to distinguish the literate upper class strata from the lower classes, often non-literate rural peoples following local and/or national traditions.

³²Graburn, *Ethnic and Tourist Arts*, 28.

binding and limiting to individual thought and artistic expression. In advocating the development of an American art, Henri strongly asserted that an American identity would develop organically if the country's leaders encouraged individual independence, experimentation, and creativity. Like Hippolyte Taine and other essentialists who believed that the expression of national identity was a given, in that each person was indelibly and inescapably marked by the climate, history, and social milieu of his nation, Henri also believed that Americans could not help but express American identity.

Take any American and develop his mind and soul and heart to the fullest by the right work and the right study, and then let him find through this training the utmost freedom of expression, a fluid technique which will respond to every inspiration and enthusiasm which thrills him, and without question his art will be characteristically American, whatever the subject.³³

Moreover, like many cultural nationalists, Henri identified with "the people", for he asserted that national character would grow from the country's fertile soil, and could not be imposed from above.

As I see it, there is only one reason for the development of art in America, and that is that the people of America learn the means of expressing themselves in their own time and in their own land. In this country we have no need for art as a culture; no need of art as a refined and elegant performance; no need of art for poetry's sake, or any of these things for their own sake. What we do need is art that expresses the *spirit* of the people today. It is necessary for the people

³³Robert Henri, "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School," *Craftsman* 15 (January 1909): 387.

of this country. . . to understand that [art] is the expression of the temperament of the people.³⁴

Thus, the nation would be rejuvenated through a synthesis of old and new to break with ossified traditions and thereby to create a more vital nation based on the people. These views were seconded by other critics of the day, including Mary Fanton Roberts, who wrote that an artist “*must paint best what he feels and knows and understands best*”; Christian Brinton, who wrote that every artist who freely expresses himself is a nationalist; and the Irishman George Moore, who wrote that national character was achieved by “remaining at home and saturating ourselves in the spirit of our land until it oozes from our pens and pencils in every slightest word, in every slightest touch.”³⁵

Clearly, some of Henri’s more immediate aims in making these statements were the promotion of more liberal policies in American art education and art exhibition practices, some of which he achieved in his own teaching and in his organization of the exhibitions “The Eight” and the Society of Independent Artists. The role of the National Academy of Design in promoting or hindering the development of native talent, for instance, was debated in a number of venues,

³⁴Robert Henri, “The New York Exhibition of Independent Artists,” *Craftsman* 18 (May 1910): 161.

³⁵Giles Edgerton, “The Younger American Painters: Are They Creating a National Art?” *Craftsman* 13 (Feb 1908): 512-32; Brinton, *Modern Artists*, 100; George Moore, *Modern Painting* (1893), quoted in Jones Gibbs, “Robert Henri,” 186. Moore’s writing was influential on the development of Henri’s own ideas, while Edgerton [Mary Fanton Roberts] and Brinton were friends and contemporaries of Henri.

including *The Craftsman*. Yet his focus on developing an American art was part of a much larger ongoing debate on American identity. Many prominent thinkers of Henri's day believed that the United States should have its own national identity in the arts, just as France, Spain, Holland, Germany, and numerous other European countries manifested their distinct national character and history through their arts and cultural traditions. In fact, many further asserted that it was of utmost importance that the country's rapidly expanding prominence as a world economic and military leader must be paralleled by an equal eminence in its artistic productions.³⁶ (A typical newspaper headline of the era records this concern: "Panama Exposition to Show America's Progress in Art: It Will Demonstrate that the United States Has a School, as Native as the French or the Italian, That Represents National Life."³⁷)

Yet in contrast to Henri's open-ended definition of a national art, other cultural critics proposed more concrete plans as to what an American art should

³⁶This overriding concern persisted throughout the first half of the twentieth century, until the 'triumph of American painting' shifted the art world's emphasis from Europe to the United States in the 1950s. For more on nationalism in American art, see Diane P. Fischer, "Constructing the 'American School' of 1900" and Gail Stavitsky, "The Legacy of the 'American School': 1901-1938," in *Paris 1900: The "American School" at the Universal Exposition*, ed. Diane P. Fischer, (Monclair, New Jersey: Montclair Art Museum, 1999), 1-94, 181-92; and Matthew Baigell, "American Art and National Identity: The 1920s," *Arts* (February 1987); reprinted in *Critical Issues in American Art: A Book of Readings*, ed. Mary Ann Calo (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998), 269-84.

³⁷*Philadelphia Ledger*, February 25, 1913, clipping in Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Records, 1805-1976, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., reel P56, frame 39.

look like. Specifically, they believed that American art should reflect distinctly American values and depict uniquely American subjects, or in the opinion of one writer, “more sunlight and fewer *cabarets*, more children and fewer *boulevardiers*, more New England, more New York, more of our big vital West, more portraits that are virile and human, more landscapes that are the very essence of what we grow homesick for when away from America.” In throwing off the yoke of European tradition, artists should abandon European styles and subject matter, let “ourselves forget the Holland lowlands . . . and leave to Sorolla and Zuloaga the presentation of *hidalgos* and *picadors*.”³⁸

How does Henri’s nationalistic philosophy relate to his portraits? Henri’s articles on nationalism were paralleled by an examination of national identity in his paintings. In particular, they reflected not only his study of and appreciation for Spanish, Dutch, and Irish art, history, and culture, but also his sympathy with the aims of cultural nationalists both in Europe and the United States. In Spain during the summer of 1908 he befriended a group of journalists and artists, who exposed him to much of the critical debate of the Spanish intellectuals of the “generation of 1898.” In the wake of the Spanish defeat to the United States in Cuba and the country’s loss of colonies in the western hemisphere, these nationalists sought a revivification of Spain’s former glory, generally based in Spain’s Golden Era of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in folk traditions such as bullfighting and

³⁸“More of the American Spirit in the Spring Exhibition of the National Academy of Design,” *Craftsman* 16 (May 1909): 176.

flamenco. Henri's Spanish paintings, in turn, explored national identity as embodied by gypsies, bullfighters, dancers, *guitareros*, and peasants. In New York in 1909, Henri began what was to become a close and important friendship with John Butler Yeats, the American spokesman for the Irish Literary Revival, a movement which sought the essence of Irish national identity through the reclamation, revival, and preservation of traditional Irish art, language, and culture. These ideas would eventually emerge in his portraits of 1913, in which he portrayed western Ireland's peasants, who were celebrated by Yeats's son William Butler Yeats and his colleagues as the font of ancient Gaelic tradition. In venerating these societies in which art was seen to be an integral part of daily life, not just art for art's sake or a pastime of the rich, Henri demonstrated his beliefs that art should belong to everyone. In other words, while Henri's writings proselytized for an American art, his ideas were in fact a synthesis of European political, intellectual, and artistic trends.³⁹

Significantly, though Henri has long been associated with a nationalistic movement in American art, few scholars have acknowledged the seeming irony

³⁹As Homer correctly observed (*Robert Henri and His Circle*, 141), Henri was not a "strident nationalist" like Thomas Hart Benton, John Steuart Curry, and Grant Wood, but both a nationalist and an internationalist. Echoing Homer, Leeds also asserted that Henri himself asserted he was not interested in "screech eagle patriotism", and believed that American identity could rightly derive from American interpretation, though not slavish imitation, of European models. As Necia Gelker concluded, such a synthesis of both European and American models to create an indigenous form of American culture was the hallmark of the modernist revolt, in which Henri played an important role; see Gelker, "Transcendental Modernism."

that a great majority of Henri's own productions depict decidedly unAmerican subjects.⁴⁰ None have acknowledged his connections with European nationalists and their similar identification with "the people" and national folk customs. How do we reconcile Henri's advocacy of American artistic identity with his own preference for foreign subjects? It seems that Henri was not so interested in American identity *per se* as in national identity as an overriding concept, how it is manifested in the people, how it is encouraged and maintained, and how it results in a national character and artistic expression. In other words, Henri was contemplating the national identity of the United States by comparison with other cultures. While he painted some American subjects while visiting California and New Mexico, many of these were in fact somewhat controversial, in that they depicted marginalized, "invisible," or hyphenated Americans--Native Americans, Asian-Americans, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans--not the New England Anglo-Saxon type promoted by many nationalist critics. The general tenor of the contemporary responses to these portraits indicated that many Americans were greatly conflicted as to what American identity actually was and who should be considered an American.

⁴⁰Jones Gibbs noted this inconsistency in pointing out that both Henri and George Moore, whose writings were highly influential on Henri, were both expatriates for much of their careers; see Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri," 186.

The sociology of tourism

And finally, we must consider Henri's portraits within the context of modern tourism, which, like cultural primitivism and cultural nationalism, can be viewed in large part as a product and a critique of modernism in its inherent contrast of developed and less developed cultures. Henri's biographers have thus far regarded his travels as either part of his student study of art historical models, as incidental to his teaching duties, or simply as retirement pastimes, and as such they have deemed the portraits as far less important than Henri's earlier New York subjects.⁴¹ In reality, almost the opposite is true. In New York Henri was extremely occupied with his various duties as a teacher and arts organizer—providing art criticisms, ordering frames, writing articles, granting interviews, shipping paintings to the many exhibitions he participated in, painting commissioned portraits of theater and society figures, and socializing with artists, critics, dancers, writers, anarchists, and other bohemian personalities. Only during summers away from New York could he concentrate on his own work, which he would then show the following winter and spring exhibition season. On these trips, Henri was not looking only for “paintable types”, but for people who embodied his deeply held beliefs that preindustrial cultures could provide the key to the rejuvenation of overly civilized

⁴¹ Leeds has examined Henri's travels in relation to Henri's search for “paintable types”, but does not examine the context of modern tourism in mediating Henri's preconceptions and interpretations of his subjects. Additionally, Rebecca Zurier and Robert Snyder's *Metropolitan Lives* has accommodated, if not contributed to, the general perception that Henri's early New York scenes are the most important of his career.

modern society. While in essence Henri's works really are representations of his touristic experiences, they are significant in that travel was an integral component not only of modernity but also of the critical discourse of cultural primitivism. First of all, Henri's portraits of "the people" would not have been possible if not for the burgeoning tourist industry, which was rapidly expanding at the beginning of the twentieth century. More important, portraits such as Henri's, which embodied his views on the exemplary character, traditions, and folkways of ethnic "others" living in faraway, less civilized places, demonstrate the tendency to seek in "primitive" societies a therapeutic antidote to the stresses of modern life as well as a model for the reform of modern industrial society. Moreover, when viewed as a product of modern tourism, Henri's portraits reveal deep cracks in the arguments of scholars who wish to view them as authentic portrayals of real individuals. Just as tourism itself promotes and concretizes fictions about the objects of tourism, including and especially ethnic "others" and their communal lifestyles, Henri's portraits both reflect and reproduce many of these same fictions and stereotypes, albeit in a "realist" guise.

In examining Henri's many portraits of diverse individuals, we must take into consideration his experiences as a tourist and the discourse of tourism as it informed his artistic philosophy and his choice of subjects. Why did Henri choose to visit these particular cities or regions? How did his experiences and expectations as a tourist color his views of the subjects with whom he came into contact? How were these attitudes inflected in his portraits? To what degree were his subjects

performing authenticity in response to Henri's implicit or explicit expectations? How did Henri's audience respond to the portraits? In attempting to more fully understand Henri's portraits and his viewers' responses to them, a legitimate source of inquiry would be the discourse of tourism; the relationships between tourists and locals; and national, commercial, or other institutions that produce information about locals that might influence or replace personal experience.

Celebrating Henri's genius and uniqueness, Henri's biographers have preferred to view him as a sophisticated traveler rather than a mere tourist. Yet Henri's travels were in fact hardly atypical for his generation. As many scholars of tourism have observed, tourism was one of the defining pursuits of the modern era. In particular, the early twentieth century represents "the first moment when modern mass tourism and its support institutions were fully elaborated as we know them today."⁴² Clearly, Henri's presence in, not to mention the popularity of his depictions of, these places would have been difficult if not impossible if not for a rapidly expanding tourist industry—guidebooks, railroad and cruise lines, hotels, posters, postcards, and other visual aids—to facilitate his travel, accommodation, and experience of other cultures.

⁴²Further, "the special reasons for travel (to visit a friend, fair, ceremony, or religious shrine, to do business or research, to shop for a special article) were giving way to the modern idea that no reason need be given to visit Paris [or other tourist destination] except to see the city itself and its sites"; Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 60, 69.

In fact, Henri was only one of countless tourists in the areas he visited. For example, his 1895 bicycle tour of the Low Countries to view Old Master paintings was not the whimsical invention of an avid art student; rather, Baedeker's, the League of American Wheelmen, and other popular guidebooks had long recommended the bicycle tour as a great way to see Belgium and the Netherlands, and countless art students studying in Paris undertook the journey. Henri's letters from Spain, Holland, and Ireland betray evidence of his implicit dependence on tourist literature, including Baedeker's popular guidebooks, Cooks and Sons tourist agencies, and even the occasional packaged tour or day trip. Moreover, the preconceptions of Henri and his students were often swayed by popular notions. In Holland in 1907, for example, Henri noted that some of his students were disappointed that the place did not match up to their expectations, colored, no doubt, by preconceived images fostered by art and tourism.⁴³

As bohemian artists and intellectuals, Henri and his friends viewed themselves as far above the mainstream tourist clichés—Walter Pach wryly commented, for example, that during the summer the Rijksmuseum did not allow serious artists such as himself to make copies because “it interfere[d] with the tourist trade.”⁴⁴ Yet even they were unable to completely avoid the fundamental

⁴³Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, August 11, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 387.

⁴⁴Walter Pach, Haarlem, to Henri, Madrid, August 27, 1906, Beinecke, box 7, folder 183.

assumptions of modern tourism that were all-pervasive in Euro-American culture: the implicit comparisons of “civilized” with less sophisticated societies and the stereotypes promoted by tourist culture.

Some scholars of modern tourism, such as John Urry, have posited tourism as a quintessential search for difference, or liminality, that experience that will take the tourist “completely out of everyday existence into another, somehow revelatory world” in which “codes of normal social experience were reversed.” This rubbing together of the familiar and unfamiliar causes the tourist to act and think in new ways, thus the fascination or *frisson* found by people seeking liminality.⁴⁵ Confirming this touristic desire for liminality, M. Elizabeth Boone has noted that the appeal of Spain to tourists, including artists, lay in its exoticism, its faraway quality, its opportunity to shed conventional social codes and to enjoy something as violent and bloody as bullfighting, as passionate and erotic as flamenco dancing. The belief that Spain was a backward and degenerate society, less moral and upright than American or British society, allowed tourists to go slumming, in a sense, and to escape for a while the rigid and oppressive social codes of their own culture.⁴⁶

⁴⁵J. Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990), 10-11.

⁴⁶M. Elizabeth Boone, “Vistas d’España: American Views of Art and Life in Spain, 1860-1898,” Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1996, 147.

For Dean MacCannell, the tourist is seeking not only a difference from everyday life, but authentic experiences that are not longer possible in modern society: “authentic experiences are believed to be available only to those moderns who try to break the bonds of their everyday existence and begin to ‘live.’”⁴⁷ For Henri, tourism was framed largely as a search for authenticity, for authentic peoples who lived outside the bounds of sophisticated, overly civilized urban society and were therefore more in touch with nature, personal expression, individual creativity, and spirituality. This fetishization of “real life” and “authentic experience”, this sense of living, of freedom of expression and creativity permeated every aspect of Henri’s life, from his deeply held philosophical beliefs in anarchism, anticlericism, antimaterialism, to his and his friends’ bohemian lifestyle, to his promotion of pedagogical methods and educational systems that encouraged personal expression over rote learning, to his attempts to get at the core essence of his subjects and his own feelings about them through art. It is in this sense that tourism overlaps with cultural primitivism, for peasant and “primitive” cultures were viewed as models for the rejuvenation of society because they promised a return to natural behavior, instinctual urges, and communal-based societies.

Because Henri believed that gypsies, Irish peasants, Pueblo Indians, and others who lived outside mainstream culture could more easily access their true natures and free expressions, his search for authenticity converged with his

⁴⁷MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 159.

primitivist philosophy as ethnic tourism. MacCannell defined the ethnic tourist as one who attends primarily to exotic cultures as key attractions: “the tourists go to see folk costumes in daily use, shop for folk handicrafts in authentic bazaars, stay on the alert for a typical form of nose, lips, breast, etc., learn some local norms for comportment, and perhaps learn some of the language.”⁴⁸

Ethnic tourism is founded on the unequal relationship between the tourists from developed countries and the objects of tourism, the locals, who necessarily live in less developed societies. Those from developed countries can and, in fact, are expected to travel as an indicator of education and affluence. Of course, their destinations can be more “sophisticated” places, as when the Grand Tour beckoned aristocrats and gentry who wanted to socialize with others of their class in refined European settings and, later, the middle and upper class who sought self-education based on eyewitness observation and sightseeing. In Henri’s day, however, Americans and Europeans were becoming increasingly infatuated with less sophisticated parts of the world, an interest that reflected anti-modernist impulses as well as the western desire to colonize and catalogue the less developed regions on the planet, the implication often being to experience these unique, exotic, and strange cultures before they were inevitably brought into the orbit of industrial cultures, modernized, and thereby obliterated.

⁴⁸Dean MacCannell, “Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (1984): 377.

Like Henri, who sneered at the pseudo-tourists who were attracted to the cheap souvenirs, such as wooden shoes, for sale in Dutch gift shops, and who unquestioningly followed their Cooks and Sons' guide books, the "real" tourist aims to experience the real life of the natives, to become one with them. "I am a savage," Gauguin was said to proclaim in Tahiti.⁴⁹ He or she aims to penetrate the backstage, to pull back the curtain, to get behind the "show", to experience the putative "intimate and real", and thereby to access an authentic and demystified experience. "Being one of them" or at one with "them" allows one to see behind the other's mere performances, to perceive and accept the others for what they really are, thus reconnecting the tourist to society and community.⁵⁰ Yet this level of authentic experience is almost impossible to achieve, not only because the tourist cannot escape his or her subject position as an outsider but more important because authenticity is highly mediated through the tourist industry itself, or what Urry calls the "tourist gaze." Guidebooks, posters, postcards, advertising, all focus on difference, creating a set of markers for authentic Irishness or typical Spanish costumes, for example. Moreover, the objects of tourism themselves respond to the pressures of tourism by accommodating tourist preconceptions and desires. Because tourists expect a certain type of behavior and become disappointed if expectations are not met, locals can become "corrupted" by contact with tourists

⁴⁹Paul Gauguin, as cited in Rhodes, *Primitivism and Modern Art*, 25.

⁵⁰MacCannell, *The Tourist*, 94.

and model themselves on tourist stereotypes, performing the “peasant” instead of playing themselves.⁵¹ Thus, “real life” is often recreated according to tourist expectations. Often the tourist is not aware of the difference.

As Leah Dilworth, Chris Wilson, and others have shown, authenticity was indeed staged in New Mexico by the Fred Harvey company, the Santa Fe Railroad, and others who hoped to attract tourists by presenting “real” native Americans at their daily activities.⁵² Yet these boosters conveniently failed to acknowledge the extent to which the “authentic” Indian art they promoted was in fact a product of tourism itself, as ceremonies, pottery, blankets, and other artisanal products were adapted to tourists’ and collectors’ aesthetic preferences. Other less picturesque or less consumable traditions, such as language and agricultural practices, meanwhile, were gradually but steadily being eliminated due to the pressures on native Americans to assimilate into white American society. Spanish gypsies and flamenco dancers also staged “authentic” dances, songs, and folk customs, though performing different dances (ie. those deemed by outsiders to be more correct or traditional) for tourists than for Spaniards; accordingly, expert tourist guides and guidebooks purported to help steer discriminating tourists away from tourist traps

⁵¹Barbara O’Connor, “Myths and Mirrors: Tourist Images and National Identity,” in *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis*, ed. Barbara O’Connor and Michael Cronin (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 73.

⁵²Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996); and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

to more authentic venues. Dutch peasants in tourist villages such as Volendam and Marken wore (and still wear) traditional costumes rather than modern dress for the benefit of tourists, and Irish peasants not uncommonly exaggerated their Irish brogue and embroidered their stories in the presence of outsiders.⁵³ In these examples, the objects of tourism may or may not have a say in reconstructing authenticity for tourists, but regardless of the question of agency, this pseudo-image presented as real is primarily in response to the expectations of the tourists, rather than in response to actual conditions.⁵⁴

In many cases, ethnic tourism combines science (sociology and ethnology) and recreation (sightseeing) and promotes the “artificial preservation of local ethnic groups and attractions so they can be consumed as tourist experiences.” These “commercially enforced stereotypical self-images” in response to pressures from tourists have been associated with what MacCannell calls “reconstructed ethnicity.” This is especially the case in regards to Henri’s experiences in Santa Fe,

⁵³J. E. Crawford Flitch, *Modern Dancing and Dancers* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1912), 195, 198; John Higinbotham, *Three Weeks in Holland and Belgium* (Chicago: Reilly and Britton Company, 1908), 76-77; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), 288.

⁵⁴Significantly, this distinction between “authentic” and “tourist” expressions is an integral and even transparent feature of tourism today, and many guidebooks take pains to point the tourist away from the “beaten path.” Yet the sophisticated traveler, the “real” tourist, is still defined as the one who can distinguish between the two, and contemporary critics of tourism often point out that even today tourists can have unreal expectations that force “locals” into adapting stereotypical behaviors. The sources of this phenomenon can be traced back to Henri’s era.

a town whose identity in Henri's day, as well as today, is based primarily on its reputation as a center of southwestern native American and Spanish-American culture. At the surface, the interethnic contact resulting from tourism suggests progressive thinking on the part of the tourists. In fact, however, it does not increase knowledge of self or other groups, merely perpetuates older forms of repression and exploitation beneath the surface, freezing a group of people in the past in a process called "museumization."⁵⁵ Another key component in ethnic tourism, and in primitivism, is a sense of distance, or a clash between time and place. Spatial difference is read as temporal difference, thus the far away is equated with a past time, a forgotten culture, timelessness, and tradition. The desire of the tourist is to keep traditional peoples in their place in order to maintain this sense of the pre-modern.

Yet, romanticized tourist perceptions often belied real social problems. In Ireland, Gaelic revivalists, Irish writers, and the tourist industry, the latter sponsored by the Irish government, created and encouraged a positive self-image

⁵⁵MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity," 388-89. Moreover, today's ethnic tourism, sometimes called "heritage tourism," "rural tourism," or "roots tourism," which is based on people as an integral part of the tourist experience, promotes an idyllic view of isolated rural life and the strange ways of rural folk. This type of tourism can actually cause more friction and less real understanding between tourists and the objects of tourism. In Ireland, for example, many tourists are Irish-Americans who perceive themselves to have a shared culture with the Irish. The Irish, however, can perceive visitors as "pseudo-Irish", and thus inferior to real Irish, to counter the sense of superiority (or the Irish perception of American superiority) displayed by tourists. In this case, little understanding is gained from the interaction; see O'Connor, "Myths and Mirrors," 81.

to counter generations of negative stereotypes perpetuated by British colonialism; for example, the romanticization of *Gaeltacht* (Gaelic speaking) areas countered Irish embarrassment of the poverty and underdevelopment that was symptomatic of these “Congested Districts.” Yet this insistently rosy image necessarily ignored the actual life and views of people living there, kept them inscribed within tourist expectations, and hindered solving of real social and economic problems.⁵⁶

Authenticity was especially important to Henri, who befriended many of his subjects and even socialized with them on numerous occasions. In Madrid, for example, he learned Spanish, became an avid bullfighting aficionado by attending the weekly bullfights and even socializing with matadors, followed the careers of local flamenco dancers, and befriended Spanish journalists, lawyers, and other disaffected intellectuals. In doing so he hoped to gain a more intimate knowledge and a deeper appreciation of Spanish culture. While Henri may not have been the typical tourist, and in many cases gained more than superficial knowledge of the places he visited, his paintings are nonetheless marked by an outsider’s point of view, mediated by tourist industry and other American ways of thinking, and not by a real, indepth understanding of the people he painted. (As Henri himself noted

⁵⁶Philip O’Leary has pointed to the inherent conflict between the Irish revivalists’ and Irish peasants’ views of rural life. The revivalists viewed overcivilized urban life as poison to artistic creativity, and believed only country life could foster pure imaginative art. In contrast, many rural dwellers were tempted by the perceived economic and social opportunities of the cities. “The challenge of the revivalists was, bluntly, how to keep them down on the farm”; see Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921: Ideology and Innovation* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State Press, 1994), 412.

numerous times, simply by virtue of being an American and having sprung from American soil, an American artist would necessarily represent an American viewpoint, no matter his subject.) But there remains a large gap between the artist's intention and the ultimate message of his portrayals. Henri *believed* he was penetrating the back stage, so to speak, and he asserted this belief many times in letters, articles, interviews, and the like. In fact, he was often perceived status as an insider, as a realistic, sensitive, and knowledgeable portrayer of other cultures, as demonstrated by the immense popular and critical acclaim his portraits generated in the United States.

Yet from our vantage point, nearly one hundred years later, it is clear that Henri's portraits represent not authenticity, but staged authenticity. Many of his subjects were in fact tourist industry workers—dancers, musicians, guides, caretakers, native artisans—all of whom were to some degree performing their ethnic and national identity for Henri and other tourists. Further, the act of painting is in itself a restaging based on the artist's interpretation, which in turn may be further mediated by the expectations of potential critics, buyers, or viewers.

Just as critics of tourism have pointed out the myth of "authenticity" and the false reliance of tourism on "the people" and their traditions, scholars of nationalism have observed that cultural nationalism often entails an inherent contrast of high and low cultures and of "invented traditions." Ernest Gellner believes that while "nationalism usually conquers in the name of putative folk

culture,” in truth it is essentially the imposition of a high culture on society, where previously low cultures had dominated throughout the population. The new high cultures, which often reflect the interests of the educated elite, are essentially reinventions or revivals, “modified out of all recognition,” of the traditions of pre-existing cultures. The new nation, then, is an “anonymous, impersonal society, with mutually substitutable atomized individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves.”⁵⁷ In other words, while pre-existing cultures are obliterated in the name of progress and modernity, their traditions are revived, appropriated, reconstructed, reinvented, and re-presented as national identity by the elite and educated classes who have replaced them. “Society no longer worships itself through religious symbols; a modern, streamlined, on-wheels high culture celebrates itself in song and dance, which it borrows (stylizing it in the process) from a folk culture which it fondly believes itself to be perpetuating, defending, and reaffirming.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷For the case of Spanish nationalism, see E. Inman Fox, “Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 21-36.

⁵⁸Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 48-49. See also Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” and “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1-14, 263-307. According to Morag Shiach (*Discourse on Popular Culture: Class, Gender, and History in Cultural*

Hippolyte Taine and national character

Reading Henri's portraits in the related contexts of cultural primitivism, nationalism, and tourism, it becomes clear that the underlying philosophy in Henri's portraits is the tendency to romanticize, even mystify, other less developed peoples as part of a counterculture critique, a quality many scholars have associated with modernism. Ultimately, though Henri's vision of his 'people' was basically one of benign or well-intentioned paternalism, many of his critics received his portraits with less than sympathetic attitudes, reflecting the contemporary tendency of many white Americans to view other races, nationalities, and classes with derision, contempt, or fear. Therefore, in addition to examining Henri's portraits in the context of cultural primitivism and related ideas, we must also briefly consider the context of early twentieth-century racist thought.

As numerous scholars have observed, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Americans had a tremendous propensity to view the world's people in terms of racial categories. This way of thinking was in the main a product of the industrialization, exploration, colonization, and imperialism of the modern era, all of which caused the comingling, on an unprecedented scale, of strangers

Analysis, 1730 to the Present [Cambridge: Polity Press in association with Basil Blackwell, 1989], 19-34), "the people" have generally been associated with 'the other' by those members of the intelligentsia who have evaluated and analyzed the popular from a position of power, as a contrast to their own legitimate, or 'high' culture.

possessing distinctly different lifestyles and physical appearances. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were also marked by increasing interest in the social sciences, particularly archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, and other fields that studied human history and development. These scientists studied not only societal and cultural practices, but also amassed a huge amount of data on physical aspects such as skull sizes, facial features, and body sizes in order to establish clear cut physical and intellectual differences between people of different races and nationalities.

Today we commonly acknowledge distinctions between racial, national, and cultural traits, based on a notion of cultural relativity. 'Race' describes hereditary traits passed down through bloodlines, often related to physical appearance such as skin color and facial features coded by genetics. In contrast, concepts of nation and culture are seen as behavioral, philosophical or spiritual beliefs, or societal conventions, passed on through groups of people living in close contact with one another. While race is fixed, nation and culture are more flexible, because based on conventions learned through families, society, formal education, or other behavioral conventions.⁵⁹ Yet, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

⁵⁹Early multiculturalists who separated race and culture included Franz Boas and Louis Adamic. Their influence, however, was not widely felt until the 1930s. For a summary of the distinction between biological determinism and cultural relativism, see Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 3-4; on Adamic, see Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1998), 259-65.

the widespread tendency was to use concepts of race and nation as virtual synonyms, and, as Eric Hobsbawm has noted, to “generalize wildly” about racial and national character.⁶⁰ Even with all the speculation, cultural and national traits were seen as inextricably linked to hereditary, therefore individuals were believed to behave in predictable and inescapable ways based on their racial or national background.

One of the major popularizers of this essentialist way of thinking, especially in relation to national character in the arts and literature, was the Frenchman Hippolyte Taine.⁶¹ Taine attributed national differences primarily to climate, history, geography, and other social and environmental conditions, or factors he called race, milieu, and moment. These conditions affected not only the character, temperament, or lifestyle of people living in a certain country, producing a national outlook, but were further recorded in physical appearance, intellect, health, and other physical and mental qualities. These conditions were then passed through the generations through heredity, so that individuals of certain races could reasonably be predicted to share common attributes.

⁶⁰Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalities*, 109.

⁶¹On Taine, see Leo Weinstein, *Hippolyte Taine* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1972). For Taine’s influence on Henri and other cultural commentators of his generation, see Jones Gibbs, “Robert Henri,” 92, 186; Virginia Mecklenberg, “American Aesthetic Theory, 1908-17: Issues in Conservative and Avant-Garde Thought,” Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 1983, chapter 3.

These differences could be applied not only to individual characteristics, but also to artistic productions, so that painting, sculpture, literature, and architecture, could all be evaluated according to shared national characteristics. For example, as an art critic, Taine sought to explain the source of perceived national differences in artistic styles and preferences. While today we might attribute these differences to the social milieu of the artist and learned (either consciously or unconsciously) responses to his environment, Taine believed that these distinctions were environmental as well as hereditary, and thereby fixed (changeable only through racial mixing or migration).

Henri's letters and published articles suggest that he was, above all, an adherent of biological determinism, and believed that national and racial character was rooted in the soil and passed down through the generations. In painting an individual of a certain race, he was, in effect, hoping to record not only that person's physical appearance or character, but, more important, the essence and the spirit of the entire race and nation. Henri's philosophy, however, was not always accurately communicated to his viewers, as evidenced by the myriad interpretations of his portrait subjects. Questions of interpretation and context, then, are significant in understanding Henri's portraits. How does the artist code race? What characteristics signify race? How are the portraits to be read by viewers? How important is it that viewers accurately read the portraits as Henri intended? In using physiognomy to read character, which physical traits indexed which moral qualities?

One way in which Henri attempted to convey national or racial character was through his palette, used either symbolically, to suggest the colors of his subjects' native landscape and environment, or esthetically, to complement the distinctive physical features of his subjects, such as skin, eye, or hair color. For example, many of Henri's early Irish portraits incorporate rich greens and vibrant burgundies, corresponding to the verdant landscape of Ireland and the natural plants his subjects used to dye their homespun wool clothing. Alternately, the warm palette of the New Mexican paintings were associated even then with the "Santa Fe style", which reflected the muted oranges, pinks, and beiges of the New Mexican desert landscape, the natural colors used by the native Americans in their pottery and blankets, and the copper tones of his subjects' skin. These esthetic choices emphasized shared racial traits over individual differences, and promoted an essentialist view of his subjects as members of particular racial groups.

In addition to color, Henri also evoked mood or inner states of his subjects through facial expressions and gestures. Henri was widely praised for his ability to capture "character"—another way of acknowledging Henri's adeptness at evoking a sense of his sitters' interior states, the person behind the facade. For example, William Yarrow and Louis Bouché noted that

taken feature for feature, his portraits do not give the minute accuracy of statement demanded of the popular portrait painter but they are far more alive than such stereotyped delineations. One received from them the impression that they are the truth about the persons while Henri was observing them. Perhaps another day they would appear totally different but the actual conformation, texture and color of their features would remain the same. One feels, despite

Henri's past experience, the entire absence of a set formula and an astonishing capacity to note his sitter's appearance at a given moment.⁶²

For others, character was akin to realism, to psychological insight, to authenticity, or to individual personality. For John Cournos, "character, rather than 'charm' and 'prettiness' as the chief condition of art" was the defining quality of Henri's New York school of realism.⁶³ Yet Sadakichi Hartmann cautioned that an artist who prided himself on painting "character" could easily slip into superficiality, theatricality, and stereotype. "There are any amount of pitfalls that beset one in these attempts. For is it not true, that every person, more or less, is a mystery, not only to others, but to himself? And is there not something very presumptuous about pretending to know anyone who does not quite know himself? . . . Often they are not at all like the portraits we conjure up." As an example, Henri's Irish characters, such as *Himself* (figure 1.2) were "too energetic, a trifle extravagant"; they strayed from truthfulness and instead emphasized the peculiar or eccentric. The result was an undesired over-emphasis of character, "where even the title 'Himself' indicates that unmitigated truth was the main purpose of representation."⁶⁴

⁶²William Yarrow and Louis Bouché, *Robert Henri: His Life and Works* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1921), 21.

⁶³John Cournos, "What Is Art? Answered by Henri, Art 'Insurgent,'" *Philadelphia Record*, December 25, 1910, 3.

⁶⁴Sadakichi Hartmann, "Pictorial Aims of Modern Portraiture: III. The Importance of Character Delineation," *Portrait* 9 (March 1918): 8, 10, 12. Critic

Hartmann's observation suggests a too-frequent slippage between "character," characters, and stereotypes. His comments on Henri's *Himself* suggest parallels between portrayals of Irish "character" in painting and on the stage, where Irish peasant types were often signified by colorful language, a thick brogue, and rough clothing. In the popular press, the Irish were similarly evoked through their distinctive bowler hat, pipe, and shillelagh. While Henri often eschewed these obvious stereotypical props, his portrayals of his sitters' moods was keyed not to individual subjects but to shared character traits suggestive of national temperament, such as widely accepted beliefs that, for example, Irish were melancholy and imaginative, native Americans were passive and stoic, Chinese were mysterious and unfathomable, and Dutch were alternately jolly and hardworking. This belief in national character was shared by many of Henri's critics and viewers. Henri biographers Yarrow and Bouché described several of his subjects in such essentialist and fixed language, implicitly suggesting that all members of the group possessed the same markers as the individual portrayed, such as "the surly side-glance of a Mexican or the stolid stare of a Chinese girl."⁶⁵ Likewise, Mary Fanton Roberts viewed Henri's portraits not as depictions of individuals but as records of distinct national and racial temperaments:

Frank Jewett Mather likewise warned of similar pitfalls: "The search for character easily runs into caricature"; see Frank Jewett Mather, Jr., "Some American Realists," *Arts and Decoration* 7 (November 1916): 14.

⁶⁵Yarrow and Bouché, *Robert Henri*, 21.

I have often thought what a great exhibition it would make—a series of rooms of Henri's paintings of the people of Ireland, Holland, France, Spain, New Mexico, and California, because in each of these rooms one would see the kind of beauty that predominated in that race, the quality of greatness or finesse, the condition of sordidness or sorrow. I cannot imagine anyone with any sympathy or receptiveness who would not recognize Ireland—her reticence, wit, naivete, sadness, from Henri's Irish paintings; who would not find at a glance the sturdy, imperturbable fundamentals of Holland; or the superficial gayety [sic] of Spain, with its underlying tragedy and poverty; and the Indian about Santa Fe, lost and hardened in modern civilization. . . . Because, after all, it is the people, individually, who create and express the nation and it is through Henri's individual portraits that I feel he expresses the lives of the people he knew so well.⁶⁶

Yarrow, Bouché, and Roberts were much more benign than other critics, who described some of Henri's portrait subjects in more derogatory terms, even while praising the portraits themselves. A Mexican sitter, Ramon, was described in 1914 as looking "like a conspirator and an outlaw"; an old Irishman, Johnnie Cummings, the subject of *Himself*, was said to possess an "ape-like visage."⁶⁷ While Henri complained on more than one occasion that critics often misunderstood his paintings, and attempted to elaborate his philosophy on his portrait subjects in interviews and published articles, notably the 1915 *Craftsman* article "My People," he refused to replace the characteristic monochromatic backgrounds of his portraits with backgrounds that would supply more details about his subjects, such

⁶⁶Mary Fanton Roberts, "Speaking of Art," *Arts and Decoration* 34 (March 1931): 44.

⁶⁷Antony Anderson, "Art and Artists," *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, September 27, 1914, 4:3; Oliver S. Tonks, "Robert Henri—An Appreciation," *American Magazine of Art* 7 (October 1916): 474.

as props or interior or landscape settings. Instead, implicitly insisting that physiognomy and other features were a sufficient index of individual and racial character, he wrote, “all their lives are in their expressions, in their eyes, their movements, or they are not worth translating into art.”⁶⁸

Scientific racialism

Attitudes such as these, voiced by American journalists and art critics, reflected the multiplicity of stereotypes about people of other races and nationalities. These issues were at the forefront of American discourse in the early twentieth century, an era in which peak numbers of immigrants arriving on American shores prompted Americans to ask complicated questions about American identity, American citizenship, and issues of race. While Henri's portraits mainly address European national identity and character, contemporary American attitudes on the concept of assimilation, the “melting pot,” and social Darwinism explain some of the diverse attitudes toward the different races represented in Henri's portraits.

In general, Americans tended to think of the world's racial groups in a hierarchical order based on skin color and a perceived corresponding state of development, or civilization, of their cultures. For example, the tribal societies of Africa or Oceania had the darkest skin. Living in small communal groups on

⁶⁸Henri, “My People,” 467.

remote islands or in dense jungles, possessing no written history, and having built nothing lasting in terms of architecture, art, or literature, they were perceived as the least civilized in terms of intellectual capacities and cultural achievement. In contrast, the lighter skinned peoples of northern Europe were perceived as the most civilized and most accomplished. Chinese, Japanese, and some Latin American cultures were placed somewhere in between, for they had all produced highly complex societies, though now in decline. All of these groups, even white Europeans, were widely believed to possess distinct physical, psychological, and societal characteristics that differentiated them from one another (figure 1.3). The only question in many Americans' minds was the degree of difference between certain immigrant groups and the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture of the United States. Therefore, the whitest immigrants, or the ones most similar to the dominant, or old stock, American people in physical appearance, religious beliefs, and cultural achievement were perceived as the least threatening to the status quo and the ones most likely to assimilate. On the opposite end of the spectrum, many Americans were frightened by the United States's recent acquisition of territories in the Philippines, by the great influx of Chinese and Mexican immigrants in the west and the southwest, and by the millions of native Americans on reservations who were being pressured to either assimilate or die out. These groups were seen as completely alien to American belief systems and physical type.⁶⁹

⁶⁹Social Darwinism's hierarchy of races is discussed in, among others, Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought*, rev. ed. (Boston:

This spectrum of acceptance or perceived degree of potential to assimilate was, not surprisingly, reflected in the responses to Henri's portraits. Many critics and viewers had little trouble with Henri's portraits of Dutch or Irish. Having been among the first immigrants to the United States, the Dutch were thoroughly assimilated into American culture and were widely admired for their work ethic, their democratic society, and their solid, predictable character. Correspondingly, Henri's Dutch subjects, especially his jolly children, were quite favorably received. The Irish, who flooded the United States in the decades after the potato famine, were initially perceived by America's predominantly protestant population as dirty, uneducated peasants, and as superstitious, popish folk. However, by the early twentieth century the Irish for the most part had found their niche in middle-class America as successful entertainers, businessmen, and public servants. While some responses to Henri's portraits reflected outdated and negative stereotypes of the Irish (Arthur Tonks's description of Henri's *Himself* as having an "ape-like visage" was a reference to popular nineteenth century caricatures of the Irish as bumbling, ignorant simians), most were positive, reflecting the contemporary vogue for Irish

Beacon Press, 1992); Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984); George W. Stocking, Jr., "The Dark-Skinned Savage: The Image of Primitive Man in Evolutionary Anthropology," in *Race, Culture and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968; reprint, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 110-32; and Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

literature, the nostalgia of Irish expatriates for the old country, and the widespread American support for Irish independence from Britain. At the other end of the spectrum, some viewers responded with thinly veiled hatred for more “primitive” Americans, such as Chinese-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and native Americans, who were generally perceived as less intelligent than European immigrants and therefore less capable of assimilation.

In this climate, Henri’s portrait subjects were often described as “types”, a term that suggested that they were viewed not as individuals of any accomplishment, but as representatives of certain ethnic or racial or national groups. Americans often used the idea of “types” to describe or categorize people with shared traits or beliefs, even defining a particular American “type”. Against this ideal, however, all other “types” were judged and found wanting. However, only individuals representing non-white or lower class groups were categorized as types, reflecting the contemporary tendency for the ruling classes to marginalize everyone else. As one Irish-American journalist for the *Boston Pilot* put it in 1899,

The ‘Anglo-Saxon race,’ which, according to the best informed ethnical students, is but one-tenth of the population of this country, is accredited with a much larger population of the upbuilding of this Republic than it deserves. . . The moment a Teuton or a Celt achieves fame in the world of letters, art, or professional life, the moment he wins a victory on land or sea, he is hailed as a new product of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ civilization! But if he winds up in police court in the morning, he is regarded simply as a drunken German or Irishman.⁷⁰

⁷⁰T. St. John Gaffney, *Pilot*, March 25, 1899, quoted in Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 208.

One critics' discussion of Henri's *Girl with a Parasol* (1906; unlocated) is illuminating, for it reveals this tendency toward typing. This early full-length portrait depicts a girl dressed in a white frock and hat and holding a plaid parasol. Standing tall and holding her right arm akimbo, she gazes out confidently at the viewer.⁷¹ According to critic Charles Meltzer,

[she] is one of many tens of thousands whom we pass daily in the streets. Possibly she is of Italian, but more probably of Jewish origin—one of the great multitude of 'smart,' bright, flippant maids who are profiting here by the slavery and perhaps the martyrdom of their foreign parents. Her bright, alert expression, the pertness of her mouth, her self-satisfied bearing, invite discipline and suggest qualities the reverse of charming. One seems to hear her gushing over her particular matinee hero and speaking with pity of her mother. She is not wholly bad or very good. She is selfish, pushing, modern, rather impulsive and distressingly superficial. Therefore she is of local interest and typical.⁷²

Whether Henri meant this particular girl to represent "a girl one meets", as Meltzer saw her, is perhaps beside the point. Apparently the realism and honesty of the picture, for Meltzer, derived from his own previous encounters (either in person, in visual imagery, or in other second-hand ways) with someone looking very much like the one depicted. Such designations could easily degenerate into stereotypes. In suggesting that such modern young women behaved in predictable fashion,

⁷¹The painting was exhibited in the 1906 winter exhibition at the National Academy of Design, and was illustrated in "National Academy Art Show Furor [. . .]," unidentified newspaper clipping [ca. 1906], Robert Henri papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Robert Henri Papers, AAA), 886:1162.

⁷²Charles Henry Meltzer, "Increasing Technical Ability Shown, but There is a Lack of Uplift and Imagination, Says Meltzer," unidentified clipping (1906), Robert Henri Papers, AAA, reel 886, frame 1151.

Meltzer has put forth a conventional, formulaic, and oversimplified conception of her as a person lacking any individuality or subjectivity.⁷³

Henri's interest in these diverse groups can also be related to contemporary American debates on the "melting pot" and cultural mixing through immigration. Many proponents of immigration believed that the mixing of diverse races in the crucible of American society would ultimately produce a stronger, more vigorous, and truly American society which would inherit the best characteristics of each race. Reflecting a widespread view that white Americans were "overcivilized" and overly effeminate, this reinvigoration of the flaccid Anglo-Saxon stock would result in the infusion of more virile and savage qualities. Alternately, others believed that mixing races would lead to the degeneration of the United States' superior gene pool. In relation to this idea, one can view Henri's portraits as perhaps a meditation on American identity: is America defined by specific racial or dominant national traditions, or by encouraging organic growth and full participation, in terms of thought and expression rather than political will, from all its citizens, including "the people"?⁷⁴

⁷³As Zurier and Snyder asserted (*Metropolitan Lives*, 115-30), at the turn of the century New Yorkers and other American urban dwellers were faced, more than ever before, with the challenges of the city's dynamic and ever-changing social demographics. In order to "make sense" of the chaotic city and the hoards of strangers they encountered daily in the streets and other public spaces, they resorted to categorizing or "typing" others.

⁷⁴It is interesting to contrast America and European thinking regarding citizenship and nationality. For instance, since the United States is fundamentally an immigrant or multicultural society, the "melting pot" idea in the United States

Ultimately, Henri's models for the ideal American are found *outside* of mainstream American culture, and his pictures define American identity in terms of what it is not. Exhibited in the United States, often in shows which also included more typical American subjects, such as portraits of wealthy American patrons and their children, Henri's portraits pose the question of American identity, what it is and what it should be. Who is the ideal American? Henri found typical Americans to be too bland, too trained, too uncreative; in contrast, marginalized types or unassimilated Americans unspoiled by American society were actually more interesting and vital. Maine children, for example, seemed to him to be inhibited by religion and middle-class values, which extinguished their natural instincts--a scathing indictment of American society, considering that many others of his generation viewed rural New England as the quintessential America.⁷⁵ In contrast, Henri found Chinese-American children to be creative and imaginative, and gypsy

holds that anyone from anywhere can be naturalized. In contrast, most European countries, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, link citizenship to ethnic heritage, or at least to language and culture. Immigrants cannot be fully naturalized and are simply tolerated as "guest workers", "migrants", or minorities, without the full rights of citizens; see Barbara Crossette, "It's the American Way: Europe Stares at a Future Built by Immigrants," *New York Times*, January 2, 2000, sect 4, p. 1

⁷⁵Henri, Ogunquit, Maine, to Alice Klauber, San Diego, August 1, 1915, Robert Henri and Alice Klauber Collection, San Diego Museum of Art Library. For the nationalist ideology of New England, see, for example, Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, 267-72; and William H. Truettner and Roger B. Stein, eds., *Picturing Old New England: Image and Memory* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999).

children to be impetuous and spontaneous; these qualities, he believed, would produce better adults and, thus, better Americans.

Clearly, such assertions that immigrants are more vital and alive than the old Anglo-Saxon stock suggest an inversion of the status quo, a privileging of the bottom rungs of society over the top. Yet many of Henri's comments further suggest that hybridity or assimilation to a dominant "American" culture, however it may be defined, was not a good thing. Because he believed that many of these positive traits are based in heredity, he sought pure races unaffected by colonization, immigration, Europeanization, or other social phenomena that entailed mixing of races and nationalities. For example, he disliked Belgian culture because it was merely a "mongrelized" version of French and Dutch.⁷⁶ He wrote in 1914 that one of his Chinese-American sitters, Jim Lee, "was not improved by Americanization."⁷⁷ He supported the rights of Pueblo Indians to continue their native spiritual rituals and practices, which the United States government was trying to ban, and to resist assimilation into American mainstream society. In short, Henri believed each nation or racial group to possess a specific character or spirit, and in his paintings he strove to capture the best and most essential qualities of those he admired. In contrast to those who worried that assimilation of diverse

⁷⁶Henri, Antwerp, to his parents, July 10, 1895, Beinecke, box 14, folder 348.

⁷⁷Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, September 15, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 400.

immigrant groups would threaten to topple the American status quo, Henri believed that the greed and materialism of American society, not other races, was the ultimate corrupting force.

Ethnography and the native American

With Henri's Irish, Dutch, and other European subjects, as well as with some of his portraits of American immigrants, race is tied mainly to the concept of national character. In Henri's native American portraits, however, contemporary ideas on ethnography and the social sciences also come into play. Henri's native American portraits have, not surprisingly, elicited many comparisons with ethnographic or documentary portraiture, which was widely prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as scientists and artists alike attempted to record the continent's and the world's "vanishing races." In general, photographs and paintings of native American subjects by artist/ethnographers such as Edward Sheriff Curtis, John Hillers, Adam Clark Vroman, George Catlin, Elbridge Burbank, or even Henri himself have generally been evaluated in relation to their perceived authenticity as documents of the "real" native American and the degree to which they accurately portray native American physiognomy, dress, and rituals. Ultimately, however, it is in most cases difficult if not impossible to distinguish between art and science, between individual expression and objective documentation. For many scholars, the "white man's Indian" has been a potent and often controversial subject for at least the last several decades. Many recent studies

have demonstrated that visual or literary portrayals of native Americans most often reflect white perceptions rather than fact, and that the “Indian” is a white construct onto which could be pinned a range of ideological points of view, from the “bad Indian” to the “noble savage”, from a justification of white progress and expansionism to a critique of the dominant culture.⁷⁸ Henri’s native American portraits, then, are significant in that they were created at a crucial moment in American history when the image of the Indian was shifting constantly, and as such, they reveal the multiplicity of attitudes toward Indians as whites were faced with the seemingly unsolvable dilemma of “the Indian problem.” Some of the diverse and overlapping issues that are reflected in Henri’s portraits, and in Americans’ responses to them, include the increasing appropriation of the native American for education, entertainment, and aesthetic purposes; the display of native American artifacts and living native American individuals in anthropological museums, at World’s Fairs, and in other public venues; the question of Indian reservations, Indian schools, and assimilation; the need to scientifically document the various aspects of Indian life and culture before its demise; the question of native American culture as a threat to or, alternately, as a model for the rejuvenation of American society; and the study and appreciation of ancient American civilizations as the “first” Americans, and thus the foundation of

⁷⁸For the “white man’s Indian,” see, for example, see Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man’s Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978); and Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

American national identity. Clearly, while all of these manifestations of whites' fascination with native Americans played a role in Henri's portraits, mythification of native culture as a counter critique of modern society was certainly at the forefront of Henri's philosophy. This viewpoint was only enhanced by his association with the Taos and Santa Fe art colonies, where art, ethnography, and tourism converged in a blatant commercialization of Indian culture and beliefs to attract visitors to the mythical "land of enchantment."⁷⁹

The cult of childhood

Finally, we should address the prevalence of children in Henri's portraits, which can also be linked in numerous ways to his primitivist philosophy.⁸⁰ On a practical level, Perlman has related the childless artist's fondness for youngsters to his desire to have children of his own.⁸¹ Alternatively, children were often the most available sitters in the subsistence communities Henri visited. Whereas adults were

⁷⁹For the modernist mythification of southwestern Indians in the early twentieth century, see Charles Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, and William Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe* (New York: Abbeville Press; and Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1986); Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest*; Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*; and Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*.

⁸⁰Homer (*Robert Henri and His Circle*, 244, 252) approached this interpretation when he attributed Henri's fascination with children to their innocence and their spontaneity, for they represented "ideal young people—healthy, optimistic types, rich in human dignity and thoroughly natural and unaffected," types pure and unspoiled by "the evils of contemporary society."

⁸¹Perlman, *Life and Art*, 112.

often occupied with fishing, farming, or other necessary daily chores, children were too young to attend school or to participate in communal work, or could be lured from school with the promise of cookies and Victrola music. More important, however, in explaining the predominance of children in Henri's works was the symbolic value of young children in modernist primitivism. As early as the Romantic era, childhood represented not only innocence and naivete, but pure, unfettered expression and creativity, unmediated by government or religious institutions, formal education, or societal expectations. In *The Painter of Modern Life*, Baudelaire, for example, linked childhood with true genius. For him, genius was "nothing more nor less than *childhood regained* at will—a childhood now equipped for self-expression with manhood's capacities and a power of analysis"; he admired children's "great capacity for abstraction and their highly imaginative power" in contrast to the "impotent imagination of the blasé public."⁸² Echoing these views, Henri acknowledged children as individuals in their own right, whose inherent talents should be encouraged and allowed to grow rather than suppressed or controlled:

⁸²Charles Baudelaire, "A Painter of Modern Life" and "A Philosophy of Toys," from *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), quoted in Jonathan Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye: Children's Art and the Modern Artist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 5. On modern artists' appreciation of children's art, see Fineberg, *The Innocent Eye*; and Jonathan Fineberg, ed., *Discovering Child Art: Essays on Childhood, Primitivism, and Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). As Jones Gibbs has pointed out ("Robert Henri," 129-44), Bashkirtseff as well as Baudelaire admired children for their expressive potential; both were potent influences on the development of Henri's thinking.

If you paint children you must have no patronizing attitude toward them. Whoever approaches a child without humility, without wonderment and without infinite respect, misses in his judgment of what is before him, and loses an opportunity for a marvelous response. Children are greater than the grown man. All grown men have more experience, but only a very few retain the greatness that was theirs before the system of compromises began in their lives. I have never respected any man more than I have some children. In the faces of children I have seen a look of wisdom and of kindness expressed with such ease and such certainty that I knew it was the expression of a whole race. Later, that child would grow into being a man or woman and fall, as most of us do, into the business of little detail with only now and then a glimmering remembrance of a lost power. A rare few remain simple and hold on through life to their universal kinship, wade through all detail and can still look out on the painter with the simplicity of a child and the wisdom of the race plus and individual experience. These, however, are rare, but the potentiality exists in practically all children.⁸³

In this sense, Henri viewed childhood as a formative state of life that symbolized great human potential. He praised the simplicity of children as natural and organic, and a model for the rejuvenation of contemporary modern society. In this way, he found that the natural creativity of children and “primitives” was superior to that of adults, whose formal training has squeezed all natural creativity out of them, merely replacing it with conformity and mediocrity. He urged his students to retain their spontaneity and their childlike vision, to resist the impersonal conformity of formal art education, and above all to think for themselves. For him, art making was a process more than a product; the finished painting was significant only as a record of a state of being attained in the process, and a suggestion of “possibilities of greater existence.” “It is for this reason,” he

⁸³Henri, *Art Spirit*, 237-38.

wrote, “that we find at times works by children, or by savages, little acquainted with the possibilities of the materials they have left their impress on, and scant of tools to work with, filled with such qualities as to cause us to hail them as great works of art.”⁸⁴

Henri’s admiration for childhood genius was echoed by other modernist artists, such as Paul Klee, the Cobra group, and Pablo Picasso, who collected children’s art and tried to achieve its freedom and unmediated expression in their own productions. It also echoed the tendency of contemporary Social Darwinists to equate childhood with the early developmental state of primitive cultures. This theory, popularized by psychologist G. Stanley Hall, placed “savages” and “primitives” at the beginning of histories of cultural development, with American Anglo-Saxon civilization at the pinnacle, just as childhood was seen to be a introductory stage of human individual development leading to the wisdom of adulthood. In this way of thinking, “primitive” peoples were often seen as small children in comparison to more sophisticated and intellectually developed Western “adults.”⁸⁵ While some people used Social Darwinism’s theories to support their ideas of “primitives” as unfit for American citizenship, others viewed children’s art

⁸⁴Henri, *Art Spirit*, 159-60.

⁸⁵For a summary of Social Darwinism, Hall, and recapitulation theory, see Stocking, “The Dark-Skinned Savage.” For discussions of Hall as related to early twentieth century American art and culture, Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life*, chapter 1; and Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), chapter 3.

and the art of primitive cultures as a way to tap into long buried human instincts.

As Arthur Wesley Dow proposed,

While from our twentieth century civilization we may not return to the childhood of the race, we can in great measure bring into play the primitive springs of thought, impulse, and action that exist in every being, and so put ourselves *en rapport* with the primitive state of mind and the primitive view of things, just as the adult can bring himself into sympathetic relations with the child.⁸⁶

Henri's views on childhood, though stemming from multiple and varied sources, almost certainly were influenced as well by the cult of childhood promoted by Yeats and other Irish revivalists. Like Henri, Yeats viewed childhood as a protected, "privileged zone," as a state of "innocence, unsullied and intense." He believed "passionately in education, which valued a child for its intrinsic sake" and "despised mere schooling, which concerned itself with producing the kind of adult the child must eventually become." For him, childhood symbolized a lost past, a time of belonging to a family and community, and an escapist fantasy world of unspoilt nature, in short, a way to escape the discontents of civilization. For Yeats, however, the child was also linked to Ireland's political aspirations as the nascent Irish state: as the child would eventually grow into an Irish person, the Irish sons would eventually fight and overtake the British father and emerge as a free, independent state.⁸⁷ Henri similarly linked youthful creativity to national

⁸⁶Dow, quoted in Sylvester Baxter, "Handicraft, and Its Extension, at Ipswich," *Handicraft* 1 (February 1903): 256, 58.

⁸⁷On Yeats and childhood, see Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 101-11. As Kiberd points out, however, the paradox of Irish childhood as a metaphor for happier,

identity, believing that Americans' natural expression, if not overly trained and thereby stifled, would lead to national greatness in the arts.

In American art, the widespread belief in childhood as a privileged zone of innocence was evinced in countless paintings of well-dressed, well-behaved little toddlers that were popular with the public and wealthy patrons alike. Artists such as Mary Cassatt, Ceceilia Beaux, Lydia Field Emmet, George de Forest Brush, Abbott Henderson Thayer, and numerous others pursued successful careers by painting chaste images of motherhood and childhood, attesting to the great respect accorded to domesticity, family values, and traditional gender roles in American culture, as well as the potential of American society in general to take over from Europe the mantle of world civilization.⁸⁸ In the reformist mindset of progressive era America, immigrant and working class children were similarly viewed by many as shapeless lumps of clay to be molded into proper patriotic American citizens through education and social programs. In this context, Henri's Irish, Dutch, Chinese-American, Mexican-American, and native American children

protected youth is the unintended infantilizing of native culture and the promotion of empire and colony as basically a paternalistic endeavor.

⁸⁸As Diane Fischer and others have noted, the sanity, wholesomeness, joy, optimism, and beauty of pure women and innocent children were commonly equated with the American national type around 1900; see Fischer, "Constructing the 'American School' of 1900," 92-94. According to art critic Samuel Isham, "something of what goddess, saint, or heroine represented to other races [Americans] find in the idealization of their womenkind"; Samuel Isham, *The History of American Painting* (1905), quoted in Stavitsky, "The Legacy of the 'American School,'" 185.

were interpreted by some viewers as the hope for America's future. This view was typified by one art critic who evaluated Henri's *Chinese Lady* as "stolid, patient, unawakened. . . the old type, the type into which the little 'Chow Chow' and 'Tam Gan' and the 'Chinese Girl with Fan' will never degenerate. She is the old, they the new, destined for a mental freedom which she could never comprehend."⁸⁹

Moreover, children growing up in rural communities, such as the Dutch and the Irish, were believed to be freer and less hardened by the grind of urban slums or industrialization. For example, Frans Hals's many pictures of fisherchildren, after which Henri modeled many of his children's portraits, were interpreted by many of his contemporaries as symbols of the benefits of rural life. In contrast, George Bellows's and George Luks's pictures of slum kids raised for many Americans the troubling issue of slum life and its effects on young minds.⁹⁰ While Henri himself mainly restricted his comments on children to observations on their natural creativity and unfettered expression, he did bemoan on at least one

⁸⁹"California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," *Town and Country* 19 (Nov 28, 1914), 27. Some scientists of the era even believed that the American environment could offer a beneficial effect on immigrants by increasing the actual skull size and brain capacity of their American-born children; see Burton J. Hendrick, "The Skulls of Our Immigrants," *McClure's Magazine* 35 (May 1910): 36-50.

⁹⁰See Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 123-99; and Bruce Weber, *Ashcan Kids: Children in the Art of Henri, Luks, Glackens, Bellows, and Sloan* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1998), 13-16, 19-23.

occasion the industrial society that kept children enchained as factory workers, and in numerous letters made clear his preference for rural life over urban slums.⁹¹

Conclusion

The overwhelming evidence from Henri's own writings and correspondence suggests that he firmly believed in essentialist concepts of national and racial character, and sought to represent and to promote the best qualities in other races as an anecdote to American greed and materialism. These ideas characterize the overlapping philosophies of cultural primitivism, nationalism, and ethnic tourism, all of which were typical products of modernism and which entailed contrasts of developed with less developed cultures. However, Henri's portraits did not always successfully convey his beliefs, especially his admiration for other, less developed cultures—it seems that, for the most part, only viewers who already shared Henri's beliefs, such as Mary Fanton Roberts, read his portraits as he intended. Rather, Henri's portraits are open-ended, amenable to multiple interpretations. They both accommodated and resisted stereotypes because they were not grounded in accumulations of detail or narrative structure. On one hand, Henri elevated his

⁹¹Robert Henri, "Only Out of Home's Narrow Confines is Full Growth Possible for Children, Says Robert Henri," *New York Tribune*, January 25, 1915, clipping in Robert Henri Papers, AAA, reel 887, frame 427. Henri's observations of the squalor of the slums of Queenstown and Amsterdam are reported in Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, July 2, 1913, Beinecke, box 16, folder 394; and Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, August 11, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 387. These slums contrasted greatly with Achill Island, Haarlem, and Volendam, where he spent most of his time while in Ireland and Holland.

subjects to higher levels by praising their lifestyles, their belief systems, and their talents. In this way, the portraits represented an implicit political statement, inverting the social hierarchy by appropriating formerly negative images of marginalized peoples and translating them into positive images as models for more “civilized” societies to imitate. On the other hand, even well-meaning perceptions could lead to reductive and overly simplistic stereotypes, for they defined a group of people according to white views, regardless of what individual sitters or the group itself actually held as important. Further, these views often ignored or simply glossed over social facts, portraying subjects as something they were not, or at best, half-truths. In the following chapters, I will elaborate on many of the issues discussed above, seeking not to establish a definitive reading of Henri’s portraits but rather to tease out the multiple, complicated contexts which underlie Henri’s fascination with other cultures and Americans’ diverse responses to his portraits.

Chapter 2.

Matadors, guitarreros, and gitanos: Henri's Spanish types

Between 1900 and 1926, Henri visited Spain on no fewer than seven occasions.¹ During these extended trips, which lasted at least six weeks at a time, sometimes as long as three or four months, he immersed himself in Spanish art and culture, studying and copying famous works at the Prado; visiting famous cathedrals, castles, and historic sites; attending Spanish religious and folk festivals; and avidly attending performances of Spanish dance, Spanish theater, and, that distinctly Spanish sport, bullfighting. He included among his friends and acquaintances Spanish artists, writers and journalists, army officers, bullfighters, and dancers. As a teacher, he led three class trips to Spain, during which he passed on his immense enthusiasm for Spanish art and culture to a younger generation of American art students. He loved Spanish music and dance, and his phonograph records of Spanish songs were among the favorites in his collection. During his long career, he depicted Spaniards and Spanish subjects in numerous canvases, which ranged from full-length formal presentations of celebrities such as dancers and bullfighters to smaller and more intimate portrayals of common folks such as gypsies, street singers, shepherds, newsgirls, working girls, old beggarwomen, and

¹In 1900, Henri visited for almost eight weeks with his wife Linda; both intended to spend the time copying Diego Velázquez pictures in the Prado. Henri returned in 1906, 1908, 1910, and 1912, during which (except for 1910) he was accompanied by his American students. He returned later for brief trips in 1923 and 1926.

Segovian villagers. He even produced a number of pochades of Spanish landscape views. Henri's focus on Spanish culture was significant among American artists. According to M. Elizabeth Boone, who has specialized in nineteenth century American artists' images of Spain, Henri's contributions as an artist and a teacher "place him among the most important of the American painters of Spain."²

Yet despite Henri's lifelong fascination with Spain, his Spanish canvases have not yet been studied in depth. This dissertation concerns itself with the broader social and cultural implications of Henri's Spanish works, which are of interest for their role in the early twentieth century discourse surrounding American-Spanish relations and the search for national identity. These works are significant in this context as embodiments of the complex and often conflicting attitudes toward Spain, its history, and its people. This chapter will investigate Henri's and Americans' intense fascination with Spanish culture through an examination of his paintings of Spanish subjects and their relation to the predominant social, political, and artistic issues of the day, revealing how his paintings participated in an ongoing dialogue about the nature of Spanish and American national identity and American-Spanish relations.

Unlike many American artists, who traveled the Iberian continent in search of picturesque subjects, Henri favored Madrid to the exclusion of other popular

²M. Elizabeth Boone, *España: American Artists and the Spanish Experience* (New York: Hollis Taggart Galleries, 1998), 76.

locales.³ Not surprisingly, then, given his tendency to stay in one place where he had established a studio and a pool of models, many of his canvases reflected not his own first-hand experiences of the country and its people as much as contemporary artistic conventions for depicting Spanish subjects. American artists in Henri's day favored a style that was an amalgam of art historical precedents set by Diego Velázquez, Francisco Goya, and others and more recent paintings of Spanish subjects by Edouard Manet, John Singer Sargent, and William Merritt Chase. Thus, Henri's earliest works reflect his dialogue both with art history and with his artistic competitors. Additionally, visual images of Spain reflected more widespread views about Spanish culture, disseminated not only through art, but also through literature, popular culture, tourism, and politics. Not surprisingly, Henri's paintings also referenced many of those current attitudes.

Yet many of Henri's pictures attempt to transcend popular stereotypes, and to reveal a more complex and nuanced view of Spain and Spanish identity that Henri gradually developed as he began to learn more about the country, its people, its traditions, and its history. More than mere reflections of American stereotypes about Spain, they represented Henri's search for the essence of Spanish identity, and his search for the real Spain that existed beneath the stereotypes. This search

³While Henri stayed primarily in Madrid during his biannual trips, his letters document stops at Seville, Granada, and Cordoba in 1906, while traveling from Gibraltar, where his ship landed, to Madrid. Archival records of his 1908, 1910, and 1912 trips to Spain are incomplete; the existing documents indicate only trips day trips to Toledo and the Escorial in 1906, though he may have taken day trips to Segovia in 1912 as well to paint his "Segovian girl."

for identity was largely influenced by the discourse of Spanish nationalism, in particular the ideas of the Generation of '98, whose goal was to identify and foster a sense of Spanish tradition, culture, and identity in a country facing the need for Europeanization and change. As a group, then, Henri's many paintings of Spanish subjects reflect these ongoing dialogues, both within the United States and within Spain, about the nature and identity of Spanishness and Spanish history and culture, and America's relationship to Spain.

Hispanism: the fascination for Spain

Recent studies of hispanism have documented the multifarious ways that American artists were inspired by Spanish art and culture in the nineteenth century and later.⁴ Writers such as Washington Irving and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow studied and imitated famous Spanish literary works. Scholars such as

⁴For an overview of "hispanism," the fascination with Spain in the creative imagination of Europe, England, and America in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Nicolai Cikovsky, "Introduction," in *John Singer Sargent's El Jaleo*, ed. Mary Crawford Volk (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1992). For nineteenth century artists' interpretations of Spain, see *Spain, Espagne, Spanien: Foreign Artists Discover Spain, 1800-1900* (New York: Equitable Gallery in association with the Spanish Institute, 1993). For American artists and collectors, see Boone, *España*; M. Elizabeth Boone, "Vistas d'España: American Views of Art and Life in Spain, 1860-1898," Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1996; Marcus B. Burke, "Velázquez and New York," in Jonathan Brown and Marcus B. Burke, *Velázquez in New York Museums* (New York: Frick Collection, 1999), 13-18; Mary Anne Goley, *The Influence of Velázquez on Modern Painting: The American Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2000); and Suzanne L. Stratton, ed., *Ignacio Zuloaga in America, 1909-1925* (New York: Spanish Institute, 1989).

William H. Prescott and George Ticknor published learned accounts of Spanish literature and history. Art collectors such as Archer Milton Huntington, Oliver H. Payne, and Louisine and H. O. Havemeyer hungrily acquired originals as well as copies of works by admired Golden Age painters including Velázquez, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, Francisco de Zurbarán, and Jusepe de Ribera, as well as works by recent artists such as Goya, Mariano Fortuny y Marsal, Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida, and Ignacio Zuloaga. Patrons such as Huntington mounted highly successful, large-scale exhibitions of Spanish art (Huntington's exhibitions were shown at the Hispanic Society of America, which he founded in 1904). Important critics such as Christian Brinton and Charles Caffin wrote insightful articles and books about Spanish painting and its contribution to art history.⁵ Hundreds of artists, most famously Chase, Sargent, Mary Cassatt, Thomas Eakins, and Henri, traveled to Spain to study and to paint copies of the Prado's masterworks.⁶ Back in the United States, these same artists and many more executed countless paintings of Spanish subjects, which ranged from Spanish landscapes and cityscapes to scenes of street vendors, vagabonds, and cigar factory workers to portraits of bullfighters, *majas*,

⁵Some examples include Christian Brinton, "Zuloaga and the National Note in Spanish Art," *Craftsman* 16 (May 1909): 131-39; Christian Brinton, *Modern Artists* (New York: Baker and Taylor Co, 1908); Charles Caffin, *The Story of Spanish Painting* (New York: Century, 1910).

⁶Whistler, also influenced by Spanish art, never actually made it to Spain, though he described a projected trip to the Prado as a "sacred pilgrimage"; Cikovsky, "Introduction," 17.

musicians, dancers, and gypsies. These were exhibited to great critical and popular acclaim and sold to enthusiastic collectors.

Henri's study of Velázquez, as well as his adaptation of signature elements of the Spaniard's style and philosophical outlook, has been discussed by countless critics and art historians. In these narratives, Henri is said to have developed his characteristic and highly individual style by modeling his own work after that of the Spanish master. Yet viewed within the context of Hispanism, Henri's fascination with Velázquez and Spanish culture was hardly unusual. In fact, for an up-and-coming artist of his generation who aspired to success within the New York and larger art world, study in Spain was *de rigueur*. The fluid brushwork, dark palette, and simple compositions associated with Velázquez were often seen as a corrective to the rigidities of French academic painting; adapted to paintings such as Henri's portrait of William Glackens (1904; Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, University of Nebraska-Lincoln), this style marked a painter as a modern, and even a politically progressive artist.⁷ Similarly, the humanitarian traits seen in the Spaniard's paintings were valued by artists and critics who sought to accurately reflect, not idealize, the modern world, the ugly as well as the beautiful. Henri often exhorted his students to imitate the Spanish artist's "human sympathy and

⁷Cikovsky has observed that one way of measuring the decline of classicism in art in the late nineteenth century was the increasing number of Spanish pictures in Salon exhibitions and the proportional decrease of Italian ones; Cikovsky, "Introduction," 18.

respect” for all his subjects.⁸ Reflecting this view, Henri’s attachment to Velázquez’s unmediated, sincere view of humanity--seen, for example, in his paintings of court dwarfs--is another commonplace in the Henri literature.⁹

Yet Henri’s appreciation of Spain was not limited only to brushwork, palette, composition, and other formal characteristics seen in seventeenth century painting, but extended as well to Spain’s history, architecture, visual arts, music, dance, and other popular traditions. His fascination with the country was most visibly demonstrated by the many Spanish subjects he painted beginning in 1900 and throughout the remainder of his career.

⁸Henri’s views on this subject were recorded in *The Art Spirit*. A typical passage reads “In that studio the king and Velázquez met and in the portrait that was painted we see eyes and gesture which tell of an unusual contract. To Velázquez he responded, and he was safe to take his true position--that of a man, not good, not bad, not great, but conscious of the futility of pomp; touched with sadness, possessed of a certain innate dignity, and craving above all things just that kind of human sympathy and respect which Velázquez, with love and without fear, was capable of giving”; Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit*, comp. Margery Ryerson (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1923; reprint, New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 236.

⁹While Henri’s sympathetic response to Velázquez’s dwarfs and beggars was typical for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Barry Wind has argued that Velázquez and his contemporaries regarded dwarfs and other people with physical deformities as “freaks,” pets, and buffoons to be laughed at and ridiculed. The painters’ serious and seemingly respectful portrayal of these subjects only served to heighten the joke”; see Barry Wind, *‘A Foul and Pestilent Congregation’: Images of ‘Freaks’ in Baroque Art* (Aldershot, England and Brookfield, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 1998), 67-98. The differences between seventeenth and nineteenth century perceptions of class and empathy toward the lower classes also come up in discussions of Henri’s view of Hals and Dutch portraiture; this topic deserves further study.

Spanish dancers

Among the large variety of Spanish types he depicted, Henri frequently painted the Spanish gypsy dancer. This group includes pictures such as *Girl with Fan* (figure 2.1), a costume figure piece in which a model adapts a “Spanish” demeanor with the aid of Spanish clothing and accessories, and *La Reina Mora* (figure 2.2), a full-length portrait of a well-known Madrid dancer. While at bottom these paintings reflected the huge popularity of the exotic Spanish dancer theme in American painting as well as on the American stage, they additionally referenced a number of intersecting and complex ideas about Spanish and American art, history, culture, and gender roles.

Many Spanish-themed works executed by Henri and his contemporaries may have been inspired by the examples of Velázquez, Goya, and other Spanish painters, whose beautiful *majas*, sumptuously costumed royalty, and haughty gypsies were directly imported into American canvases.¹⁰ But recent art history

¹⁰The influence of Spanish painting can be gauged in part by the number of American painters who copied Velázquez works in the Prado to keep in their studio as references. Henri himself copied *The Surrender at Breda*, *Menippus*, *Pablo de Valladolid*, and a full-length portrait of Mariane of Austria, writing to his parents in 1900 that “If I had known I would have come here [to the Prado] long ago. . . . to have and bring home these copys [sic] would be a constant advantage I could have them at hand and it would be so great an advantage to be able to make comparisons of what I do myself with the copys of the Valesques [sic]” (Henri to his parents, May 4, 1900, Robert Henri Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven [hereafter cited as Beinecke], box 15, folder 369). Chase kept a number of Old Master copies, including Velázquezes, in his studio, and artists at a 1906 Copley Society exhibition of Old Master copies were reported to be “Velázquez mad”, for one-third of the works displayed were copies of the Spanish artist (see

seemed to have provided the most potent precedents. Perhaps the most famous examples included Manet's many paintings of Spanish subjects, including the painting and prints portraying Lola de Valence (1862; Musée d'Orsay, Paris), the famous dancer of Madrid's Teatro Royale.¹¹ Manet was one of the most famous popularizers of Spain; almost half of his paintings from the period 1860-1867 were Spanish themes, most of which were also published and exhibited as prints. Similarly, John Singer Sargent's famous *El Jaleo* (1882; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston), a dramatic scene of a flamenco performance, did much to enhance the image of Spain in the American imagination. One of the most highly acclaimed paintings at the Paris Salon of 1882, it enjoyed an enduring popularity, and was eventually purchased by Isabella Stewart Gardner in 1914 to hang in the place of honor in the Spanish chapel in her grand Boston home/museum.¹² *El Jaleo* and other paintings of Spanish subjects demonstrate Sargent's interest in Spain, for he became lifelong aficionado of Spanish music and dance. In 1890, he and Chase, in a friendly rivalry, both painted full-length portraits of the Spanish dancer Carmencita (figure 2.3), who was then captivating sold out crowds in New York.¹³

Goley, *The Influence of Velázquez*, 7).

¹¹Manet's interest in Spanish subjects has been well-documented. For a brief summary, see Volk, "Sargent, Spain, and *El Jaleo*," in *John Singer Sargent's El Jaleo*, 45-47, passim.

¹²Volk, "Sargent, Spain, and *El Jaleo*," 21-109.

¹³Chase's *Carmencita* (1890; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

These are only some of the most famous examples, which demonstrate the American fascination for Spanish dance. While nineteenth-century artists produced canvases depicting any number of Spanish subjects—from landscapes, to architectural and city views, to Spanish street scenes--by the end of the nineteenth century Spanish dancers were among the most popular subjects in the international art market.¹⁴ Following this trend, Henri likewise painted a number of dancers, which figured prominently among his early figural works and helped to establish him as a quickly rising star on the art world horizon.¹⁵

Spanish Dancer (figure 2.4), for example, was one of the first large-scale Spanish paintings Henri exhibited. This full-length canvas depicts a beautiful raven-haired woman clad in a fringed red shawl, her hair adorned with red roses, and clapping a castanet. The composition—a long elegant figure posed in an ambiguous space—recalled the Velázquez works, such as the portrait of *Pablo de Valladolid* (1642; Museo del Prado, Madrid), that Henri had so diligently studied a few years earlier in the Prado. These references to the great master of Spanish painting gave the portrait a stamp of imprimatur. The shawl itself presented a

¹⁴Boone, “Vistas d’España,” 173.

¹⁵Homer (*Robert Henri and His Circle*, 241-44) suggested that Henri did not select his subjects purely for their picturesque qualities, but rather was more interested in them as human beings. While this may have been true for certain paintings and at certain points in his career, Henri could not have been unaware of the huge popularity that Spanish subjects enjoyed with the American public. Indeed, he proved himself over and over to be a savvy self-marketer, as demonstrated by Elizabeth Milroy in *Painters of a New Century: The Eight and American Art* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991).

marvelous opportunity for Henri to demonstrate his skill as a painter. The brilliant red silk was accented by colorful embroidered flowers and long fringe, the flowing lines of which were echoed in the ribbons streaming from the castanet at the end of the dancer's outstretched arm. Yet, wrapped tightly around the woman's breasts and leaving one shoulder and a long arm seductively bare, and revealing the curves of a voluptuous body, the suggestively draped scarf endowed the painting with an erotic aura.

The painting was highly acclaimed at the 1905 exhibition of the Society of American Artists. While some critics thought the bare arm a bit risqué, the painting was recognized as a sensation, marking Henri's rise to prominence as a painter.

The great figure of the show is Robert Henri's 'Spanish Dancer.' If it be the work by which he is to become popular, we may recall that the figure of a Spanish dancer in 'El Jaleo' made popular Sargent. The 'Spanish Dancer' of Henri has similar qualities, accessible to the appreciation of the passer-by as well as to that of the artist. It is dramatic and brilliant. The figure, at rest, vibrates with action. . . . With this work at least, the art lovers . . . may realize the excellent artist that America has in Robert Henri.¹⁶

After its sensational debut in New York, *Spanish Dancer* was exhibited at the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh, where it was selected to illustrate large-scale street car and billboard posters advertizing the exhibition, and also traveled to various other venues on the east coast and mid-west.¹⁷

¹⁶Henri Pène du Bois, "The American Artists' Show," unidentified clipping (1905), Robert Henri Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter cited as Henri Papers, AAA), reel 886, frame 1194.

¹⁷The use of the painting as advertising is recorded in a letter to Henri from John W. Beatty, Director of Fine Arts, Carnegie Institute, November 21, 1905,

Henri painted at least two other versions of the *Spanish Dancer*: *Spanish Dancing Girl* (1904; private collection) and *Spanish Dancer with Cigarette* (1904; private collection), both of which depict the same model in the same red shawl, albeit with widely contrasting attitudes. In *Spanish Dancing Girl*, she wears a black choker and red flowers in her hair, yet here the shawl is not so revealing or close-fitting, instead suggesting a loose wrap worn over another dress (the model's dark skirt and shoes are visible at bottom). As a *cigarrera*, she sits, leaning slightly forward, clutching the shawl at her throat with one hand and holding a cigarette in her other.

Henri repeated this basic formula for erotic costume pieces in a number of works, including *Girl with Fan*, *The Red Shawl* (1909; Baltimore Museum of Art), *Dancer in a Yellow Shawl* (1908; Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio), and *The Red Flower (Betalo in a Spanish Chair)* (1910; Estate of Robert Henri), all of which were modeled in his New York studio by his friend and favorite model, the dancer Betalo Rubino.¹⁸ Flirtatious and erotic--almost aggressively so--with flushed faces suggesting vigorous dance or sexual activity, attired in costumes suggesting actual Spanish costume or suggestive boudoir attire for the mistresses of upper-class

Beinecke, box 2, folder 50. For an incomplete exhibition history of the painting, see Bennard Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), 85.

¹⁸Henri's wife also took a turn modeling one of these erotic dancers in *Marjorie in a Yellow Shawl* (1909; Warner Collection of Gulf States Paper Corporation, Tuscaloosa, Alabama).

American males, these portraits counter other popular figure paintings depicting well-bred women as passive, introspective, restrained, and quiet, such as those painted by Henri's contemporaries John White Alexander, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, or Abbot Henderson Thayer.

In stylistic elements such as the sparse, indeterminate background, the full-length format, and the dark, shadowy palette, these Spanish costume pieces, painted between 1900 and 1906, clearly owe a great deal to Henri's study of Velázquez in the Prado in 1900.¹⁹ But they reflect very little of Henri's actual experiences during that trip, perhaps because he spent much of his time at the Prado or tending to his wife, who was frequently under the weather, rather than participating in the daily life of the bustling capital. Rather, as Henri's letters clearly reveal, much of his view of Spain was colored by previous, limited knowledge about the country—cobbled together from Spanish art and literature, guidebooks, and recommendations from friends. For example, on his approach to Madrid from France, Henri compared the snow-capped ranges he saw from his train window to the landscapes in Velázquez portraits; similarly, he saw burros ridden by “Sancho Panza” or “Dulcinea del la Bosa” accompanying flocks of sheep.²⁰ Of course, it is certainly not unusual for first-time travelers get their knowledge of

¹⁹Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 237-38.

²⁰Henri to his parents, May 4, 1900, Beinecke, box 15, folder 369. Sancho Panza and Dulcinea de la Bosa are characters in Miguel de Cervantes's famous novel, *Don Quixote*.

a place second-hand, but what is important is that the sources of Henri's initial information about Spain affected the way he viewed Spain and the way he in turn presented Spain in his paintings.

Not surprisingly, then, the "Spanish dancer" paintings are a representation of current stereotypes and artistic conventions more than a reflection of actual people Henri may have encountered in Spain. While in Madrid Henri may have purchased a few characteristic accessories, such as the brilliantly colored shawl and the flat brimmed hat, they seem to have merely been used as props. *Spanish Dancer* was, in fact, a studio concoction, painted in Henri's New York studio in the winter of 1904, an amalgam of contemporary conventions typical for such images of seductive, scantily and exotically clad young women. While many similar paintings of the time gain much of their erotic atmosphere from the seemingly unlikely combination of white women in exotic clothing from faraway lands such as Japan or Persia, Henri's pictures gains a measure of authenticity from the model, Anna Maria Bustamente, a woman of Spanish heritage whom he knew in New York, as well as the more aggressive physicality suggested by her pose and direct gaze.

Theatrical portraits

It is hardly surprising that such works were based on stereotypes, considering that they were intended as exhibition pieces to display the artist's skill. Full-length portraits such as *Spanish Dancer* were painted primarily as exhibition

pieces, and Henri would paint a succession of these pictures in the next decade. The theatrical subject matter of the portraits such as this allows for more painterly embellishment on the part of the artist, compared with portraits that call for more moderation and convention, such as society portraits. Bullfighters and flamenco dancers were perfect subjects for this kind of portrait: known for their overt display of eroticism, their flamboyant gestures, and their interaction with the audience, their bodies and personalities were perfectly suited to being depicted with such dramatic effects. Their beautiful, luxuriant costumes only heightened the effect: the matadors's costume--from the tight-fitting pants and brilliant pink stockings to the elaborately embroidered *traje de luces*, the "suit of lights", and the distinctive cap, the *montera*--was specifically designed to show off his body and to attract attention, and the dancer's lush, colorful garments were designed to attract the eye and to accentuate the movement of the body during the dance. Because of the flamboyant attitudes of his sitters, Henri is allowed to utilize similar attention-getting painting techniques, thereby equating his own bravura performance as an artist with the performance of his subject.²¹ As Sadakichi Hartmann noted, a theatrical subject calls for a theatrical painting style:

Theatrical portraiture is really in a class by itself. In its domain all sorts of devices, unusual light effects, bolder shadows, and more variety of accessories aside from the costume, which, in itself, is an attraction, seem to

²¹The artist's masculinity was also associated with his painting performance. One critic, for example, noted that Henri's *Spanish Dancer* was "executed with dash and virility"; see "Pictures by American Artists Admired on 'Varnishing Day,'" *World*, March 24, 1905, 7.

be permissible. It is the very opposite of careful moderation and classic convention. . . . And instead of trying to get rid of all these embellishing influences, this style of representation thrives by utilizing them to the fullest extent. . . . It is the translation of a world in which forced attitudes and colorful effects are the order of the day.²²

The Spanish woman as Carmen

The successful theatrical effects of Henri's portraits were similarly enhanced by the current popularity of Spanish dancers on the American stage. Boone and Mary Crawford Volk have linked the numerous images of Spanish dancers that proliferated in circa 1900 American art to the overwhelming popularity of *Carmen*, the French opera by Georges Bizet.²³ In Bizet's opera, first produced in 1875 at the Paris Opéra-Comique, Carmen was a *cigarrera*, a beautiful gypsy girl who worked in a Sevilla tobacco factory. Flashy and flirtatious, passionate and overtly erotic, she shamelessly pursued affairs with wild abandon, proclaiming her undying devotion to lovers then discarding them as soon as she tired of them. Critics were attracted to the theatricality of the opera's music and dances as well as the brilliant costumes, but were repelled by the story, the downfall of a respectable army officer who is seduced by Carmen's charms and who ends up stabbing her to death

²²Sadakichi Hartmann, "Pictorial Aims of Modern Portraiture: X. Theatrical Effects," *Portrait* 10 (October 1918), 10. In this context, "theatrical" referred both to the concept of a shared performance by the artist and the subject depicted, and to the conscious sense of extravagant display, showy spectacle, and exaggerated artificiality that pervaded both.

²³The best discussion of the popularity of Carmen in American painting can be found in Boone, "Vistas d'Espana," 173-85; and Volk, "Sargent, Spain, and *El Jaleo*," in John Singer Sargent's *El Jaleo*, 63-68.

after she leaves him for a toreador. While Bizet incorporated elements of Spanish music and dance to give his opera more Spanish flavor, the production was, significantly, based mainly on French stereotypes of Spain, invented by Prosper Mérimée, Théophile Gautier, and other mid-nineteenth century French romantics. Nonetheless, for many Europeans and Americans, Carmen came to embody the Spanish woman as a flashy low-class, even vulgar, *femme fatale*, albeit one that dressed well and danced marvelously.

The opera was a tremendous success in Europe and the United States. Its popularity prompted numerous productions throughout the next several decades and it is now considered, along with Puccini's *La Bohème* and Verdi's *La Traviata*, as one of the most popular operas of the nineteenth century. Actresses such as Emma Calvé, who played Carmen in an acclaimed 1893 New York Metropolitan Opera production, were propelled to greater heights of success through their roles as Carmen and were celebrated in portraits reprising the character they had made their own.²⁴ The Carmen character was also evoked by many Spanish dancers. Carmencita, Otero, Guerrero, Tortajada, and many others who toured New York

²⁴For Calvé as Carmen, see *Portraits of the American Stage, 1771-1971* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1971), 86). Her portrait by Théobald Chartran, *Emma Calvé in the Title Role of George Bizet's Carmen* (1894; Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts), is honest and friendly despite the character's seductive and passionate nature. Irving R. Wiles also painted an actress in the role of Carmen, Mme. Gerville-Reache (unlocated; illustrated in Hartmann, "Pictorial Aims of Modern Portraiture: X. Theatrical Effects," 13).

and other American cities, owed their fame and celebrity to the popularity of Carmen, which fueled the American fascination with Spanish dance and music.

Carmen Dausset, popularly known as “Carmencita”, exemplifies the immense enthusiasm enjoyed by Spanish performers in the United States.²⁵ One of the most popular theatrical attractions in New York in 1890, Carmencita danced nightly at Koster and Bial’s Concert Hall and tutored matinee dancing classes in Madison Avenue mansions. In January 1891 Madison Square Garden even hosted a “Carmencita Ball,” a sold-out affair which featured an orchestra, a procession of “dragoons, senoras and señoritas, pages, dancing girls, toreadors, and picadors,” and Carmencita herself, who circled the Garden drawn on a green and gold dragon chariot.²⁶ Feted in the popular press with numerous reviews, publicity photographs, and interviews, Carmencita also performed privately for select artist groups, including soirees hosted by James Carroll Beckwith, John Singer Sargent, and William Merritt Chase. Dausset had a reputation as a passionate, untamed gypsy, a “child of nature”, and stories abounded in the popular press which

²⁵Unlike Calvé, Carmencita did not perform in the opera, but seems merely to have taken her stage name from the character. For more on Carmencita, see Carter Ratcliff, *John Singer Sargent* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1982), 122-24; Barbara Dayer Gallati, *William Merritt Chase* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1995), 44-47; and M. Elizabeth Boone, “A Torpedo in Dance Shoes?: The Portraits of Carmencita by J. S. Sargent and W. M. Chase in the Context of Nineteenth-Century Spanish-American Conflict” (paper presented at annual conference of the American Studies Association, Nashville, Tennessee, October 1994).

²⁶“The Carmencita Ball,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1891, 2; quoted in Boone, “Torpedo in Dance Shoes,” 4.

conflated her upbringing and personal life with Bizet's famous character. These appear to have been wildly speculative, based little on truth, yet she played the role to the hilt to enhance her popularity and her celebrity.

Carmencita was immortalized in Chase's and Sargent's full-length, life-sized oils, which were greatly influential on later artists. Henri's series of Spanish dancers, painted from 1906 to 1910, follow these earlier precedents. Some of the best known of these works include *La Reina Mora*; *La Trinidad* (1906; National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City); *El Tango* (figure 2.5); *Manolita Marequis Bailarina* (c. 1906; formerly Houston Museum of Art); and *La Madrileña* (figure 2.6).

Spain and gypsies had long been popular in European art. Now, sparked by the enduring success of Carmen and Spanish dancers like Carmencita, the image of the half-wild Sevillian gypsy became conflated in the popular imagination with the Spanish woman. In turn, the popular image of Spain became indelibly marked by Carmen, who represented the sensuality, passion, and eroticism of the demi-monde, and the freedom and romance of the gypsy life, and outsiders became fascinated with this image of Spain. By Henri's time, Spanish women were commonly depicted as flamboyant, petulant gypsies who smoked cigars, danced flamenco, clapped castanets, and broke hearts. Obviously, some writers tried to dispel these popular myths about Spaniards. In 1917, for example, Marius André wrote about the arbitrariness and untruthfulness of French stereotypes of Spain:

Spanish women, they say, are ardent and fickle; no, they are no more fickle than those of other countries, it is they who stay the most at home. They smoke cigarettes; no, Spain is the country in Europe where there are the least women who smoke. *Carmen* is a masterpiece of French music, the Spanish rave about it, but from that to make the heroine of Mérimée and of Bizet, just as the smugglers who surround her, the normal Spanish types, it's a chasm; one has leaped over the chasm.²⁷

Yet the stereotypes persisted, even until today.²⁸

"Remember the Maine": American views of Spain

This simultaneous fascination and repulsion which fueled the popularity of images of Spanish dancers was indicative of the American attitude about Spain in general that had dominated throughout the nineteenth century. Spain was commonly romanticized as an exotic, traditional culture that contrasted sharply

²⁷"Les femmes espagnoles, dit-on, sont ardents et volages; non, elles ne sont pas plus volages que celle d'autres pays, ce sont celles qui restent le plus au foyer. Elles fument la cigarette; non, l'Espagne est le pays d'Europe où il y a le moins de femmes qui fument. *Carmen* est un chef-d'oeuvre de la musique française, les Espagnols en raffolent, mais de là à faire de l'héroïne de Mérimée et de Bizet ainsi que des contrebandiers qui l'entourent des types normaux d'Espagnols, il y a un abîme; on a franchi l'abîme"; Marius André, *Guide psychologique du Français à l'étranger* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1917), 41-42; quoted in Hervé Poutet, *Images Touristiques de l'Espagne: de la Propagande Politique à la Promotion Touristique* (Paris: Editions L'Harmattan, 1995), 298.

²⁸Poutet (*Images Touristiques de l'Espagne*, 301, 332), has observed that the *Carmen* stereotype is today one of the major themes in Spanish tourism. For example, a figure of *Carmen*, based on the golden silhouette of Sargent's portrait of Carmencita, graced the back cover of periodicals devoted to Spain in 1991-92 and also figured prominently in the Seville Universal Exposition in 1992. Further, among the "ABC's" of Spain listed in tourism brochures are *Carmen*, castanets, flamenco, and gypsies.

with modern America. Boone has discussed the “competitive dynamic between Spanish and American culture,” describing the American view of Spain as a two-sided coin: one of both admiration and jealousy, of adoration and hostility, of appreciation and opprobrium.²⁹ Americans had always admired the power and the vastness of the Spanish empire, even as they continually competed with Spain for land—Florida, Texas, California, Mexico, Cuba and the Caribbean--throughout most of the nineteenth century. Similarly, Americans envied Spain’s rich heritage. Having perpetually suffered from a cultural inferiority complex in relation to Europe, they looked to Spain’s Golden Era and the richness of her art and literature as a model for the development of their own national cultural traditions. Works of literature such as *Don Quixote* and *El Cid* and paintings by Murillo and Velázquez became touchstones of Spanish culture to be emulated.

However, even as Americans admired Spain’s picturesque traditions, they also blamed them for Spain’s contemporary decline. For example, Harvard professor George Ticknor helped to establish and popularize a canon of famous works of Spanish literature, while framing them in a context of national moral decline that contrasted sharply with America’s rise. Spain, for example, was associated with lofty ideals of Catholicism and chivalry, ideas that he and his generation found clearly outmoded in comparison to New England intellectual concepts of Protestantism and entrepreneurialism. Washington Irving’s popular

²⁹Boone, *España*, 15.

and influential *The Alhambra*, first published in 1831, praised Spain's glorious past while at the same time declaiming it as the source of Spain's contemporary backwardness and decline.³⁰ Similarly, the popular image of Carmen was linked with dual fascination with Spanish dance and music and reprehension of Spanish character and morals.

Yet the image of Spain as decadent and declining took on even more potency in the 1890s. After more than a century of competition with Spain, the American defeat of Spain in the Spanish-American war of 1898 finally turned the tables for good—Spain was forced to surrender her last colonial possessions—Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—to the United States. The United States, a country heretofore known for its economic but not its military strength, was decidedly on the rise as a world power; Spain, a large and powerful empire for over four hundred years, was now clearly at a nadir.

Spanish dancers and the image of the new woman

Fueled by the success of Carmen and the general fascination with Spain, the image of the Spanish dancer, in particular, was perhaps the most potent image of Spain in the popular American imagination at the turn of the century. While the reception of Carmencita, Otero, and other dancers was undoubtedly conditioned by the long-standing rivalry between Spain and the United States, the dancers'

³⁰Boone, *España*, 42-47.

popularity was also part of a larger fascination with exotic dancers and foreign cultures, a craze that quickly spread in the wake of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Of course, Americans' attraction for Carmen was fueled by the tension of the attraction and repulsion toward her character, and the contrast of her overt eroticism with the more restricted morality and social conventions in the United States. While the main emphasis of Bizet's Carmen seemed to have been her deeply flawed character as a shamelessly immoral and tantalizingly evil seductress, in the 1890s and later the focus of Spanish and other exotic dancers seemed to gradually and decisively shift toward an overt display of sensuality and eroticism.

As Holly Edwards has noted, the conception of the exotic dancer now became associated not with Orientalist fantasies in art or literature, but with in-the-flesh versions that Americans could view at any number of venues, from World's Exposition displays, to burlesque and vaudeville, to more artistic modern dance performances. Moreover, the appeal of exotic dancers in the early twentieth century coincided with Progressive Era movements to reform numerous aspects of American life, particularly social interaction, public and private behavior, and gender roles.³¹ For some viewers, portraits of exotically costumed young women suggested an erotic, sexually charged atmosphere of male pleasure, now brought out from behind closed doors into the open. For others, scantily clad dancers

³¹See Edwards's discussion of Orientalism in Progressive America in Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press in association with the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2000), 40-47.

suggested sexual freedom and the opportunity for women to break with restrictive standards of middle-class morality. Correspondingly, Henri's many pictures of Spanish dances not only symbolized a fascination with Spanish culture, but represented the possibility for increased individual freedom. In other words, rather than being an example of extreme immorality, Carmen could now represent expanded possibilities for the new liberated woman.

Cigarette smoking was one of the era's controversial flashpoints, representing both freedom and immorality. As Hervé Poutet has demonstrated, the popular image of the "Carmen fumée", which advertised Gitanes cigarettes beginning in 1910 vulgarized the image of Spain by joining it with cigarettes and castanets and wedded the exotic appeal of smoking with the desire to flaunt dominant middle-class social conventions.

Tobacco smoke, especially when it is exhaled by a woman, having the extra good taste to be a *cigarière*, gypsy and Andalousian, exercises a genuine fascination. . . . The smoke curls emerge from the sulfurous emanations suggesting the singular sensuality and eroticism shocking and attracting because forbidden and depraved, or pretended to be such, difficult to reconcile with moral conventions of honest people.³²

³²"La fumée du tabac, surtout quand elle est exhalée par une femme, ayant de surcroît le bon goût d'être cigarière, gitane et andalouse, va exercer une véritable fascination. . . . Des volutes de la fumée se dégageront des effleuves sulfureux suggèrent la sensualité singulière et l'érotisme choquant attirant parce qu'interdit et dépravé, ou supposé tel, difficilement conciliable avec les conventions morales des honnêtes gens"; Poutet, *Images Touristiques de l'Espagne*, 299. Madrilènes and other brands similarly paired the Spanish woman with the allure of cigarettes.

The popularity of exotic dancers went hand in hand with contemporary movements to reform dress as well as conventional gender roles. Masquerades and costume balls enjoyed incredible fashion, for they offered the opportunity to experience alternative identities and sample illicit pleasures while protected by disguise.³³ Such fêtes were especially popular with artists and art schools, such as the famous Quatres Arts Balls in Paris; in New York, the Art Students League's 1910 Spanish motif ball was painted by Francis Luis Mora (figure 2.7). The loose-fitting and revealing clothes worn by many dancers suggested pleasure in and appreciation of the human body, and new fashions based on Oriental styles countered conventional ideas about restrictive corseted clothing. Overtly sexualized and erotic dancers spoke to expanded sexual roles for women in an era promoting free love, equality in marriage, the validity of the female sexual experience, and birth control.³⁴ Dancers such as Isadora Duncan and Irene Castle

³³Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*, 46. As Mary Cassatt discovered several decades earlier, travel in Spain could also be associated with the opportunity to escape the rigid social conventions of the United States and European capitals; see M. Elizabeth Boone, "Bullfights and Balconies: Flirtation and *Majismo* in Mary Cassatt's Spanish Paintings of 1872-73," *American Art* 9 (Spring 1995): 55-71.

³⁴These issues are discussed in Barbara Epstein, "Family, Sexual Morality, and Popular Movements in Turn-of-the-Century America," in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 117-30; and Ellen Kay Trimberger, "Feminism, Men, and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900-1925," in *Powers of Desire*, 131-52.

projected a sense of youthful, active womanhood and “broadcast a previously denied sexuality and passion for life.”³⁵

Further, paintings like Henri’s *El Tango* also reference the new popular dances--such as the tango, the foxtrot, and the cakewalk--that were sweeping the United States. Emphasizing close physical contact and movements suggesting sexual intercourse, these new dances were eagerly adopted by younger adults of the working class and bohemian culture and just as vehemently declaimed by religious leaders and other conservative members of the public.³⁶ The cakewalk, for example, according to one contemporary commentator, was little more than a “sex dance,” or an African belly dance.³⁷ Likewise, the tango and “the whole ‘new paganism’ of which it [was] declared a part” was condemned by Pope Pius X in 1914 as “amusements which are incitant to corruption” and which “gravely outrage modesty.”³⁸ Closer to home, in early 1913 faculty at the Pennsylvania Academy of Art, Henri’s alma mater, barred students from dancing the turkey trot,

³⁵Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*, 46.

³⁶Kathy Peiss, “Charity Girls’ and City Pleasures: Historical Notes on Working-Class Sexuality, 1880-1920,” in *Powers of Desire*, 76-77.

³⁷Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*, 40.

³⁸“Against the Tango,” *Literary Digest* 14 (January 31, 1914), 210. Not surprisingly, many of these new dances were imported from other countries or non-white ethnic groups; the impetus to reject these dances as affronts to morality reflects the American and European sense of superiority and need to protect civilization from the encroachment of immoral “primitive” cultures.

the tango, the chicken flip, the bunny hug, and other “vulgar, disgraceful, disgusting, and extreme” dances.³⁹

While it is difficult to pinpoint with any authority exactly which meanings Henri intended to invest in his paintings of Spanish dancers, given his liberal politics and his close connection with the bohemian culture of Greenwich Village in those years, it seems fairly certain that he viewed his dancers in a positive, liberating light. Henri’s progressive political and social philosophies have been well-documented. Throughout his long career, he remained fascinated with the stage and the many possibilities it afforded for human expression through the language of the body. He was a great friend and supporter of Isadora Duncan’s emotive dance, and she often performed at his studio.⁴⁰ He was a great fan of Emma Goldman, and supported her libertarian ideas about education, anarchism, and birth control.⁴¹ Further, his letters around this time are dotted with comments

³⁹“Art Academy Bars ‘Chicken Flip’ Dance,” *Philadelphia North American*, January 11, 1913, clipping in PAFA records, AAA, reel P55, frame 771.

⁴⁰On Henri and Isadora Duncan, see Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 151, 196, 257; Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, 91-93, 95-96, 118. Henri so admired Duncan that in 1915 he wrote a salute to her, “Isadora Duncan and the Libertarian Spirit,” in *The Modern School*, a publication of the Ferrer Society. Henri’s associations with dance and the theater is an interesting subject that deserves further study, both for the overlapping of art and dance in New York at the beginning of the century, but also for a deeper understanding of Henri’s political and artistic philosophy.

⁴¹On Henri and Goldman, see Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 180-81, and Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, 100-01, 118. John and Dolly Sloan likewise respected Goldman for her pacifism, anti-capitalism, and outspoken advocacy of birth control; in spring 1916, along with the Henris and George and

about dancing the foxtrot, one of his and Marjorie's favorite dances, and with anti-clerical sentiments that make clear he would have enjoyed flaunting middle class standards of propriety.

Spanish dancers and modern theater

As demonstrated above, Henri's many portraits of Spanish dancers suggest multiple, often conflicting readings, paralleling America's diverse attitudes about the clash of American and other cultures circa 1900. As full-length figure paintings, they allowed him to demonstrate his prowess as a painter, the flamboyance and exotic aura of the theatrical subject demanding extra painterly flourishes that gained the attention of viewers. The exotic nature of the subject—scantly clad dancers—also signaled his progressive, bohemian outlook, that thumbed the nose at conventional morality even while seeking approval by conservative art institutions like the National Academy of Design and the Society for American Artists. Yet, even while Americans were attracted to the exotic qualities of the dancers and their performances, they were still repulsed by their less than wholesome characters, which in turn spoke to the widely perceived degeneracy and decline of Spain as a culture and as a world power and proved the unquestioned superiority of American culture. Large-scale portraits of this type countered, even parodied

Emma Bellows, they attended a banquet to honor Goldman, who was in jail for speaking out about the dissemination of information about birth control; see John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1995), 220-21.

the image of the proper, well-bred, impeccably groomed woman that was so prominently displayed in paintings by Sargent, Cecelia Beaux, John White Alexander, and other society portraitists of the day. It would seem, however, that in many ways the image of the Spanish dancer was a construction, a stereotype, which allowed for viewers to fantasize about other identities, freer sexual mores, less restricted gender roles, and freer bodily movement; or alternately, to feel secure in their sense of American superiority. Both men and women found these images tantalizing as well as threatening, depending on their political leanings. As a corollary, however, this kind of thinking reduced the rich culture of Spain to the image of a sexualized *femme fatale* in the eyes of Americans, who came to associate Spanish womanhood with this type of flashy, passionate, emotional character.

Yet, despite the highly symbolic function of the Spanish dancer, critics pointed to a sense of realism and authenticity that pervaded many of Henri's portraits and took them to a level just beyond stereotype. As one reviewer noted in 1906, "those who value unconventionality and a touch of the outré will always find something fascinating in Mr. Henri's paintings of women. They may verge on the eccentric, but they express character, individuality; and in a curious, half sombre, half lurid way stand out from their surroundings."⁴² Other reviewers liked

⁴²"The Decisive Moment in Portraiture," *New York Herald*, December 16, 1906, clipping in Henri Papers, AAA, reel 886, frame 1199. The author was responding to a recent comment by Sadakichi Hartmann in *International Studio* that Henri's women were "rather uninteresting as types."

Henri's painting style because it suggested with absolute authority that an individual, not an generalized type, was portrayed: "Without knowing the young woman who posed, one feels that the picture is a likeness," one critic wrote of the *Spanish Dancer*.⁴³

Beginning in 1906, Henri began to use actual Spaniards as models for his figure paintings, a practice which demonstrates his desire to create more authentic depictions of Spanish culture. Hoping to transcend facile productions aimed only at titillating viewers with suggestions of erotic behaviors or with brilliantly colored costumes, Henri began to gain a real appreciation for Spanish dance through his trips to Spain. Working out of a studio in Madrid, he painted numerous portraits of dancers, toreadors, and gypsies, a practice he would continue on subsequent visits to the city in 1908, 1910, and 1912. Precedents for these portraits, of course, include Manet's *Lola de Valence* and Chase's and Sargent's portraits of Carmencita, but Henri's portraits signal a decided shift in tone. His portraits take on an added measure of authenticity because they are Spanish performers painted in Spain, not in a New York (or Paris, in Manet's case) studio. Portraits such as *El Matador Felix Asiego* (figure 2.8), *Antonio Baños-Picador* (figure 2.9), *La Reina Mora*; *El Tango*; and *La Madrileña* attest to Henri's fascination with Spanish art and culture, and his lifelong interest in the theater and modern dance.

⁴³Raymond Gros, "Beautiful Paintings on Exhibition," undated clipping from the *Pittsburgh Index* [review of 1905 Carnegie exhibition], Henri papers, AAA, reel 887, frame 382.

While many visitors to Spain may have attended dance performances out of curiosity or titillation, Henri developed a sincere interest in the Madrid stage. Perhaps he was interested in seeing “authentic” Spanish dances that he had heretofore seen only in a bastardized, touristified version in New York, but he also became interested in the dancers themselves both as fellow artists and as symbols of Spanish culture. As J. E. Crawford Fitch wrote, “Spanish dancing is intensely national,” and only in Spain, in “some stifling, exuberant little café or theatre of the people” could one find authentic Spanish dance.⁴⁴ Over the summer Henri became somewhat of a discriminating connoisseur of dance—he attended a range of performances, evaluating them according to artistic criteria and differentiating the truly accomplished from the mere titilating and exotic. Moreover, the Spanish friends he met were his companions and guides in his visits to the theater and other popular entertainment, and introduced him to a world to which mere tourists would not have had access. One senses in Henri’s diaries and letters his appreciation of the art of dancing and the rich tradition behind it. This respect for the accomplishment and reputation of dancers as fellow artists pervade his portraits of Spanish performers.

La Reina Mora (the Moorish Queen) was the stage name of Milagros Moreno, an Andalusian dancer whom Henri painted in 1906. After seeing her performing at Actualidades, a center for traditional dance, Henri arranged to paint

⁴⁴J. E. Crawford Fitch, *Modern Dancing and Dancers* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1912), 195, 198.

her portrait.⁴⁵ Her costume is that of the stage: a brilliant white ruffled skirt, white stockings and satin shoes, and a bodice decorated with a design of brilliant red flowers; expensive gold jewelry decorated with diamonds and pearls; powdered white face and dark hair decorated with flowers. Her formal, frontal pose, made slightly more aggressive and assured by the arms akimbo, is that of the seasoned stage performer striking a pose for her audience. While the composition references other famous paintings of Spanish dancers by Manet and Sargent, the stiff pose suggests the many publicity photos and *tarjetas postales* that immortalized performers of the day.

Henri was quite in awe of Moreno, whom he judged to be very successful among Spanish dancers, “distinguished among her class.” Before commencing the portrait, he visited her apartment to choose the costume she would wear. Her room he found “magnificent” and her wardrobe even more opulent. “She showed a choice of dresses which could not have meant less than several thousand dollars value—they were most exquisitely done in every detail, lace of very rare quality, etc. and there was a pile of shawls to choose from every one of which was worth more than 100 dollars.” While he noted her gypsy background, characterizing her appearance as “very Andalusian in type” and her dancing as “savage” and “fierce”,

⁴⁵Moreno was a person of some celebrity, but the portrait was not commissioned. Therefore, Henri paid Moreno for her time not with money, but rather presented her with a second, bust-length portrait of herself. Typically, Henri compensated all of his Spanish celebrity models this way, and this accounts for the existence of other less formal versions of his full-length exhibition pieces.

off stage he found she displayed a “fine sense of pride and spirit. Always kind in manner and speech. Nothing of the show woman.” During her sittings she was always surrounded by a retinue of servants and admirers, who took to calling Henri “El Maestro.” After his experience with Moreno, Henri expressed his desire to stay in Madrid longer, so that he could paint more “persons of character and importance”, but it is unclear what impressed him more, her accomplishment as a dancer or her opulent celebrity lifestyle.⁴⁶

A few years later Henri painted several pictures of the dancer Josefa Cruz, known as La Madrileña. Like Moreno, Cruz is posed very stiffly and formally. While she wears a dazzling stage costume—a brilliant green satin gown adorned with pink flowers and ruffled sleeves and trim—her calm, almost introspective demeanor suggests a posed publicity photograph more than dancing or other physical activity. For Henri, Cruz seemed to embody the best of Spanish tradition and a sense of pride and dignity that characterized the best of Spanish personality. Writing in 1919, he recalled,

She is a very young girl, born and raised a dancer (that is, she is the niece of the celebrated teacher of dancing, Cansino of Madrid). Cansino trained her in the old dances of Spain. Although very young, she was already a very remarkable dancer at the time the painting

⁴⁶Henri’s experience with Moreno is documented in several letters from Madrid to his parents, dated September 18 and 23, 1906 (Beinecke, box 16, folder 384), and in diary entries for September 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 16, 1906 (Henri papers, AAA, Reel 886). For a summary, see Michael Andrew Marlais, “Robert Henri: La Reina Mora,” *American Art Review* 5 (Fall 1993): 84-85, 159.

was done, and it seemed to me she had in her carriage at all time much of the spirit and dignity of old Spain.⁴⁷

Henri's comments demonstrate much respect for the talents of Cruz and her family, yet they only hint at the reputation of the Cansinos' world-famous dancing school. Founded in Seville, the center of flamenco culture, the school moved to the Spanish capital in 1910. Henri surely knew of the Cansino family from their representatives in the New York theater world, the brother and sister dancing team of Eduardo and Elisa Cansino, for he mounted newspaper photographs of them into his scrapbook of dancers and theatrical performers.⁴⁸ New Yorkers who viewed the portrait may have also made the connection, for the Cansinos were among the most renowned dancers in the city. By 1916 they had been hired by the Ziegfield Follies and were the admiration of many of their peers, including the up-and-coming dancing team of Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire.⁴⁹

In contrast to the staged poses of *La Reina Mora* and *La Madrileña*, *El Tango* demonstrates more action and vivacity. Here, the famous Spanish ballerina Manolita Marequis, wears an opulent cream-colored fringed shawl decorated with

⁴⁷Henri to Colonel A. R. Lawton, December 5, 1919, typescript, Telfair Museum of Art, Archives.

⁴⁸Henri papers, AAA, reel 887, frame 232. A full-length portrait of Eduardo Cansino (1910; location unknown) is recorded by the Inventory of American Painting, Smithsonian Institution.

⁴⁹Eduardo's daughter, born in 1918, would later become the famous dancer and movie star Rita Hayworth. Some brief information on the Cansino family is contained in Joe Morella and Edward Z. Epstein, *Rita: The Life of Rita Hayworth* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1983).

a brilliant floral pattern. Her flushed and laughing face suggest a momentary pause from the exertion of the dance as well as interaction with the audience that was characteristic of the best Spanish dancers.⁵⁰

Los toros

If Henri was enamored with Spanish dancing, bullfighting was an even greater obsession. Henri's portraits of famed dancers of Madrid are paralleled by two magnificent portraits of bullfighters, Antonio Baños Hernández, also known as Calero, and Félix Asiego. Baños, an ex-lime and cement factory worker from Cartagena (his nickname, Calero, means lime-maker or lime-burner), debuted at Madrid's Plaza de Toros in 1908, where Henri saw him perform.⁵¹ Baños was a picador, the member of the matador's team, or *cuadrilla*, who prepares the bull for the matador. Riding a blindfolded and heavily padded horse, the picador attracts the bull by calling it, waving his pike, or clanking his armored leggings to attract

⁵⁰Flitch (*Modern Dancing and Dancers*, 195-96) noted the importance of audience participation in Spanish dancing—every audience member is supposed to take part in the dance by “rhythmic clapping and stamping, by the occasional prolonged ‘oles’ and other cries by which the dancer is encouraged or applauded. Thus the dance is not the spectacle for the amusement of a languid and passive public, as with us. It is rather the visible embodiment of an emotion in which every spectator himself takes an active and helpful part.”

⁵¹Baños's biography is found in José María Cossío, *Los Toros: Tratado Técnico e Histórico*, 5th ed., 4 vols. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1965), 3:86. Henri also painted a bust portrait of Baños (1908; Houston Museum of Fine Arts), inscribed “A mi amigo/ Antonio Baños (Calero)/ Robert Henri”; he gave this portrait to Baños in appreciation for letting him paint his portrait.

attention. He then drives his pike into the *murrillo*, the muscles at the back of the bull's neck, in order to weaken the neck muscles and thereby lower the bull's head.

While the matadors were the glamorous stars of the *corrida*, the picadors were seen as "moody and uncompanionable."⁵² Henri believed that the picador's job was actually more dangerous, and that the picador's horse was treated more cruelly than the bull, as the horse could often be gored and flipped around by the bull's horns.⁵³ Henri's portrait is meant to capture the picador's rough personality. Baños appears in characteristic picador's attire: thick leather pants and boots with spurs, broad-brimmed hat with red pompon, and elaborately embroidered velvet jacket, worn over a white frilled shirt and narrow tie. Carrying his *garrocha* over his shoulder, he appears focused, tough, and ready for work.

Asiego was a promising young matador who had achieved some fame by 1906, when Henri saw him at Madrid's bullring.⁵⁴ Henri painted him wearing his spectacular green satin and gold-embroidered suit, the *traje de luces*, and wearing his magnificent *capote de paseo*. The costume is the bullfighter's glory; hung with

⁵²Leonard Williams, *The Land of the Dons* (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1902), 176. Henri himself saw them as "brutal" and "heavy", and hoped to capture these characteristics in his portrait; see Henri to Mary Fanton Roberts, Mary Fanton Roberts papers, AAA, D162:135-37.

⁵³Henri, Madrid, to his parents, June 1, 1900, Beinecke, box 15, folder 370. Today, the picadors' horses wear heavy padding to protect them, but this was not the case in Henri's day.

⁵⁴Asiego's biography found in Cossío, *Los Toros*, 3:68. Cossío's spelling was "Assiego."

silk tassels and embroidered with silver and gold threads, the *traje de luces* can weigh up to 35 pounds and may take six tailors as much as a month to make. The equally spectacular cape is worn only in the parade; during the bullfight it is hung over the fence in front of a friend or distinguished guest.⁵⁵ This glittering costume, with its brilliant color contrasts and its encrustation of tassels, spangles, bells, and thick gold threads, is the focus of the picture, just as it was in the *corrida*. Yet the meaning of the portrait extends beyond these painterly effects.

Like the portraits of dancers, the portraits of Asiego and Baños evoke many of the same stereotypes of Spain. Because bullfighting, like flamenco, was found almost nowhere else in Europe, the sport was distinctly associated with Spain. Within Spanish culture, it was intimately linked with *majismo*, a Spanish lower class ethos that is characterized by the proud and saucy *maja* and the swaggering cocky *majo*, a group which was epitomized by the bullfighters.⁵⁶ Just as gypsy dancers were commonly viewed as openly flirtatious and aggressively feminine,

⁵⁵Writing to his parents, Henri described a fight in which Asiego had draped his parade cape over the fence in front of Miss Niles and Miss Bell, two of his more adventurous students who accompanied Henri to the bullfights and who seemed to have been more than a little enamored of Asiego. The *traje de luces* and the parade cape, he reported, was unusually beautiful, and even the newspapers commented on it. Henri reported the next week that he and his group “spend a good many an evenings with Asiego. We have our café and it happens to be in a square only a few steps from his café . . . in Plaza de Alfonso”; see Henri, Madrid, to his parents, July 28, 1906 and August 7, 1906 (Beinecke, box 16, folder 382-83).

⁵⁶On *majismo*’s importance in both bullfighting and Spanish culture, see Timothy Mitchell, *Blood Sport: A Social History of Spanish Bullfighting* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 56-67.

bullfighters were viewed as especially virile and hypermasculine. (Brinton called them “the most obviously masculine creations Spain has thus far produced.”)⁵⁷ Correspondingly, the bullfighter’s tight fitting and stylish costume was meant to call attention to the graceful movements of his body and also to emphasize every aspect of his anatomy, especially the area below the waist. His fight with the bull was seen as both violent and erotic, for ancient traditions linked bulls and bullfighting to sacred fertility rituals, and the bullfighter’s art could be equated with sexual prowess. Further, the bull’s horns were often seen as phallic symbols, and the Spanish word *cornudo* (from *cuerno*, horns), was a slang word for a cuckolded man.⁵⁸ The sport enjoyed countless admirers from diverse social classes, but many found it at once fascinating and repulsive. American and European tourists especially found the sport excessively bloody and unnecessarily cruel and were conflicted about its extremes of beauty and violence.⁵⁹ The ritual was also

⁵⁷Brinton, *Modern Artists*, 258.

⁵⁸Boone, “Vistas d’Espana,” 144; Mitchell, *Blood Sport*, 155-60. In fact, the sport of bullfighting is so intimately linked with masculine identity that female bullfighters are extremely rare, even today. As Mitchell observed, the few *señoritas toreros* who gained success found they were strongly resisted by male bullfighters and misunderstood by the public. Often they were promoted merely as novelties, and categorized with fringe acts such as clowns.

⁵⁹According to Boone (“Vistas d’Espana,” 13), many American visitors were fascinated by the artistry of the bullfight, yet critiqued the proceedings afterward, claiming the bullfight as proof of American moral superiority over the decadent and violent Spaniards. Some writers (Spanish as well as foreign) have equated the bullfight with the “blood sport” of the Roman gladiators; others have compared the physiological arousal it inspires to an orgiastic spectacle, or as sado-masochistic pornography; see Mitchell, *Blood Sport*, 160-75.

intimately associated with the lower classes. The rowdy, working class audience whose passionate participation—roaring with approval, hissing and booing disapproval, throwing objects into the ring—shocked and enervated American visitors suggested a constant threat of disorder to Spanish officials.⁶⁰ In 1900, Henri himself wrote long letters to his parents describing all the gruesome details of the bullfights he attended—the horrific violence suffered by the horses and the *banderilleros* who were gored and stomped by the bull, the “most vehement and violent passion” displayed by the crowds—noting that his description was “no exaggeration.”⁶¹ Yet he also loved the matadors’ magnificent costumes, the whole ritual and spectacle of the event, and like other fans, he was clearly mesmerized by the bullfighters he met both as fellow artists and famous celebrities.

Art historians have associated Henri’s portraits of *Asiego* and *Baños* with Manet’s famous *Torero Saluting* (1866; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), yet Henri’s influences extend far beyond Manet.⁶² Bullfighters and bullfight scenes were commonly portrayed by Goya and other Spanish artists, including Henri’s contemporary Zuloaga. Like famous Spanish dancers, matadors often posed for publicity stills for *cartes-de-visites*. The poses in photographs, posters, and painted portraits were similar: wearing his spectacular clothing of the *corrida*, the torero

⁶⁰Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain*, 201.

⁶¹Henri, Madrid, to his parents, May 24, June 1, June 8, 1900, Beinecke, box 15, folders 369-70.

⁶²See Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 244; and Leeds, *My People*, 24.

strikes a dramatic pose as if working the bull in front of the audience, or waves to the crowd in triumph.⁶³ Characteristically, these portraits emphasized the bullfighters' stylish costumes and body language—their *majismo*—as well as their celebrity. Yet Henri also invested his portrait of Asiego with a sense of realism, of human interest. Henri's frontal emphasis highlights one of the bullfighter's more pensive and vulnerable moments, presenting him

in full costume as he appears just before the grand entry into the ring--the procession across to the presidents (of the fight) box where he salutes and makes his short address (which no one hears) but which is interesting--graceful to see--and which is immediately before the blast of the trumpet which signals the entry of the first bull. . . . Before going into the fight they are all very serious and one can see in their faces that they . . . do not get over the sense that they are about to take risks that may end in death or injury of an almost equal value. My visit to them before the entry was a very interesting moment and in my portrait I think I got the sense of that look on the face I noticed particularly in Asiego. He said when I asked him afterward, that he was always a bit nervous before the fight and that he remained so until his first meeting with the bull's charge.⁶⁴

⁶³Cossío's *Los Toros* reproduces many photographic and painted bullfighter portraits; in a common full-length pose in full regalia, the bullfighter takes one of his formal stances in the bullring, sometimes adding a dramatic flourish of the cape, sword, or arm, as if performing for the crowd.

⁶⁴Henri, Madrid, to his parents, August 7, 1906, Beinecke, box 16, folder 383. Henri based his portrait on several photographs taken before a fight. The fact that Henri was given access to Asiego before a fight was an honor. As Leonard Williams observed, before the fight the matador is treated like a celebrity; his acquaintances "form a knot about him, justly elated at being seen to be on speaking terms with so great and good a man"; Williams, *Land of the Dons*, 176.

Spanish nationalism: the generation of '98 and the "problem of Spain"

What is interesting and significant about Henri's Spanish portraits is that many of them—particularly those executed in Madrid from 1906-1912—both accommodate and resist popular stereotypes of Spain. In other words, while the subject matter and execution often nod to current conventions for depicting Spanish subjects—with all the implications contained therein—they also contain an added sense of realism and authenticity that makes them slightly unusual among the genre and difficult to categorize. This attempt at a greater sense of accuracy and realism in Henri's portraits can be traced to Henri's 1906 trip, which had a great impact on his thinking about and visual imaging of Spain. Specifically, his interactions with a number of Spanish intellectuals influenced his ideas about Spanish culture, politics, and national identity. These ideas were not only reflected in his portraits but also formed the basis for his later thinking about national identity in the arts.

While many of Henri's earliest portraits were in a sense studio evocations of a generalized aura of "Spanishness" that was in vogue circa 1900, his letters reveal an increasing concern with authenticity. In painting Spanish subjects, he hoped to capture the many minute details of costume, demeanor, and physiognomy in order to identify and record the essence of Spanish culture. These goals were facilitated by his first-hand experiences in Spain. Though he was not fluent in Spanish, he included among his friends a number of Spanish artists, writers, intellectuals, and entertainers. Through his numerous visits to Spain and his lifelong interest in

Spanish music, dance, bullfighting, and art, he learned a great deal about the country and its people.

While most tourists to Spain would attend the theater and the bullfights on at least one occasion, Henri attended bullfights and Spanish dance halls with startling regularity, and soon became quite an aficionado of both. In 1906, for example, he recorded in his diary which matadors he saw, who earned the cheers and scorn of the crowds, who suffered injuries, and even the results of other fights reported in the newspaper. By 1908, his diary was separated into two columns, one to record his work, the other for "toros."⁶⁵ He also commented on the many opera and music-hall performances he attended, which ranged from the excellence of "La Reina Mora," a play whose authors Henri called "the best theater writers in Spain," to more pedestrian venues, such as a "silk-tight nude performance that was about the limit of vulgarity. They do not do these things with the art of the French."⁶⁶

More important, Henri befriended several of these performers, who would visit him at his studio or join him for evening social events. In summer 1906 he attended the bullfights every Sunday and socialized with the bullfighters Minuto-- "one of the greatest matadors of Spain (he gets a thousand dollars for every fight he is in)"--Caballero, and Asiego and his *cuadrilla*. He attended the play "La Reina

⁶⁵Henri diary, August 1908, Henri papers, AAA, reel 886.

⁶⁶Quotes from Henri diary, September 19, 1906 and August 30, 1908, Henri papers, AAA, reel 886.

Mora" with Asiego and Fernando; he was introduced to the dancer La Reina Mora by Caballero; and he became good friends with Asiego, whose café he frequented and whom he considered as a potential travel companion.⁶⁷

Henri's immersion in Spanish culture signaled his fascination with Spanish life and traditions, and a real respect for bullfighters and dancers as fellow artists. Yet his fascination with bullfighters also marked him as bohemian and even a bit risqué. Toreadors and dancers were persons of some celebrity in Henri's day, among the first modern professional athletes and public idols, on a par with today's movie stars and pop stars.⁶⁸ In spite of their celebrity, however, dancers and bullfighters were often considered beyond the pale, that is, not exactly members of respectable Spanish society. These performers, though adored by rich and poor alike, more often than not hailed from the uneducated peasant or working classes, and many aspiring toreadors in particular began as cattlemen and butchers. While the best could become wealthy as well as famous—in the United States and Europe today for most successful professional athletes, musicians, and actors—it was very rare for bullfighters to be regarded as proper gentlemen.⁶⁹ In an

⁶⁷See dairy entries for June-October 1906, Henri papers, AAA, reel 886; Henri, Madrid, to his parents, June-September 1906, Beinecke, box 15, folders 381-84.

⁶⁸Shubert, *Social History of Modern Spain*, 201.

⁶⁹Leonard Williams (*Land of the Dons*, 210) cited Luis Mazzantini y Eguía as "a familiar exception to the usual run of unlettered *toreros*": in his refined dress, "unexceptionable" education and tastes, love of the fine arts, and avoidance of interior decor even hinting at his profession, he was a "gentleman," not a

era obsessed with class boundaries and proper behavior, they lacked the education, refinement, and pedigree expected of Spain's elite classes.

Henri's earliest trips to Spain, between 1900 and 1912, coincided with a seminal moment in Spanish history marked by important and widespread national debate on the "problem of Spain." At the turn of the twentieth century, Spain found itself at an important crossroads due to the convergence of several historical moments. One of these was the difficult transition between an agricultural and industrial economy, which was accompanied by a shift in social structure defined by the consolidation of a monied middle class, an emerging working class, and the instability of the traditional *petit bourgeois*. Other factors included the country's ineffective government, corrupt electoral system, high illiteracy rates (around 75 percent), and an antiquated church-run educational system, all of which prevented progress on a par with the rest of Europe. Additionally, Spain's entanglement in colonial wars resulted in the loss of much of her overseas possessions—*El Desastre de 1898*--leaving the national coffers depleted, the Spanish empire in shambles, and the national collective psyche severely defeated. According to Spanish historian José Álvarez Junco, the crisis was mostly a matter of perception rather than reality, but it was deeply damaging mainly because it caused a widespread perception of Spanish worthlessness.

The loss of the remaining Spanish colonies happened just when the great European powers—among which Spaniards naturally included

bullfighter.

themselves—were carving up the world, and their victories or defeats were interpreted in terms of racial and national superiority or inferiority. . . . Now it was the Spanish people who had had a part of their sacred body amputated and who had staged a pathetic show of incompetence in front of the whole world.⁷⁰

In the wake of *El Desastre*, a number of political parties—including both Radical and Reformist Republicans, anarchists, socialists, and conservatives—vied for the backing of the people and the control of the government. The question of governmental reform was taken up by an extraordinary group of Spanish writers, artists, and intellectuals, called the Generation of 1898, who initiated a public debate on the regeneration of Spain, the question of historical national identity, and the challenges of modernization, all in the spirit of national unity. While the question of *los dos Españas* had dominated Spanish development for generations, the dichotomy of old and new, Spanish and European, conservative and liberal, tradition and progress, was even more crucial in the wake of the demoralizing defeat of 1898.

⁷⁰José Álvarez Junco, "History, Politics, and Culture, 1875-1936," in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 75. In the view of the Spanish, Spain's traditional civilization and ancient values were defeated by money-grubbing, morally bankrupt capitalists. For more on the Spanish reaction to the defeat in 1898, see also Sebastian Balfour, "The Lion and the Pig: Nationalism and National Identity in Fin-de-Siècle Spain," in *Nationalism and the Nation in the Iberian Peninsula: Competing and Conflicting Identities*, ed. Clare Mar-Molinero and Angel Smith (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 107-17; and Sebastian Balfour, "The Loss of Empire, Regenerationism, and the Forging of a Myth of National Identity," in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 25-39.

Liberal-minded Spaniards, among them the '98 intellectuals, believed that government and educational reform was necessary to Spain's salvation, and accordingly they looked to European and American models as cures. Yet real reform was difficult to achieve. Various competing factions were unable to unite to replace the existing regime or to quell outbursts of rioting, strikes, and civil unrest. Regional separatist movements arose in the crisis, for example, in Catalonia, the Basque region, and Galicia. Most Spaniards agreed that modernization was necessary, but how to keep the best of Spain in the face of dynamic change? More to the point, what was Spain?

In times of crisis and change, many nations seek stability and national unity by looking back to a more glorious past, in Spain's case, the Golden Era of the Christian reconquest through the seventeenth century. Consequently, one result of Spain's national soul-searching was a renewal of traditional values about Spanish history and the nature of Spanishness, emphasizing the country's spiritual values, the valor and heroism of its men, and the exceptional beauty and devoutness of its women. These values were found within Spanish culture itself—or, more specifically, in works of art, literature, and history which were identified as having significantly contributed to the definition of Spanish culture. Paintings by El Greco, Zurbarán, and Velázquez, novels such as Fernando de Rojas's *La Celestina* and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, or the poetry and prose of the mystics Santa Teresa, San

Juan de la Cruz and Fray Luis de León were all viewed as examples of the national character, a trait which critics believed persisted through the generations.⁷¹

Spanish intellectuals also sought to rediscover the people (the folk) and popular traditions, which could then be converted into national traditions. Because peasants or rural folk the least tainted by modernism, Europeanization, or, in a word, progress, their religious, social, and cultural traditions were identified as representative of the heart of Spanish character, distinct from other countries. Thus, the ruling classes transformed vernacular traditions into national traditions, a practice that established common traditions, beliefs, and language for what were in reality diverse groups of people living on the Iberian peninsula and that served to identity Spanish culture as distinct from other European nations.

While the decades after *El Desastre* were chaotic and unstable, they actually produced a rich body of art and literature precisely because the public debate on the “problem of Spain” was carried out in the arts as well as in other more traditional venues. Artists and writers aimed to create works that retained the essence of Spanish national character while also incorporating more contemporary and forward-looking elements derived from European avant-garde styles. In the visual arts specifically, painters such as Zuloaga, Sorolla, Herman Anglada Camarasa, José Gutiérrez Solana, and Dario de Regoyos painted their often contrasting views of Spain in images of lush landscapes, scenes of peasants at work

⁷¹Balfour, “Loss of Empire,” 30.

and play, or portraits of Spanish types. Exhibited in Spain and abroad, these works prompted much debate on Spanish national identity and the future of the country and her people.

For Henri, the motives and debates of the Generation of 1898 and, indeed, the general atmosphere of discourse on Spain's past and future, translated into a rich context for his investigation of Spanish culture and history. Accordingly, the timing of his visits was crucial for the development of his ideas and attitudes about the country's history and national identity. During his 1900 visit, Henri seems to have lived apart from much of Spanish society. Because of his wife's extended illness, his and Linda's inability to speak Spanish, and his focus on painting in the Prado, he seems to have been more of a Baedeker's tourist looking at Spain through the eyes of an outsider. The summer of 1906, however, found him in the thick of activity, socializing with Spaniards of widely diverse backgrounds and immersing himself in Spanish daily life and culture. His Spanish companions that summer included Don Federico Nieto Linares, a law student and Republican writer and reformer; Rafael Castro, also a political writer; a Lieutenant Clemente of the Spanish Army; Felix Asiego, a popular matador; a number of other bullfighters, including Caballero, the famous Minuto, and members of Asiego's *cuadrilla*; several dancers then starring in Madrid's cabarets and theaters; and Carmenita and Rosario, the vivacious daughters of the hostess of his boarding house. They introduced Henri to a Spain he had not seen before, taking him to the bullfights, dance halls, cafes, and picnics.

Of this groups, Nieto and Asiego were his closest companions. Henri met Nieto through Walter Pach, who had led the New York School of Art trip the previous year. Nieto often socialized with Henri and his students, giving Spanish lessons to girls in the class in return for English lessons. A law student and political writer with Republican views, Nieto was anti-clerical and anti-monarchical, and like many young intellectuals of his day, looked toward America as a model of freedom and reform.⁷² Clearly, Nieto's desire to reform Spanish society, especially its educational systems, would have resonated with Henri's own tendency toward progressive politics.

Henri also spent a great deal of time with Asiego. Henri's letters recount that Asiego had studied law, but began bullfighting after he failed his examinations. Like Nieto, he had "a great fancy for Americans—a desire to learn [E]nglish and come to America." Henri asked the bullfighter if he could paint his portrait, and during the process the two became warm friends. "Many of his friends have come to see the portrait and they all like it very much, we spend a good many an evenings with Asiego. We have our café and it happens to be in a square only a few steps from his café . . . in Plaza de Alfonzo." Asiego "belong[ed] to a fine family in Malaga and is a fighter much against the wishes of his family.

⁷²On Nieto, see Henri, Madrid, to his parents, July 8 and 16, 1906, Beinecke, box 15, folder 382.

His father is a judge, his brother a naval officer and another brother a diplomat.”⁷³

His interest in bullfighting seems all the more unusual when we consider that Spanish society was extremely conscious of social status: the elite socialized together at the opera and private clubs, summered together at Comillas or San Sebastián, lived in an elite section of town, and were buried in cemetery sections according to social class.⁷⁴ They did not socialize with bullfighters, who usually began as cattlemen, butchers, coachmen, or other working class backgrounds and who were known for their lack of refinement and taste. Yet Asiego’s circumstances place him, with Nieto, among Spain’s younger, politically liberal elite who chafed against traditional societal norms. Had he finished law school, he would not have been assured of a job, for government positions, such as those held by Asiego’s father and brothers, drew more aspiring applicants to Madrid than could find jobs.

⁷³Henri, Madrid, to his parents, August 7, 1906, Beinecke, box 15, folder 383. Henri had previously reported that “We saw him at the Madrid Plaza des Toros [sic] in a fight about three Sundays ago--a very handsome and graceful man--he is not more than twenty-two. . . and has studied law but did not want to give up his idea of glory in the bull ring . . . he is indeed very popular and attracts attention all over Madrid”; see Henri, Madrid, to his parents, July 24, 1906, Beinecke, box 15, folder 382. Interestingly, Asiego never rose to great heights as a bullfighter, and after 1908 gradually abandoned his profession. In fact, bullfighting historian José María de Cossío (*Los Toros*, 3:68) listed him only as a “matador de novillos”, an apprentice who fought only young bulls. Henri was quite taken with Asiego as a friend and as a bullfighter, and hoped either to travel in Europe with him or receive him as a visitor in New York. However, his letters do not mention Asiego in 1908 or thereafter. Perhaps Asiego returned to Malaga to follow in the profession more suitable to his class.

⁷⁴On Spain’s urban elite circa 1900, see Shubert, *Social History of Modern Spain*, 105-07.

This situation caused many young men of his generation, like Nieto, to question Spanish society and economics and to push for reform. As someone naturally interested in political and social issues, Henri would have learned a great deal about Spanish culture and national identity from Nieto and Asiego. In this context, Henri's close friendship with Asiego is interesting. Hailing from Malaga's elite class but pursuing a dream as a toreador, Asiego was certainly an acceptable companion for a respectable bohemian such as Henri, who would certainly not have consorted outside the studio with gypsies. Moreover, Henri's female students who were equally enamored of Asiego, could rest assured that he was at bottom a respectable, if disaffected, member of Spain's *crème de la crème*, and not a mere butcher.

The search for national identity in contemporary Spanish painting

Though many scholars have emphasized the influence of the old masters and French impressionists such as Manet on Henri's art, Henri was clearly influenced by contemporary Spanish painters as well. Henri's work can be compared with that of Joaquín Sorolla and Ignacio Zuloaga, who were renowned throughout Europe and America for their depictions of the Spanish people. At the turn of the century, both Zuloaga and Sorolla seem to have been at the heart of an ongoing debate about what constituted Spanish identity. Both were seen as chroniclers of the "very soul of Spain," and as leaders in a "nationalist movement

in contemporary Peninsular painting” whose goal was to capture the real Spain, its people, its regional customs, its scenery.⁷⁵

Sorolla was known for his bright, sunny views of Spain and its people. Large exhibitions of his work in 1906 at the Paris Galleries Georges Petit and in 1909 at New York’s Hispanic Society of America helped bolster his international following. The dazzling light and brilliant color of his works was appealing to a number of artists and collectors alike (Sargent and Chase were admirers), and critics often praised his depictions of modern Spain. Focusing on the provinces, particularly the sunny beaches and the quaint fishing villages of sunny Valencia, he was viewed as an optimistic and truthful interpreter of Spanish life and traditions. Zuloaga, on the other hand, was championed by Spanish intellectuals among the “generation of ‘98” whose search for a national identity was focused on the old Spain of Castile and the royal seat of Madrid, the region believed to be the heart and soul of Spanish heritage and identity.⁷⁶

While both artists were viewed as solidly within the Spanish artistic and cultural traditions, critics often viewed them as complete opposites. In the contemporary debate over Spanish identity, Sorolla was often backed by writers

⁷⁵Brinton, “Zuloaga and the National Note in Spanish Art,” 138.

⁷⁶For more on Sorolla and Zuloaga, see Boone, *España*; Peel, *Sorolla*; Leonard Williams, introduction to *Catalogue of Paintings by Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida Exhibited by the Hispanic Society of America, February 8-March 8, 1909* (New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1909); and Stratton, *Ignacio Zuloaga in America*.

and critics who wanted to picture Spain as a modern European country, emphasizing social reform, intellectual achievement, and industrial progress, as compared to popular stereotypes of old Spain. For example, reviewing Sorolla's 1906 Paris exhibition, Spanish critic Francisco Acebal wrote that Sorolla was

not content to portray physical workers, but also rises to the depiction of workers of the intellect. Thus today he is able to exhibit . . . a large number of portraits illustrating modern intellectual Spain—the Spain that deserves to be shown to foreigners rather than the shabby procession of *toreros* and *manolas*, beggars and bandits, which is usually brought forward to keep up the old legend. Here we have the fine, expressive, sober portraits of . . . representatives of the Spanish intellectual world of today. . . This is hard-working Spain as opposed to idle Spain.⁷⁷

Another critic, Max Nordau, reiterated this theme:

Let no one expect to meet, in [Sorolla's] gallery of great men, a Mazzantini or a Mazzantinito or any such famous matador. The Spain that Sorolla glorifies is not that of bull-fights or guitars, flamenco singers or the fandango: he is not interested in the tastes and outdated expectations of trippers whose ideas of Spain are confined to the Seville carnival, cigar-girls, the Alhambra, and the Albaicín at Granada—all the false tinsel of stale romanticism that delighted Théophile Gautier and is still being diligently painted by Jules Worms. No—the Spain that Sorolla chooses to present to the world is that of modern thought, fruitful work, radical progress; in a word, European Spain and not the old Moorish Spain, which is in fact African.⁷⁸

⁷⁷Quoted in Carmen Gracia, "Sorolla and His Critics," in Peel, *Sorolla*, 87.

⁷⁸Quoted in Carmen Gracia, "Sorolla and His Critics," in Peel, *Sorolla*, 87. In a more balanced critique, Leonard Williams found Sorolla to be sympathetic to all types of people, balancing beauty and ugliness in the tradition of Velázquez and Goya. He wrote that Sorolla was an interpreter of "all aspects and developments of contemporary Spain", from "portraits of royal personages, nobles, commoners . . . statesmen, novelists, poets, scientists, or soldiers . . . [to] the bright and tender joys of infant life, the playful scenes of boyhood and of girlhood, sorrows and problems and anxieties of later age, the sordid schemes of evil-doers, the strenuous toilers of the deep, the simple cultivators of the soil, the village cares and pastimes

Other critics appreciated Zuloaga's dark and somber studies of Spanish character as the more truthful representations of the Spanish. Seen as the heir to Spain's artistic heritage, in the tradition of Velázquez, Ribera, Goya, and other realist painters of Spanish life, such as *A Basque Peasant Standing on His Mountain Farm* (1915; Muséo del Arte de Ponce) or *The Toreadors* (figure 2.10), Zuloaga captured the "antique Iberian spirit" in his paintings of traditional Spanish life. Spanish intellectuals viewed Sorolla's brilliant canvases as superficial, facile, and shallow, preferring Zuloaga's canvases because of their national overtones and historical associations.⁷⁹ American Hispanophiles, such as the art critic Christian Brinton, likewise viewed his paintings of "characteristic types and scenes," such as "*matadors* and *manolas*, of ascetic hermits and hideous sorceresses, of pilgrims, gypsies and scarred *picadors*," as the embodiment of Old Spain. Further, because they were painted by a Spaniard, they were steeped with a "strong racial accent."⁸⁰

Not only is it immediately apparent that these subjects are Spanish, it is also possible to tell from what province they come and to what particular social stratum they belong. In the hundred-odd canvases which Zuloaga has placed to his credit can be studied as nowhere, save from the originals themselves, these deep-rooted factors which have moulded into distinct types the seductive Andaluz, the aggressive Basque, the haughty Castilian, or the sturdy half-Moorish Valencian.⁸¹

of the peasantry"; Williams, *Catalogue of Paintings*, 18-19.

⁷⁹Peel, *Sorolla*, 42.

⁸⁰Brinton, "Zuloaga and the National Note in Spanish Art," 131, 138.

⁸¹Brinton, *Modern Artists*, 254.

Chase was much enamored of Sorolla's work and the two maintained a solid friendship--Chase routinely took his students on a tour of Sorolla's Madrid studio during his summer art course and encouraged students to study with the Spaniard. New Yorkers were also in love with Sorolla's work, judging from the high attendance levels and the favorable sales at his 1909 at his Hispanic Society exhibition.⁸² Henri's feelings about Sorolla, however, are not certain. There are obvious similarities between Henri's and Sorolla's works, most notably those which focus on costume as an indicator of Spanish identity. These include Henri's paintings of the Segovian girl, especially *La Montera--Segovia Girl in Festival Costume* (1912, Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.), and Sorolla's many sketches of Spanish types, such as *Segovian Peasant Girls* (figure 2.11), a scene of two girls in festival costumes seated inside a church or religious shrine. Other full-size oil studies of costumed types, such as *Bride of Lagartera* and *Locals from Salamanca* (both 1912; Museo Sorolla, Madrid) were preliminary studies for the mural series *The Provinces of Spain* (1911-19; Hispanic Society, New York), which illustrates Spain's traditional provincial folk customs and celebrations such as the Castilian Fiesta del Pan, Seville's famous Holy Week celebrations, bullfighting, and the popular Aragonese folk dance *la jota*. In all of these scenes, the particular costumes of the subjects, in combination

⁸²During the one-month run, attendance totaled over 160,000. More than half of the 350 pictures sold, and the catalogue was reprinted by popular demand in an enlarged version; Peel, *Sorolla*, 13-15.

with the activities performed, signify traditional Spain; the paintings themselves are seen as accurate renditions of costumes and customs that were in danger of being lost with increasing industrialization and societal change.

Henri became acquainted with Zuloaga's work in 1899, when both exhibited at the Paris Salon and sold canvases to the French government for the Luxembourg gallery (Henri's *La Neige*, 1899; Zuloaga's *My Uncle and My Cousins*, 1898, both now Musée d'Orsay, Paris). Two years later, seeing his work exhibited at the Paris Exposition, Henri called Zuloaga "undoubtedly the greatest Spanish painter of the day."⁸³ Between Sorolla and Zuloaga, he seems to have been much more interested in Zuloaga's canvases and his particular approach to the question of Spanish identity. Likewise, the style and feeling of Henri's paintings seems closer to Zuloaga, who painted Spanish types such as beggars, peasants, bullfighters, *majas*, gypsies, dancers and other performers, often in large-scale, full-length canvases. Zuloaga frequently silhouetted his subjects against backgrounds depicting the Spanish countryside or Spanish villages, using a low horizon line to monumentalize the figures and associate them more closely with the Spanish soil, though he also painted portraits with the dark, monochromatic background favored by Henri.

Variations on a theme: *chulas*, *modistas*, *ciegos*, and *celestinas*

⁸³Henri, Madrid, to his parents, June 2, 1900 [July 2?], Beinecke, box 15, folder 370.

In the context of Henri's interest in contemporary politics and social issues, his paintings take on added nuances as explorations of Spanish character and national identity. Interestingly, among these works we note some variations on the basic theme, suggesting that Henri accepted the generalized stereotypes because he wanted success within the current system, but that at the same time he wanted to stretch the boundaries and expand, if only incrementally, the range of acceptable subjects and presentations of Spanish subject matter. Thus we find a variety of types which balance a fine line between stereotype and more sincere honest portrayals. Moreover, after 1910, Henri's emphasis on large-scale theatrical portraits decreased dramatically, and he instead began to paint mainly smaller, informal canvases depicting the Spanish poor and working class, a parade of types which included working girls, old women, gypsies, beggars, street singers, newsgirls, and rural peasant girls. The standard interpretation of these pictures has long been based on Henri's own comments in "My People": that he wanted to find dignity and nobility in all people, "people through whom dignity of life is manifest", including children, persons with physical afflictions and those of advanced years.⁸⁴ Certainly, more so than the theatrical, highly artificial costume pieces and celebrity portraits, these works focus on the sitters by emphasizing character over costume. Even the fact that he portrayed at all individuals from the streets was a political act in itself, for he was recognizing a class that most

⁸⁴Robert Henri, "My People," *Craftsman* 27 (February 1915): 459; quoted in Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter*, 115.

Spaniards and tourists would have viewed as untouchable, filthy nuisances (beggars) or as dirty, uneducated, and vulgar working people. While this interpretation stresses Henri's humanitarian views, it overlooks other more complex aspects of his fascination with people and with Spanish culture. As a group, these pictures reveal a tendency toward people who seemed to Henri to embody Spanish culture and identity, both the old Castile of Madrid and the surrounding peasant villages of Segovia and Toledo as well as the newer industrialized Madrid. In painting these various "types", Henri was echoing the practice of other Spanish painters whom he admired, such as Velázquez, Goya, and Murillo, who visualized and recorded Spanish culture through its people, as well as visualizing his new ideas about Spanish identity in relation to the discourse of the Generation of '98.⁸⁵

The portrait of *Celestina* (figure 2.12) has been taken at face value as the portrait of an ordinary beggarwoman or working woman, one of the common street types that Henri painted in the tradition of Hals and Murillo.⁸⁶ The basic

⁸⁵Henri's gradual shift from a preference of full-length, formal portraits, to smaller busts and heads may also reflect other career concerns. In particular his break with the National Academy of Design in 1910, may have meant that he no longer needed to paint the large-scale canvases often seen in those competitive exhibitions. He may have also found it easier to sell his smaller, less expensive canvases. However, since most of Henri's works went unsold during his lifetime, the impact of sales on his choice of subjects is a question that is difficult to ascertain.

⁸⁶Perlman's association of the portrait with art historical precedents—his observation that *La Celestina* was a "somewhat raffish character that Hals delighted in portraying"—is typical of this narrow, decontextualized reading; see

drabness of the sitter's life is conveyed by her simple costume and Henri's muddy olive and beige palette. The old woman wears a dirty beige head scarf and a plain blouse, over which a greenish brown shawl is wrapped around the neck, crossed across the bodice, and tied together at the back in the tradition of the Spanish peasantry. Turning toward the viewer in a three-quarter profile, she smiles broadly, revealing the discolored and missing teeth and brown, leathery skin that mark her lower class status. Yet the portrait signifies more than simply Henri's compassion for ordinary people; rather, the title refers to an important and age-old symbol of Spanish history and culture. Celestina is the main character of the popular tragicomedic novel *La Celestina*. Written in 1499 by Fernando de Rojas, it is recognized as one of the most important achievements of Spanish literature, along with Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and a perfect literary symbol of the Spanish Golden Age.⁸⁷ In the novel, Celestina is an old bawd who acts as a go-between for two young romantic lovers, Calixto and Melibea. Called "one of the most real characters in all Spanish literature," she possessed numerous talents: she was "a laundress, a perfumeress, a fixer of faces, a mender of broken maidenheads, a bawd, and had some smatch of the witch. . . . At her home she made perfumes, civet, powders, musk and mosqueta, confections to clarify the skin, waters to make

Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter*, 99. Leeds (*My People*, 27) echoes this reading.

⁸⁷ John A. Crow, *Spain: The Root and the Flower: An Interpretation of Spain and the Spanish People*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 154-57.

the face glisten, lip salves, ointments, and a thousand other slibber-slabbers.”⁸⁸

Since its initial publication, *La Celestina* has gone through hundreds of editions and is still considered one of the classics of Spanish literature. Though Henri gave his painting an alternate title, “Old Spanish Woman Laughing,” he presumably preferred *Celestina* not only as a classic reference to Spanish history and culture but also as a suggestion that the bawdy characters of the Spanish Renaissance still existed in the modern era.⁸⁹ As Christian Brinton suggested in 1908, Spanish character was believed to have changed little throughout the years: “the same dwarfs and beggars that look from the walls of the Prado also shuffle in tattered swarms or sun themselves beside the church door.”⁹⁰

Another run-down old woman, portrayed in *The Old Model* (1912; Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin), lacks *Celestina*’s mischievous grin, and instead betrays a world-weary and knowing expression. Though her background is unknown, her dark, wrinkled skin suggests lower class status—a Moorish or gypsy heritage and a life as a laborer. The old model appears again in *Mother and Daughter* (n.d.; unlocated), a figure painting which contrasts her with

⁸⁸Crow, *The Root and the Flower*, 155.

⁸⁹Henri’s record book listed the title as “‘Celestina’/ Old Spanish Woman Laughing” (photocopy, Smithsonian Institution, Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Archives)—the quotes suggesting that *Celestina* is not the woman’s name, but rather a reference to that type. The name is even today in usage to denote a matchmaker.

⁹⁰Brinton, *Modern Artists*, 255.

a much younger and more beautiful woman. The younger woman is posed nude, in a reclining pose reminiscent of Goya's famous *La Maja Vestida* and *La Maja Desnuda* pair (1797-98; Museo del Prado, Madrid), which Henri would have seen on his various visits to the Prado. Behind her is the tanned, weather-beaten, and bent-over old woman, who, the comparison suggests, was once as fair, beautiful, and voluptuous as her daughter. While American audiences were put-off by the unabashed display of nudity and the stark realism embodied in the comparison between the ripeness of youth and the sad decline of old age which shows the painting for what it is rather than an ideal nude, Henri's intentions behind the portrait are unknown.⁹¹ The portrait makes a number of references to the history of art as well as to Spanish history. The old woman could be viewed as either a chaperone or a procuress for the virginal young maid; both roles were common in the history of painting. In Spain's intellectual climate, however, which had for years been trying to forge an uneasy balance between the country's glorious past and her uncertain future, the young woman might have symbolized Spain's past—with the obvious reference to its cultural heritage in Goya's *Maja*—with the old woman suggesting Spain's current state of decline and decrepitude, left with only memories of her former beauty.

⁹¹[Unidentified newspaper review of Henri's Milch Gallery solo exhibition], *New York Herald*, [March 1918], Henri Papers, AAA, reel 887, frame 428; H. L. H., "Paintings by Henri at Museum of Art Prove Startling Canvases," *Detroit Times*, [July 1919], Henri Papers, AAA, reel 887, frame 429.

Two other portraits by Henri contain more pathos, commenting on the sad condition of Spain's urban poor. In painting *Blind Spanish Singer* (figure 2.13) and *Spanish Singers* (1912; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.), Henri noted that the Spaniards had a "more dramatic strain" than the jolly Dutch, a quality he wanted to capture on canvas.

I have done one picture which I think is a very strong painting of a blind woman playing a guitar and singing--but it will not be a popular picture because it is of a terrible human tragedy and not a sentimental tragedy. It was an experience painting this picture. There were two blind women, one thin, emaciated body moving forward in the act of singing and head thrown back, the eyes closed and hollow. The other (not in this picture) a big woman, head always downcast--They sing in the street for a living--sing beautifully and with a sadness that belongs to blind singers--and a sweetness despite the rigor and occasional shrill notes of the Spanish folk songs. While I painted--for 5 hours they sang and played the guitars. When I made them rest it was terrible--there was no rest from being blind. I had to get used to being alone with them in the studio--during the rests--when they were singing it was different.⁹²

Comments such as these reveal Henri's interest in selecting subjects which would capture distinct aspects of the Spanish character. Though he demonstrated a great deal of sympathy toward his subjects and their tragedy, the theme of the blind street singer was still in keeping with his selection of Spanish "types", for beggars and other indigents had often been painted by Velázquez, Ribera, and Murillo. Henri admired these artists for the manner in which they lent dignity and respect

⁹²Henri, Madrid, to his mother, August 9, 1912, Beinecke, box 16, folder 392.

even the most deformed and ugliest of their subjects,⁹³ though provoking laughter and derision rather than sympathy may have been the artists' intention.⁹⁴ Perhaps not surprisingly, Henri never exhibited the portraits of blind singers because he believed they were more tragic than picturesque, more confrontational than genteel and uplifting than gallery audiences would desire.⁹⁵

Yet apart from their appearance in Spanish painting, beggars and other such base types were commonly seen on the streets of Spanish cities in the early twentieth century, to the point that they were a distinct element of the Spanish

⁹³Henri wrote in *The Art Spirit* (237) that “[w]hen the dwarfs posed for Velázquez they were no longer laughing stock for the court, and we see in their portraits a look of wisdom, human pathos and a balancing courage. Velázquez knew them as fellowmen with hearts and minds and strange experiences. He knew them as capable of sensitive approach. Even in the madman it is the glimmer of human sensibility, a groping of a puzzled heart, that makes the great moving force of the picture.

Where others saw a pompous king, a funny clown, a misshapen body to laugh at, Velázquez saw deep into life and love, and there was response in kind for his look.”

⁹⁴Wind, ‘*A Foul and Pestilent Congregation*,’ 67-98.

⁹⁵*Blind Spanish Singer* was, however, donated to an exhibition and sale benefitting those blinded in the first world war. At that time, Henri commented that “this picture is one in which I put my deepest feeling and the painting is as well as anything I have done. In fact, I consider it one of my very best pictures. It has never been shown to the public because there are so few to sympathise [sic] with or understand a frank facing with the tragedy of blindness. My feeling at the time of the painting was to meet it frankly, with all my heart and without sentimentality. Sentimentality is a protective mist which life-slackers throw about themselves to obscure from their consciousness the reality—they wish to pity but they do not wish to share the hurt”; see catalogue for the *Exhibition at the Anderson Galleries of Works of Art Donated for the Benefit of the American–British–French–Belgian Permanent Blind Relief War Fund*, 5/11-24, 1918, n.p.

atmosphere.⁹⁶ For example, in his 1902 book on Spanish life and customs, *The Land of the Dons*, British journalist Leonard Williams discussed at some length the prevalence of mendicants in Spain and their place in Spanish society. Because “the Spaniard as a rule is warm-hearted and impulsive; the merest glimpse of rags, or of a real or simulated misery, softens him at once,” he wrote, there are a large number of beggars in the country: “in no country of Europe are the evils of unrestrained mendicancy more glaringly obtrusive.” In Madrid, in particular, Williams described streets “swarm[ing] at all hours with nasty creatures in various stages of raggedness and filthiness, and physical distortion or infirmity.” Williams hardly tried to hide his disgust at the many “tatterdemillions” crawling all over Spain, many of whom he believed to be “rascally thieves who earn by begging three times the wages of an honest laborer,” he did look more kindly on the blind, whom he found to be of a “decenter class.”

As a rule they sit about the pavement scraping a fiddle, or perambulate the streets with a guitar, and one cannot but admire the extreme gentleness with which both young and old, rich and poor, assist the *ciego* on his way, taking him by the hand and leading him past all difficult crossings, corners, hoardings, ladders, and so forth. These blind musicians, then, I exclude from my censure, though doubtless they would be better off, more useful, and more contented if gathered into some industrial home.⁹⁷

⁹⁶Writing to his parents his initial impressions of Madrid in 1900, Henri mentioned that “we have seen very little begging and none of it persistent,” a comment which suggests that he had fully expected to see much of it; see Henri to his parents, May 4, 1900, Beinecke, box 15, folder 369.

⁹⁷Williams, *Land of the Dons*, 65-66.

Though Williams's comments may seem extremely harsh and insensitive to readers today, they record what were likely common reactions by tourists in Madrid to the prevalence of beggars. Moreover, as is common during times of economic and social instability when longstanding class hierarchies were no longer stable, Spanish public opinion toward the poor was also shifting. On one hand, a tolerance of the poor was seen as typically Spanish, as symbolic of the charity of a deeply religious country. On the other hand, by 1900 urban Spaniards were increasingly viewing beggars as an obstacle to the nation's progress. According to historian Adrian Shubert, at this time, "paupers lost their unfortunate, but God-given and morally useful place in society and became instead a nuisance and even a danger. They ceased to be a stimulus to good works and came to constitute a 'social question' which had to be solved."⁹⁸ In the shift from an agricultural to industrial economy, many rural folk had moved to the city to work in Madrid's light industrial jobs. Many, however, lived under difficult conditions. The chronic instability and miserly pay offered by these jobs ensured that many of these workers at one time or another had to resort to begging or prostitution to make ends meet. In the context of the early nineteenth century Spanish economic climate, Henri's portraits of street singers, then, take on other, potentially more important meanings.

⁹⁸Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain*, 52-54. For more on the living conditions of the Spanish poor and working class, see Carr, *Modern Spain*, 38-40; and Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain*, 36-56.

A number of other portraits likewise address the realities of contemporary life in Madrid. *Modiste of Madrid* (1906; Minnesota Museum of American Art, St. Paul), *Spanish Girl, Madrid* (1906; Berry-Hill Galleries, New York [1986]), *Spanish Girl of Madrid (Una Chula)* (figure 2.14), and *Spanish Girl-Modiste* (1908; Berry-Hill Galleries, New York [1986]), all depict a young seamstress, or *modista*, of Madrid.⁹⁹ Henri's diaries and letters tell us little about these models, but historians have noted that the seamstress was a characteristic type in Madrid, a city which had a "large number of tailors, bootmakers, and woman milliners using sewing machines bought on the installment system."¹⁰⁰ In fact, while the 'sweated trades' were a major industry, the largest employer of women after agriculture and domestic service, Madrid's working class was badly paid. Living in run-down old garrets in the old city center (near the Plaza Mayor and Puerta del Sol, where Henri often stayed while in Madrid), they lived in miserable conditions comparable to Dickensian England, and even purchased clothes and shoes by minute

⁹⁹Like many Spanish words, *modista*, meaning seamstress, seems to have been Gallicized by the French-speaking Henri, who referred to her as a *modiste*. Henri also executed a bust version of the Virginia painting, *Spanish Girl-Modiste* (1908; Berry-Hill Galleries, New York). *Newsgirl, Madrid, Spain* (1908; Berry-Hill Galleries, New York), while not specifically related to the *modista/chula* series, is another urban Madrid street type Henri included in his repertoire.

¹⁰⁰Carr, *Modern Spain*, 39. An entry in Henri's diary (August 10, 1906) mentions only that he had "completed without model [the] second full length of 'the modiste' . . . [I] think it an excellent likeness of the girl."

installments. In fact, their meager wages and job instability drove many into part-time or full-time prostitution.¹⁰¹

In these portraits, which bridge the gap between Henri's formal performer portraits and his smaller depictions of ordinary folk, it is difficult to discern whether the girls are modest and demure or flashy and flirtatious, whether they are honest working women or streetwalkers. (The word *chula*, which Henri attached to the title of one painting, indicates a flashy, insolent young woman from certain Madrid neighborhoods; in the past the word has been used to denote a prostitute.¹⁰²) The model for *Spanish Girl of Madrid (Una Chula)* stands with both hands on her hips, glaring at the viewer from the side, looking proud and defiant. Her folded fan, fringed shawl, ruffled blouse, red polka-dot skirt, and

¹⁰¹Shubert, *A Social History of Modern Spain*, 39, 43. Shubert recorded that in 1925 over 9000 women worked in Madrid's sweated trades. Official estimates from 1899 suggested that around 9000 women worked as prostitutes in Madrid. A good percentage of these streetwalkers were working women, including seamstresses and others from the sweated trades, driven by poverty. Additionally, many were domestic servants or widows and daughters of civil service workers whose miserable pensions drove them to prostitution.

¹⁰²Henri's titles for these works conflate the concept of *modiste* and *chula*, but it is unclear if the types are confused in Henri's mind or are actually the same. *Modiste* refers to an occupation, a seamstress, that has been documented as part of Madrid's social classes. The *chula* is more ambiguous as a type, but is generally associated with a lower class person living in certain sections of Madrid who is characterized by an insolent bravado and an indecorous manner. In a discussion of local and regional Spanish costume worn mainly by the peasantry and the lower-middle class, Leonard Williams (*Land of the Dons*, 54) observed that cities also possessed their special fashions; as such, the *chula* was characteristic of Madrid. Unfortunately, Williams did not give any specifics to describe the *chula's* distinctive style.

floral hair adornment mark her Spanish identity; the simplicity of her costume signify her low economic status. Her insolent and flippant manner would seem to characterize the *chula* type, a street-smart working class woman trying to make a living in a difficult environment. Similarly, the plain costume--a white waist and dark skirt under a white apron and black fringed shawl--worn by the model in *Modiste of Madrid* and *Spanish Girl, Madrid* suggests her working class status. In these portraits she either stands with one arm akimbo and holds a folded fan, her direct gaze suggesting both self-assuredness and sadness, or uses her fan, a cautious smile, and a sideways glance to flirt with the viewer.

Most American viewers of the portrait would have had little knowledge of Madrid's social structure to grasp the nuances of the *chula* or the *modista* as an urban type. However, her direct gaze and defiant, flippant manner, if not her fan and fringed shawl, clearly signified her working class status.¹⁰³ These accouterments may also have reminded some of Bizet's famous character, Carmen, who worked in a Sevillian cigarette factory. Cigarette making was another distinctly female, and typically Spanish, occupation. Though cigarette makers actually received higher pay than most manufacturing workers, had a high commitment to their jobs, and were known for being stylish dressers, they were commonly viewed as low-lives and prostitutes, in part because of Bizet's depiction of them as such.

¹⁰³Boone, "Bullfights and Balconies," passim.

Alternately, the pictures may have recalled for Henri's audience his earlier figure studies of similar American working class and immigrant types as *Girl with White Waist* (1901; destroyed), *Girl with a Parasol* (1906; unlocated), *Girl with Red Hair* (1906; Arts Council of Spartanburg County, South Carolina), *Maid's Night Out* (1909; Sotheby's, June 2, 1983, lot 191), or even *The Art Student* (1906; Milwaukee Art Museum). Henri's early portraits such as these deserve much more study, though they are beyond the scope of this project. However, what is significant here is that these works seem to be of a piece with the portraits of the Spanish *modista* and *chula*: they are all portraits of ordinary working class or middle-class types of young women, whose honest and unflattering presentation in full-length portraits sharply contrasted with the prevailing academic practice of reserving full-length compositions for persons of important social standing.¹⁰⁴

While the portraits of the *chula* and the *modista* reference contemporary Spanish urban types, a series of portraits of a young *Segoviana* suggest Spanish Henri's concept of rural identity and folk customs. Perhaps the most famous of these is *Spanish Girl of Segovia* (figure 2.15) and *The Green Fan (Girl of Toledo, Spain)* (1912; Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, South Carolina), both three-quarter length portraits of an attractive young girl with dark hair, penetrating large black eyes, and fine features. In both portraits she wears a white blouse and gold

¹⁰⁴See discussion of *Girl with a Parasol*, chapter one.

skirt, over which is wrapped a dark violet fringed shawl decorated with red and green flowers and a dark red and black patterned apron. Her ensemble is completed by a bright green fan, which she holds at her waist. The portraits are dazzling with their fluid brushwork and brilliant color contrasts. The richly colored and thickly applied paint lends a vibrancy and vividness to the portrait of the girl, who seems to come alive. In the Hirschhorn's portrait, *La Montera*, the sitter wears a dazzlingly beautiful coat of black velvet decorated with silver and gold embroidery and brightly colored ribbons and beads. The title of the picture refers to the girl's strangely shaped hat. Made in the shape of a bishop's mitre, the *montera* was typically made of velvet or embroidered black silk, and was adorned with tassels hanging from the points. The entire ensemble would have been quite expensive, reserved only for occasions such as weddings (as the model was of marriageable age, the costume would have been made for her to wear on her wedding day) or religious festivals.

Henri painted this girl numerous times that summer, using various canvas sizes, poses, costumes, and color combinations.¹⁰⁵ In each of the pictures, whether

¹⁰⁵Despite the apparent conflict of the titles, which identify the subject as either from Segovia or Toledo, it is clearly the same model. Both towns are accessible by day-trip from Madrid. Other paintings of the same girl include *Segovian Girl* (1912; Sotheby's, May 25, 1994, lot 101B), *Spanish Girl* (1912; photo in Robert Henri artist file, National Museum of American Art Library, Smithsonian Institution), *Segovia Girl* (1912; private collection, illustrated in Perlman, *Life and Art*, colorplate), *Girl from Segovia* (1912; Parke-Bernet, October 24, 1968, lot 77), *Segovia Girl* (1912; Inventory of American Painting, #61070948), and *The Segovia Girl* (1912; illustrated in Nathaniel Pousette-Dart, *Robert Henri* [New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1922], n.p.

the girl is dressed in her most elaborate festival costume or in her plainest everyday attire, Henri attended to specific details or particular qualities in the girl's features, demeanor, or dress that marked her as distinctly Spanish. For those familiar with Spanish life, these details clearly located her within a middle-class family of Segovia or Toledo, and signified regional and rural traditions specific to Old Castile. For many outsiders, including Henri and his American audience, the entire ensemble would have been read as a signifier of Spanish national identity, and more generally as a symbol of past traditions. While Leonard Williams noted in 1902 that these costumes were gradually disappearing from Spain in favor of the more sophisticated and international clothing from Paris, and were seen mostly during local festivals, photographs and written descriptions of the Spaniards' colorful costumes were virtually ubiquitous in travelogues and guidebooks of the day.¹⁰⁶ The colorful and quaint clothing worn by Spanish countryfolk was a favorite of tourists to Spain who were drawn to the picturesque and colorful spectacles offered by the country's numerous religious and folk festivals. Yet they

¹⁰⁶Williams discusses regional clothing styles in *Land of the Dons*, 49-54. Throughout his book, *Spanish Life in Town and Country* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1906), L. Higgin reproduced various photographs of "peasants" in characteristic regional costumes. His lack of specific captions or discussion in the text which would identify which regions the "peasants" hail from suggest he is more interested in regional costumes as identifiers of a general exotic Spanishness; moreover, the term "peasants" suggests that the people depicted were much poorer than they actually were, since generally the festival costumes were worn by provincial village landowners, merchants, and middle class families rather than the landless farm laborers suggested by the term.

were also embraced by Spanish nationalists and others, like Sorolla and Zuloaga, who equated regional customs with Spanish identity and tradition.¹⁰⁷

Gypsies as stereotypes of Spain

In the years between 1900 and 1912 Henri painted a variety of Spanish types, all of which represented for him significant aspects of Spanish life and culture. Yet Spanish gypsies were perhaps Henri's most frequent subject in Spain. His depictions ranged the gamut from full-length portrayals, such as *La Trinidad* (1906; National Cowboy Hall of Fame, Oklahoma City), *Gypsy with Guitar* (figure 2.16), and *Maria y Consuelo* (figure 2.17); to half-lengths, usually seated gypsy women, such as *Gypsy Girl* (1912; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), *Wild Spanish Gypsy* (figure 2.18), *Spanish Gypsy* (1912; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), and *Madre Gitana* (1912; Westmoreland Museum of Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania); to smaller to smaller bust-portraits, usually of street urchins, such as *Spanish Gypsy Girl* (1908; New Orleans Museum of Art).

La Trinidad and *Gypsy with Guitar* are intimately related in concept to Henri's portraits of Spanish performers, discussed earlier. Little is known about *La*

¹⁰⁷See, for example, Isabel de Palencia, *The Regional Costumes of Spain: Their Importance as a Primitive Expression of the Aesthetic Ideals of the Nation* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1926) and César Justel, *España: Trajes Regionales* (Madrid: Ediciones Al y Mar, SL, 1984). Palencia (9-10) asserted that the costume of each region was "singularly expressive of the racial influences which have brought to bear upon it" and that the art of dress was "a distinguishing mark of a nation's personality."

Trinidad, which may in fact be a portrait of an actual professional gypsy performer.¹⁰⁸ The model for *Gypsy with Guitar* was one of a number of gypsies Henri invited into his studio in 1906. Henri's letters suggest that the model was appealing because he seemed extremely typical of the colorful, musical gypsies he had seen in Spain. He carefully noted details of the man's appearance, especially the broad-brimmed sombrero, short-cut jacket, and red neck scarf, which he found to be a *chulo* style peculiar to Spain, and recorded that he "painted him in his loose swing, a Spanish guitar in his hands playing and his face in a reckless devil may care song. . . .and his face in a reckless devil may care song."¹⁰⁹

It is unclear whether or not the gypsy was really a *guitarrero*, but Henri's words strongly suggest that he was selected as a model because he exuded a peculiar style and demeanor that seemed especially Spanish, especially gypsy-like. Created in the studio, the portrait echoes a number of popular beliefs about Spanish gypsies, who were commonly believed to be natural musicians. The gypsy with a guitar was a trope often depicted by artists, perhaps most famously by

¹⁰⁸While we know a little about many of Henri's Spanish sitters from his letters and diaries, *La Trinidad* seems not to have been mentioned. The title for the painting, however, suggests a stage name. Henri's letters and diaries note that he often found gypsies on the street whom he arranged to come model for him in his studio. For example, a letter dated June 29, 1906 (Beinecke, box 15, folder 381), Henri mentions that on a picnic outing on the outskirts of Madrid "gipsys [sic] came about us and I engaged one of them to paint Monday when my studio will be ready for work."

¹⁰⁹Henri, Madrid, to his parents, September 23, 1906, Beinecke, box 16, folder 384. *Gypsy with Cigarette* (1906; IBM Collection, Armonk, New York) is a bust-length portrait of the same model.

Manet in his *The Spanish Singer* (1861; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) and Sargent's *El Jaleo*. Moreover, the Spanish love for guitars was a commonplace often repeated Spanish tourist guides, and commentators like Leonard Williams often described the "national devotion to this instrument":

In every home throughout the land you will find the family guitar hanging from its peg upon the wall. The poor man picks one up for a dollar at the *casa de empeños* (pawnbroker's); the well-to-do selects it spick and span, at twenty times the price, redolent of new varnish and inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The student strums it in the intervals of his reading, or when he goes *de juerga*. Men and women sing and dance to it, from the modest amateur or blushing *señorita fina* to the paid *cantatores* and bold, impassioned *cantadoras* of Andalusia. The lover serenades his mistress to its strains. It accompanies the soldier to the war. The roysterer in the tavern, the blind pauper in the street, the workman when his daily toil is over . . . the nation to a man—and woman—tinkles it, or sings and dances to it with greater or less ability, or hearkens to it with glee . . . where is the spot where guitars and *guitarristas* are not in constant evidence?¹¹⁰

Henri's comments on a nineteen-year-old gypsy mother, whom he depicted in *Maria y Consuelo*, reveal other popular stereotypes of gypsies as colorful, savage, proud, dirty, and childlike individuals.

A gypsy with a baby in her arms came in—crossed the room to where I was seated in a big armchair, presented me with a piece of paper with my name and address on it and at once sat down at my feet in front of me and began a comfortable conversation while the half naked baby slept or fed himself at the breast that was only concealed

¹¹⁰Williams, *Land of the Dons*, 73-74. Higgin (*Spanish Life in Town and Country*, 113-14) similarly observed that "wherever two or three men and women of the lower classes are to be seen together in Spain during their play-time, there is a guitar, with singing and dancing. . . . throughout the length and breadth of Spain, outside the wayside *venta*, or the barber's shop, in the *patios* of inns, or wherever holiday-makers congregate, there is the musician twanging his guitar, there are the dancers twirling about in obvious enjoyment to the accompaniment of the stamping, clapping and encouraging cries of the onlookers."

by a shawl. The gypsy was typical of the race, very large handsome eyes in a dark face—a gleam of teeth, jet black hair and much gypsy finery and flowers. She seemed as if she had never known a place better than sitting there and one would have said we were very old friends by her easy manner. She told me of her life—she is nineteen, has been married seven years—but this was her first baby[.] [H]er husband she said was handsome and could sing well[.] [T]hey had no house and slept in the open where she found herself and ate her meals where she happened to find them. Told fortunes and lies to get money—and she laughed through it all—Finally it appeared that Asiego would not come so I had her pose holding the baby in her arms and painted very rapidly a thing which I think contains some of the life she made more clear to me in her conversation. They are dirty, the bab[ie]s are like young animals—and not the clean kind either. The mothers seem to have the mother instinct to an intensity—children themselves they seem. Good easy nature is their characteristic, and with all their irregularity of life there is from appearances a natural morality—this girl with her baby seemed to have the most perfect spirit of happiness and contentment and the sixty cents she got for the pose was probably equal to three good days earnings in the streets and parks.¹¹¹

What is significant about Henri's comments on gypsies, and his portraits of them, is that his first-hand experience sometimes confirms, sometimes conflicts with preconceived notions and stereotypes. Henri noted that Maria purposely lied while telling fortunes—the amusement at her own chicanery suggesting amorality—and that she was extremely dirty and unconcerned about properly covering her breasts or her baby, yet Henri was also impressed by her “natural morality” and “perfect spirit of happiness and contentment.” Dirty and guided purely by instinct, the mother and baby were compared to young animals, but Henri also viewed her natural mothering abilities as an admirable trait. Henri hoped that his portrait of

¹¹¹Henri, Madrid, to his parents, August 13, 1906, Beinecke, box 16, folder 383.

her would convey some of the story of her life; instead, as a studio portrait with little visible connection to social fact, it merely reiterated commonly held stereotypes about gypsy appearance. However, the inclusion of the baby allowed for a slight revision of the gypsy *femme fatale* image by conflating the popular trope of the gypsy dancer of *La Trinidad* or *La Reina Mora* with another subject that enjoyed great popularity in American academic painting circa 1900, the mother and child theme.¹¹²

Other portraits depict gypsies as proud, bold, and insouciant, again, following common stereotypes. These women, as in *Gypsy Girl*, *Wild Spanish Gypsy*, *Madre Gitana*, among others, boldly stare at the viewer, arms akimbo, without resorting to the *maja*'s subtle flirtation with the fan or with averted eyes. Their typical dark complexion characterizes their exotic Moorish bloodline and outdoor lifestyle; their colorful layers of scarves and skirts and their profusion of bangles typifies their clothing style.¹¹³ Similarly, Henri's street urchins, such as the New Orleans gypsy girl, are characterized by their dark skin, bad teeth, and carefree, even happy, disposition.

¹¹²This subject was, however, rare in Henri's works. It appears again in a depiction of a native American mother and child, *Marie and Baby* (1917; Indianapolis Museum of Art).

¹¹³Colorful fabrics, especially red and white polka-dotted patterns, were commonly associated with gypsies; compare *Wild Spanish Gypsy*, *La Trinidad*, *Gypsy Girl*, *Madre Gitana*, and *Maria y Consuelo* to an illustration captioned *A Gypsy in the Pradera* in Williams, *Land of the Dons*, facing 162.

Henri's particular attitude toward gypsies was not unusual, and in fact echoed many popularly held sentiments about these non-conformist members of society. Gypsies had long been subjects of painting and literature, appearing in Cervantes's *The Little Gypsy Girl* and *The Dogs' Colloquy*, in George Borrow's famous accounts of his life with the gypsies *The Bible in Spain* (1841) and *The Zincali* (1842), and notably in French nineteenth century painting and literature. Beginning in the eighteenth century and continuing through Henri's day, gypsies were often seen as noble savages whose imaginative and spontaneous life contrasted with ordinary society. Feared because of their fringe relationship to ordered society, they were seen as travelers and non-conformists, and ascribed with traits such as mysterious, supernatural, or even criminal.¹¹⁴ (Carmen, for example, fraternized with a band of smugglers in their roadside tavern headquarters.) By the late nineteenth century, gypsies were often associated with music. Based on their history as traveling minstrels, some gypsies rose to a position of considerable eminence as professional musicians and entertainers. Because of their virtuosity at performing and the popularity of gypsy music among the elite classes, they were even able to marry into well-to-do or even aristocratic families. In Spain, gypsies were associated with flamenco—a unique blend of Andalusian folk

¹¹⁴Angus Fraser, *The Gypsies* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992) is the best recent study of gypsies. See also Jean-Pierre Liegeois, *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, trans. Toney Barrett (London: Saqi Books, 1986).

music combined with Byzantine, Arab, and gypsy elements which emerged in the nineteenth century—and many of the best-known performers were gypsies.

As flamenco music spread across Spain and the Hispanic world, many gypsy musicians and flamenco dancers became more or less absorbed into mainstream society. Yet other gypsies who still maintained the traditional itinerant lifestyle were regarded as *gitanos bravíos*, wild gypsies. In many cities such as Seville, Cadiz, Jerez, Granada, and Madrid, gypsy settlements became popular tourist attractions. Granada's gypsy caves at the Sacro Monte were especially popular, and remain so today, as sites where visitors could witness "authentic" gypsy performances.¹¹⁵ Gypsies could be seen on the streets of these cities, pursuing occupations such as basket-makers, knife-grinders, tinkerers, or horse-dealers. The women were fortune tellers and peddlers, going door to door carrying a basket with items for sale. Like many marginalized peoples, gypsies were viewed with some ambivalence—derided as repulsive nomads who were dirty, immoral, and criminal, they were also romanticized as good dancers, musicians, and performers, and mythologized for their freedom and spontaneity. Both tourists and artists alike celebrated them as picturesque characters who lived a free and spontaneous life

¹¹⁵Then and today, however, performances in the caves are geared toward tourists, and many of today's guidebooks caution visitors against a too-easy parting with their money in the caves. See, for example, Darwin Porter and Danforth Prince, *Frommer's 2000: Spain* (New York: Macmillan, 2000), 291, which cautions that "these inhabited gypsy caves are the subject of much controversy. Admittedly they are a tourist trap, one of the most obviously commercial and shadowy rackets in Spain. Still, the caves are a potent-enough attraction, if you follow some rules."

outside the strictures of mainstream culture. Americans in particular loved the exotic gypsy characters in literature and painting, but perhaps, as Jeanne-Pierre Liegeois has suggested, this favorable view was aided by imagination.

When gypsies are so far away that they verge on myth, they suddenly become alluring: handsome, artistic, living untrammelled lives, symbols of freedom. They are accepted provided they are confined to designated areas and to folklore: music and dance, the circus, caravans in approved sites. The only good gypsy is the mythical one—the one who does not exist.¹¹⁶

Homer has asserted that Henri saw gypsies as “sincere and natural human beings [who] had not been spoiled by the excesses of sophisticated Western civilization. . . . he was probing the essence of the sitter’s life and personality, not painting gypsies because they were picturesque ‘characters’ that would appeal to a public attuned to academic art.”¹¹⁷ Henri himself commented on this aspect of the gypsy character numerous times, suggesting that his major attraction to them lay in their anti-materialism, their spontaneity and zest for life, their ability to flaunt the rules of conventional society, their resourcefulness, their focus on family and community, and their natural artistic talents. He found them to have a natural ease and refinement. “There is a look in their eye that is firm and unequivocal. The

¹¹⁶Liegeois, *Gypsies*, 141. Even today, European gypsies are associated with the illiterate lower classes and fringe elements of society. They continue to suffer ethnic hatred and at best negative attitude in society because of their itinerant lifestyles. For example, *The Encyclopedia of the Peoples of the World* (Amiren Gonen, ed. [New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993], 234-37) notes that Spain’s 850,000 gypsies are “mostly unregistered, illiterate, unemployed slum-dwellers.”

¹¹⁷Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 125.

gesture of the eye, in fact, the gesture throughout is a gesture of all time I always feel when in the presence of a gypsy, however uncouth he may be, that I am in the presence of an aristocrat."¹¹⁸ Their strong sense of character was also appealing to him: "They are the most savage people in color I have ever seen—not a bit like the colorful and weakly romantic Italians—but strong—savage—positive—in their costume and in all their customs the most childlike people I have ever seen and as proud as if each one was a king or queen. Always at home, feel that they are your equal and feel too that you are worthy of them—have much respect."¹¹⁹ These qualities, he believed, would improve society were they more widespread throughout the general population.¹²⁰

While some of Henri's depictions, such as *Maria y Consuelo*, suggest his fascination with gypsies as authentic individuals, many of his other portraits seem quite in keeping with stereotypical and romanticized notions of gypsy character and appearance. In fact, the gypsy was a common visual metaphor appropriated by bohemian artists to express their anti-bourgeois values. As Marilyn Brown has

¹¹⁸Mary L. Alexander, *Cincinnati Daily Times Star*, March 10, 1926, quoted in Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 206.

¹¹⁹Henri to his parents, September 23, 1906, Beinecke, box 16, folder 384.

¹²⁰Henri later stated that he was "pretty sure that there lurks in everyone who watches the gipsy [sic] a secret envy. I used to remark this in Spain, how the average Spaniard d[e]spised the gipsy [sic] superficially and secretly envied him his independent, superior elegance (despite the dirt)"; see Henri, Ogunquit, Maine, to Alice Klauber, San Diego, August 1, 1915, Robert Henri and Alice Klauber Collection, San Diego Museum of Art Library.

demonstrated, this visual trope has rarely reflected social fact. Occasionally, depictions of gypsies, such as Gustave Courbet's *The Alms of a Beggar* (1868; Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow), attempted to transcend the aesthetic myth of the gypsy by reinserting historical reality into the gypsy subject; others, such as Manet's *Old Musician* (1862; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) merely assimilated a social reality into a popular artistic myth.¹²¹ Henri's ahistorical studio portraits must be included in the latter group, for they show nothing of the daily life of his models that would contradict popular beliefs. Rather, his romanticization of his subjects' natural, savage, and childlike behavior, confirms his own and his era's views of the "noble savage" as an attractive alternative to restrictive societal mores.

Conclusion

This chapter seeks to answer several fundamental questions about Henri's work as a series of visual images embodying American attitudes about Spain and

¹²¹Marilyn R. Brown, *Gypsies and Other Bohemians: The Myth of the Artist in Nineteenth Century France* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985), 73. Brown recognized that the visual myth used by the French avant-garde painters oscillated somewhere between the exotic "other" of the salon *machines* and the more immediate social phenomenon, between the notion of art for art's sake and cultural dissidence; however, very rarely did artists drain their pictures of all myth. For example, "gypsy women were primarily artisans and craftspeople, dancers, musicians, jockeys, acrobats, fortune-tellers, and folk-doctors who were forbidden by kinship structure to engage in relations with non-gypsy men. But, with few exceptions, artists removed them from ethnic and social contexts to depict them as isolated objects of sexual contemplation and as projections of aesthetic wish-fulfillment" (74).

Spanish culture. Why did Henri select the subjects he painted? What political, social, artistic, or other issues colored his vision of Spain as recorded in his many portraits and figure paintings? How did his image of Spain correspond to that of his Spanish and American contemporaries? What agendas did his images serve?

Henri's attitude regarding Spanish culture was mediated by a web of influences. Art historians have long acknowledged the art historical and aesthetic sources of Henri's Spanish works. The goal here is to reinsert Henri's paintings and his Spanish experiences within a broader context which considered the social and cultural history of Spain as well as the United States, and the overlaps between the two that influenced American-Spanish relations and attitudes. While Henri's views of Spain were in part informed by the Spain depicted in art and literature, they were also greatly influenced by contemporary events and by the people he met during his travels.

Henri scholars have long asserted Henri's sincerity and sympathy for his subjects, qualities enhanced by his realistic style and his links with Velázquez and other painters known for these qualities. Because Henri painted real people, they asserted, his paintings should be read as truthful and accurate renditions. Moreover, Henri's art was anti-academic, revolutionary because real instead of ideal. These commonly held views on Henri's portraits should be revised, however, because they have obscured other important aspects of Henri's art. Rather, Henri's paintings forge a middle ground between the extremes of stereotype and reality, allowing for more open-ended readings that accommodate multiple views. On the

one hand, Henri's paintings reflect American stereotypes of Spaniards as primitive, economically and socially backward, quaintly picturesque, exotic, or even decadent. These stereotypes proliferated through literature, art, theater, tourism, and international expositions and were embodied by characteristic Spanish "types" such as dancers, gypsies, beggars, and bullfighters. On the other hand, Henri's pictures are also indicative of Spanish intellectuals' attempts to construct a national identity by identifying unique national customs, traditions, and racial characteristics that would distinguish Spain from the rest of Europe. In doing so, nationalists resorted to older traditions and practices, such as flamenco, bullfighting, and folk rituals, that existed before European modernization instituted more homogenous and international customs.

Henri's Spanish paintings incorporate a complex mix of art historical precedents with contemporary attitudes on social, economic, nationalistic, and racial issues. Many of these paintings defy monolithic and definitive readings, precisely because they reflect the changing dynamics of Spanish and American relations and the evolving nature of Spanish and American national identity. The portraits themselves record Henri's and his generation's ideas on Spanish identity--the attempts to reconcile Spain's past and present, American views of Spain with Spanish views of Spain, distinctions between a Spanish identity projected to itself and that projected to outsiders--and Henri's often unsuccessful attempts to penetrate beyond superficial stereotypical representations of Spain to uncover the core, the essence of Spanish identity. In doing so, Henri's portraits

address important questions of national identity, both that of Spain and of the United States, and the role of art in reflecting or creating national identity.

Henri returned to Spain on several occasions in the 1920s, focusing primarily on portrayals of gypsies. These pictures reiterated various stereotypes of gypsies as free and spontaneous creatures, ideas Henri had developed during his earlier visits. The discussion here, however, focuses on the earlier paintings, as they reveal more closely Henri's engagement with nationalism and other important issues in the formation of his views on Spain and Spanish identity.

Chapter 3. Henri in Holland: Dutch Realism and the “Happy Hollander”

As we have seen, in the years ranging from 1906 to 1912, the art and people of Spain were very potent influences on Henri's work, both in his subjects painted abroad and in the building of his reputation as an artist during the winter exhibition season in New York, Philadelphia, and other east coast cities. Yet, perhaps more so than Spain, the Netherlands and Dutch art also play a crucial role in Henri's career. Frans Hals and Rembrandt van Rijn have long been acknowledged as seminal influences, and Henri's character studies of children and working class adults, which played so prominent a role in his career, were first developed in Holland.

Many of Henri's most popular paintings portray Dutch subjects, most notably the children Cori, Martsche, and Jopie, who are depicted in numerous canvases such as *Laughing Child* (figure 3.1), *Martche with Hat* (1907; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond), and *Dutch Joe* (figure 3.2), respectively. Today, *Laughing Child* ranks among Henri's best known works. Purchased by Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney in 1908 and later donated to the museum she founded, it has since appeared in numerous exhibitions and textbooks on American art as the representative Henri portrait.¹ Less well-known, but also typical of Henri's Dutch

¹See Matthew Baigell, *A Concise History of American Painting and Sculpture*, rev. ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1996); Milton Brown et al., *American Art* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, and New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1979); Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, rev. ed. (New York: Prentice Hall and Harry N.

canvases, are portraits of working men, such as *The Stoker* (figure 3.3) and *Dutch Fisherman* (figure 3.4).

Henri visited Holland several times during the course of his career: first in 1895 as an art student; later, in 1907, as an art teacher leading students on a summer study tour; and again in 1910, with his wife. Art historians have long emphasized the importance of these trips as seminal influences in the development of Henri's characteristic style, primarily because they allowed him to study in person Dutch paintings, especially those by Hals and Rembrandt, and to put these lessons into practice by painting Dutch subjects.

But it was not only the style of Dutch portraits—the paint application, dark palette, use of light and shade—that Henri adopted in his own works, but also, and perhaps more important, a general concept of Dutch society and Dutch people that he saw embodied in Dutch painting. The context and the conceptual framework for Henri's Dutch portraits, rather than the style and painting process itself, have hardly been broached in the Henri literature. This chapter addresses broader issues relating to Henri's conceptualization of the Dutch and of portraiture as a means of depicting national character. In relation to this issue, important questions to ask include What aspects of Dutch art and life did Henri admire and why? How were these artistic (and other) models appropriated and transformed by Henri? What

Abrams, 1999); Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900-1950* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art in association with W. W. Norton, 1999).

preconceptions about the Dutch underlie Henri's representations? How did Americans respond to Henri's Dutch portraits, and what do their responses reveal about American values and self-identity? Henri's interest in copying and capturing the national style and national spirit of the Netherlands is key to his attempts at forging an American national art. These efforts reflect both the popular notion of national style popularized in the early nineteenth century by the French art historian Hippolyte Taine and contemporary calls for the creation of an American national style in the arts. They also reflect the general American interest in the Netherlands as an artistic, cultural, and social model for the United States. Yet Henri's and Americans' attitudes toward Dutch history and culture were not always based on fact, but reflect popular (mis)conceptions mediated through Dutch art, the tourist industry, and a tendency to romanticize pre-industrial societies.

Henri's trips to the Netherlands: basic facts

The basic facts relating to Henri's activities in Holland have been recounted elsewhere, but a brief summary will be helpful here.² Henri's interest in Dutch painting dates as early as 1895, when he first visited the Low Countries to view paintings by Hals, Rembrandt, and other esteemed Dutch masters. That summer

²For summaries of Henri's activities in the Netherlands, see William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, rev. ed. (New York: Hacker Books, 1988), 133-36; Bennard Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (New York: Dover, 1991), 78; and Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Orlando, Florida.: Orlando Museum of Art, 1994), 25-26.

Henri and a group of fellow art students made the trip from Philadelphia to Paris intending to study first hand revered Old Masters in the Louvre and contemporary works in the galleries and annual salons. As a side trip, Henri proposed a bicycle tour to Holland and Belgium, which he envisioned as “valuable . . . for health and for knowledge gained by seeing great portraits—. . . it is Frans Hals that I think of particularly.”³ Along with William Glackens and Elmer Schofield, Henri cycled and sketched his way through northern France and the Low Countries, stopping to tour the galleries of Brussels, Antwerp, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam. In Brussels, Henri had his first look at a representative group of Hals works, which he reported were “worth alone our coming to see.”⁴ Even better collections awaited them in Antwerp and Amsterdam.

Though Henri did not visit Holland again for another eleven years, his bicycle trip was clearly memorable. As William Innes Homer notes, because of his trip to Holland and his study of paintings in the Louvre and other European galleries, Henri’s palette gradually shifted from his earlier Impressionist and tonalist works to the darker tones of Edouard Manet, Diego Velázquez, Ribera, Hals, and Rembrandt, and his paint application became faster in imitation of these

³Henri, aboard ship from New York to Ostend, to his parents, June 16, 1895, Robert Henri Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven (hereafter cited as Beinecke), box 14, folder 348.

⁴Henri, Antwerp, to his parents, July 10, 1895, Beinecke, Box 14, folder 348.

models, especially Hals. This crucial artistic reorientation is generally acknowledged as a key moment in the development of Henri's characteristic style.⁵

In 1907 he again visited Holland, this time as an art teacher leading a group of students from the New York School of Art. The class set up their home base in picturesque Haarlem, Hals's home town, and there established a studio above Brinkmann's Café in the main square, the Grote Markt. Haarlem city hall offered a number of Hals's canvases for public viewing (these paintings are now at the Frans Halsmuseum), and the village itself provided numerous picturesque subjects for sketching and painting, such as almshouses, the fish market, or scenes along the canals. On Sundays the class made the short train trip to Amsterdam to visit the Rijksmuseum, the theater, or cafes; to The Hague to visit the picture gallery at the Mauritshaus and the nearby seaside resort of Scheveningen; or to Volendam, a quaint fishing town on the Zuider Zee that was popular with tourists. While in 1895 Henri had considered himself primarily a landscapist, a decade later he was an established portraitist and so the paintings of Hals and Rembrandt yielded even

⁵Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 87-88: "By this time Henri had begun to develop his characteristically rapid methods of painting. In his diary he noted that he could turn out a portrait in two hours and execute a head in forty-five minutes. The source of inspiration for this spontaneous technique is not hard to find: it is Frans Hals, whose name Henri linked with his own work in letters to his family. And like Hals and Manet, Henri introduced liberal quantities of black into his paintings, in sharp contrast to his former teacher Vonnoh's high-keyed, Impressionist palette." There is almost no textbook, catalogue, or article on Henri, either today or during Henri's lifetime, that fails to connect Henri's paintings with his Dutch artistic models, as well as with other masters such as Velazquez and Manet.

more information. Further, now he had the entire summer, rather than a brief visit, to study the paintings in Amsterdam and Haarlem.

Aside from supervising his students' work, Henri himself spent that summer on a series of bust-length portraits of children and working class individuals, which were modern updates of Hals's character studies. Henri was quite taken with two little children, Cori and Martche. "All the time I have been here I have painted over and over again a little roistering white headed, red cheeked, broad faced girl [Cori]. I have done many heads of her, most of them laughing. I have another little model [Martsche]—just the opposite type in character—thin, pathetic—pale—very interesting and just as Dutch as the rollicking one."⁶ He found them both "so interesting [as models] that I have no desire to change but have painted day after day new heads of the same one I get one at 4 every day and have until 7, the other from 2 to 4 on Wed[nesday] and Sat[urday]."⁷ Henri painted more than fifteen portraits of Cori Peterson that summer.⁸ In these portraits Henri varied the

⁶Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, July 28, 1907, Beinecke, Box 16, folder 386.

⁷Henri, Haarlem, to John Sloan, New York, July 28, 1907; quoted in John Sloan and Robert Henri, *Revolutionaries of Realism: The Letters of John Sloan and Robert Henri*, ed. Bennard B. Perlman (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 152.

⁸Leeds, *My People*, 26. The more famous of this group include the Whitney's *Laughing Child*; *Dutch Girl, Laughing (Happy Hollander)* (1907; Dallas Museum of Art); *Cori and the Kitten* (1907; Brooks Memorial Art Gallery, Memphis). Martsche also appears in a number of canvases, including *Martche with Hat* and *Dutch Girl in White* (1907; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

compositions and clothing, painting Cori standing, seated, holding a kitten, or wearing a hat, yet in all she is seen smiling contentedly, her sparkling eyes, red cheeks and lips, short white hair, and elfin features dominating the composition and revealing her as a very charming little personality.

Less is known about Henri's 1910 trip. No longer employed by the New York School of Art, this time Henri visited Holland with his wife. They spent June in Haarlem and moved to Volendam in July. In mid-August they left for Spain.⁹ In Holland, Henri painted some sixty canvases in six weeks.¹⁰ Henri painted more portraits of Cori in 1910. By then she appeared a bit older, perhaps a bit more lady-like, but still as bubbly in paintings such as *Laughing Girl* (1910; Brooklyn Museum of Art), *Little Dutch Girl* (1910; Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.) and *Laughing Girl* (1910; Spencer Museum of Art, Lawrence, Kansas). Another favorite model that summer was Jopie van Slouten. Deemed by Henri a "real cut-up", Jopie and his little band of friends, who lived in the alley near Henri's studio, brought an air of hilarity to the studio.¹¹

in White (1907; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

⁹Leeds, *My People*, 28-29.

¹⁰Perlman, *Life and Art*, 97.

¹¹Perlman, *Life and Art*, 96. See also Henri, New York, to Samuel O. Buckner, February 15, 1916, Milwaukee Art Museum, Registrar Files. Jopie appears in a number of portraits, most notably *Dutch Joe* (1910; Milwaukee Art Museum) and *Jopie Laughing Boy* (1910; Birmingham Museum of Art).

Artistic issues

If Henri's 1895 bicycle trip was a seminal influence, his study of Hals in 1907 and 1910 was even more significant for the developing portraitist. Hals in particular has been viewed by Homer as "the catalyst that thoroughly liberated Henri's brushwork."

Hals had previously counted as one of several major influences upon Henri, but now, for a few summers, Henri yielded completely to the Dutch master, producing many canvases distinctly in his idiom From the mid-1890's his strokes tended to be free, in the manner of Sargent and Chase; but now, under the influence of Hals, the movement of Henri's hand becomes frenetic at times, applying the paint in quick, choppy strokes, though without all of Hals's masterful control. Henri's Dutch canvases of 1907 and 1910 mark the beginning of his capacity to make the activity of the pigment on the surface of the painting serve as a vehicle for his feelings about the human being who stood before him, an aspect of his style that we will find in full force in most of his informal portraits of Irish subjects painted after 1912.¹²

Homer and others have aptly demonstrated Henri's stylistic debt to Dutch painting. What has been less often discussed are the reasons for Henri's interest in Dutch art and culture. If Henri really was a so-called revolutionary or "insurgent", emulating such respected Old Masters as Hals and Rembrandt would not necessarily mark him as new and untraditional. (By comparison, while Henri was studying Hals in 1907, Picasso was studying African sculpture; by 1910, Marinetti had already advocated burning down all museums.) But, in the context of New York's conservative art world circa 1900, Henri's adaptation of Hals marked his portraits as forward thinking in a number of ways.

¹²Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 241.

First of all, Hals's painting technique offered a model of a brilliant character sketch. In Henri's day, Hals was widely admired by European and American artists, collectors, and art historians for his ability to capture fleeting impressions of his subjects, an effect that was enhanced or made possible through his speedy execution and lack of finish. These talents as a painter enabled him to create subjects that were extremely lifelike and vivid. As Charles Caffin noted in *The Story of Dutch Painting*, Hals's ultimate genius was his mind, which was "an active vitalizer of the impressions that it received." His style was based on "bold and vigorous generalization" rather than detail, giving the viewer an overall impression of the sitter's character.¹³ For Henri, this sense of immediacy and transparency offered a fresh vision of his sitters in contrast to the highly polished, formulaic society portraits and sentimental, clichéd popular illustrations of the day. In this sense, Hals offered Henri a model for producing a brilliant portrait by transcending commonly held notions of finish taught in painting academies. Henri's pictures were seen not as facile representations, but as real, living, and breathing people. As Charles Wisner Barrell noted in 1908,

Robert Henri does not dodge, pose, or juggle with his materials, but works straight to a living climax, and when that is achieved he stops, sacrificing a pretty 'finish' every time for vitality and spontaneity. His women breathe and smile at you out of seeing eyes. His men lose

¹³ Charles H. Caffin, *The Story of Dutch Painting* (New York: Century Company, 1909), 55, 64. Caffin named Hals as one of the first Impressionists because he focused on key details and left out less important ones in order to give a whole impression of his subject.

nothing of their native dignity and masculinity by translation through the Henri portrait.¹⁴

Henri's paintings of Jopie and Cori recall Hals's deft brushwork as a vehicle for capturing fleeting expressions, especially joy and laughter. Compared to *La Madrilénita* (figure 2.6), a Spanish portrait painted later in the summer of 1910, the Dutch pictures demonstrate Henri's emphasis on spontaneity.¹⁵ The Spanish painting seems much more smoothly and evenly painted, the flesh tones more blended; in contrast, both the Milwaukee Jopie and the Spencer Cori consciously draw attention to the painting process in the overtly visible brushstrokes which delineate the structure of the face and the many features indicating laughter and gaiety--the round, pink cheeks, grinning mouth, sparkling eyes, and Jopie's buck teeth. In quickly executed portraits such as these, we see Henri's use of Hals's painting style to capture the fleeting, joyous expression on his sitters' faces. Considering Henri's rapid execution--he spent only one to three hours on each portrait--it is not surprising that many of these canvases seem more successful as character studies, or perhaps painting experiments, than as finished portraits, for in more than one canvas Jopie's or Cori's face resembles a masklike caricature more than a real, flesh and blood child. In attempting to render the elasticity of the

¹⁴Charles Wisner Barrell, "Robert Henri--'Revolutionary,'" *Independent* 64 (June 24, 1908): 1431.

¹⁵Henri's diaries from July 1910 (Robert Henri Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereafter cited as Henri Papers, AAA], reel 886) confirm this focus on capturing the "fire" of the sitter even though he or she may be getting droopy and tired.

face and the manner in which the face is contorted and colored by laughter, Henri at times sacrificed naturalism for the sake of self-conscious spontaneity. Yet at its best, the technique yielded magnificent results. Viewers marveled at the vivacity of Henri's sitters, reveling in their laughter almost as if the figures before them were real humans.

Henri conceived of portraiture largely as a vehicle for embodying and exploring human emotions. In this sense, he also found inspiration in Rembrandt's works, which offered a model for a serious, indepth, psychologically penetrating character study, which could be made more dramatic by heightening contrasts of light and dark. *The Stoker* (figure 3.3) and *The Rum* (figure 3.5), for example, are characteristic of Henri's many faces seen emerging from dark, murky backgrounds. Both canvases are illuminated dramatically by a strong light from the right, which focuses the viewer's attention on the sitter to reveal a worn face, wrinkled brow, and serious expression. Their faces are not idealized; rather, many distinctive features are delineated, thereby suggesting a real individual. While the palette is limited to white, black, grey, and flesh tones, instead of Rembrandt's famous golden glow, and the faces and clothing are broadly brushed in the manner of Hals, the overall conception, notably the deep psychological interpretation of the sitters, is indebted to Rembrandt.

In addition to their deft brushwork and interpretation of character, both Hals and Rembrandt were generally regarded as interested in people from all walks of life, eschewing notions of prettiness and idealization for transparency,

immediacy, and authenticity. This quality was also attributed to Dutch painters in general. This democratic viewpoint sat well with the anti-establishment, bohemian ideals of Henri and his circle, and was an important characteristic of the work of Henri and the New York Realists as identified by contemporary critics.¹⁶ Henri's portraits of working class or ethnic subjects could not fail to be noticed as a contrast to typical portraits of upper class sitters. In short, to consciously and overtly adapt Hals's idiom was more than a stylistic move, but also a political gesture. In the climate in which Henri exhibited, to associate oneself with Hals was to associate oneself with the many ideals attributed to Hals.

For many reviewers of Henri's paintings, his spontaneity and lack of finish, his realism and interest in character were enough to mark him as a great painter and set him apart from many of his contemporaries. This idea was put forth in numerous reviews of Henri's art both during and after his lifetime. In Sloan's evaluation, "Henri's portraits were emotional without sentimentality. There is emotional excitement in his work, a special feeling of respect for the dignity of the person. You sense that he saw a nobility of spirit there, whether he was painting a distinguished lady or a simple child."¹⁷

¹⁶See, for example, John Courmos, "Three Painters of the New York School," *International Studio* 56 (October 1915): 239.

¹⁷John Sloan, quoted in Helen Farr Sloan, "Robert Henri: An Appreciation," in Bennard Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), xi.

“Holland Mania” and popular stereotypes of the Dutch

The characteristics associated with Hals and Rembrandt—facile brushwork, dramatic lighting, concepts of character and realism—were often discussed in Henri’s day. In fact, early twentieth-century newspaper and journal reviews of art exhibitions were completely dominated by a focus on formal issues. Yet in painting Dutch subjects, Henri painted not only individuals but types; not only children, but Dutch children. Contemporary attitudes about Dutch identity and the Dutch people were an integral component of both Henri’s study of Hals and the popularity of his Dutch pictures, and it is impossible to separate the portraits from their context. Henri’s Dutch pictures reveal contemporary attitudes regarding Dutch national identity as mediated through art history, tourism, and popular culture.

Clearly, much of Henri’s knowledge about Dutch life and culture derived from his study of Dutch painting. His imitation of Hals and Rembrandt may have been the main aspect of his characteristic style, a style that he hoped would signify his difference from academic painters. In point of fact, however, Henri’s fascination with the Dutch painters was hardly uncommon for artists of his day. Henri was only one of hundreds of artists to study Dutch art and to paint Dutch subjects. The reputations of Gari Melchers, Walter MacEwen, and George Hitchcock—all popular American academic painters of Henri’s generation, to name only a few—were strongly linked with their Dutch subjects.

The context of these artists' interest in Dutch art was a more general and widespread American craze for Dutch artifacts and cultural values during the period 1880 through 1920, which Annette Stott has characterized as "Holland Mania."¹⁸ The appreciation of all things Dutch touched art, architecture, design, high fashion, tourism, history, and literature, and ran the gamut from high art to popular culture, to the point that America became oversaturated with Dutch images. One the most influential aspects of "Holland mania" was the craze for Dutch art, which inspired American collectors to spend millions on Dutch painting, encouraged countless artists to produce works in imitation of Dutch art and culture, and caused millions of Americans to view Holland through the lens of Dutch painting.

In large part, Henri's experiences in Holland followed the usual patterns. The bicycle tour, the mode of transportation chosen by Henri and his friends in 1895, came highly recommended by Baedeker's, the League of American Wheelman, and other leading guidebooks. Holland was especially popular with art students. According to Stott, "virtually all late-nineteenth century artists studied Frans Hals and Rembrandt, often making a special trip to Holland to do so."¹⁹ The New York School of Art was only one of numerous art schools to offer study trips

¹⁸Annette Stott, *Holland Mania: The Unknown Dutch Period in American Art and Culture* (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1998).

¹⁹Stott, *Holland Mania*, 27.

to Holland.²⁰ In 1903, the class, led by William Merritt Chase and located near Haarlem, advertised that “in addition to working from the landscape and model out-of-doors, one of the features of the trip will be the study of the Old Dutch Masters, special work being paid to the works of Frans Hals. Excursions will be made to Amsterdam, The Hague, and other neighboring places of interest.”²¹ A prospectus for Henri’s 1907 class promised that the class would “settle down in the vicinity of Haarlem and Amsterdam, whose galleries contain the finest examples of the works of Rembrandt, Frans Hals and those painters who have made the Dutch school famous.”²² Many other teachers, including Alexander Robinson, Emma Lampert and others introduced their students to picturesque Holland, and literally hundreds of artists visited Holland between 1880 and 1920, making similar pilgrimages in search of Dutch subjects.²³

²⁰Hired in 1902, Henri taught the school’s summer classes at Bayport, Long Island in 1904 and 1905. He began leading the school’s trips abroad in 1906. For the next several years, Henri would lead student trips to Spain and Holland in alternate years, and John Douglas Connah, the school’s president, led the classes to France and Italy.

²¹Advertisement for “Chase Classes in Holland,” *Brush and Pencil* 11 (February 1903), 7.

²²Prospectus for the “Annual Summer Tour to Europe for Artists and Students, Nineteen Hundred and Seven, Holland, Belgium, France, and Italy,” Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke, Box 30, folder 674.

²³Stott, *Holland Mania*, 38. Artists and other tourists of this period recorded their impressions of Holland in numerous books and articles; examples include “Talks With Artists: Mr. H. W. Ranger on Sketching in Holland,” *Art Amateur* 28 (1893): 132-33; George H. Boughton’s *Sketching Rambles in Holland* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1885); Jane Quigley, “Volendam as a Sketching Ground for Painters,” *International Studio* 29 (August 1906): 118-25; and Edward Penfield,

Focusing on Henri's fascination with all types of humanity, William Innes Homer has claimed that Henri was interested in Dutch children "because they fascinated him as human beings, not because they were quaint, picturesque subjects that would attract American buyers."²⁴ Yet Henri's interest in Holland clearly reflected these larger trends and must have been, at least in part, motivated by market forces. Back in the United States, American collectors and the American art going public were clamoring for pictures of Dutch subjects of all types. The demand accommodated a large range of artistic production—from originals and copies of paintings by Hals, Rembrandt, and other seventeenth-century Dutch artists, to contemporary Dutch paintings (which themselves often imitated earlier Dutch art), to contemporary works painted in Holland by visiting artists, to more conventional and clichéd studio productions built around a few stock costumes, props, and poses.²⁵ Like Henri, many artists consciously imitated their Dutch models: Walter MacEwen's and Augustus Koopman's works recalled the domestic interiors of Johannes Vermeer and Gerard Terborch; George Hitchcock and Gari Melchers laid a Dutch veneer on the popular contemporary genre of figure painting; Charles Webster Hawthorne's paintings of Cape Cod fishermen were often compared to Hals's.

"Amsterdam Impressions: A Side-Street Isle of Marken," *Scribner's Magazine* 37 (January 1905): 45-53.

²⁴Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 241-44.

²⁵Stott, *Holland Mania*, 34-42.

Henri's paintings of Dutch subjects generally fall into two basic categories: dark, serious, studies of careworn adults, such as laborers, fishermen, bums, or old folks, and more colorful, lighthearted, Halsian portrayals of laughing children. Henri surely preferred his merry children, for the latter category predominates in his oeuvre, and he wrote about them often in his diaries and letters. Additionally, these canvases were very popular with critics, collectors, and the public in general; they both outnumbered and outsold the portraits of adults. That Henri's laughing children were modeled after Hals was noted by critics in Henri's day, as typified by one Philadelphia critic who attributed their "recklessness of handling" and character to Hals's influence.²⁶

Which pictures by Hals provided Henri's immediate sources? What did he take from them besides style? What message did they portray to viewers? Images of laughing, often mischievous, little children were a staple of Dutch painting in the seventeenth century.²⁷ However, Henri's direct models seem to have been Hals's numerous character studies of happy children, drinkers, and fools. Pictures such as *Laughing Boy* (figure 3.6) and *Fisherboy* (n.d.; National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin) seem very close in conception to Henri's Dutch subjects. While today we

²⁶Francis J. Ziegler, "Good Pictures at the Art Club," *Philadelphia Record*, November 15, 1908; clipping in Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, reel P55, frame 118. Ziegler summed up the appeal of *Dutch Child Laughing*: "After the sickly sentimentality of much present-day portraiture a thing of this kind is a joy and a delight."

²⁷Mary Frances Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1979).

might associate Hals primarily with his single portraits and pendants of soberly dressed burghers and his large civic group portraits, such as the *Officers of the Haarlem Militia Company of Saint Adrian* (c. 1627; Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem), a century ago Hals was greatly admired for his many rollicking character sketches of laughing fisherboys and fishergirls, boys with flutes, gypsy girls, smoking boys, and the like.²⁸

To be sure, many of these “character” portraits that so intrigued viewers a century ago are today acknowledged to be copies of several key paintings from the 1630s.²⁹ In Henri’s day, however, many art historians identified Hals’s paintings of ordinary people as the primary focus of the painter’s oeuvre. For example, *The Merry Drinker* (also known as *The Jolly Toper*) (figure 3.7) and *De Nar* were

²⁸For instance, Wilhelm von Bode and M. J. Binder characterized Hals as bohemian artist of superb genius, with brilliant powers of expression and a great sense of humor. Accordingly, the images that figure most prominently in their study are pictures of laughing children, drinkers, smokers, musicians, gypsies, and fisherfolk, the many anonymous Dutch who, though poor, seem to be living life happily and fully. The darker and more sober portraits of burghers or civic groups follow later in the book. (Wilhelm von Bode and M. J. Binder, *Frans Hals: His Life and Work* (Berlin: Photographische Gesellschaft, 1914); original German ed. 1871.) Writing a century later, Seymour Slive noted that the popularity of Hals’s pictures of children reached a high in the late nineteenth century, when collectors paid top prices for works by Hals as well as those done in his manner; see Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (New York: Phaidon, 1970-74), 3:132.

²⁹According to Slive (*Frans Hals*, 3:132), the huge popularity of Hals’s works accounted for the many children and fisherchildren painted by anonymous followers that entered collections and art historical literature as authentic works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Slive was one of the first to reject many of these “character” sketches as “doubtful” or copies. See also Bob Haak, *The Golden Age: Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth Willems-Treeman (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1984), 233.

among the most frequently copied works in the Rijksmuseum.³⁰ *Malle Babbe* (c. 1635; Staatliche Museen, Berlin), popularly interpreted as an image of a mad woman full of life and energy, also inspired numerous copies and imitations, one of which hung at the Metropolitan Museum of Art at least through 1979.³¹

It is easy to understand the popularity of these subjects for Henri and other artists of his generation. The lack of finish constituted an anti-academic gesture; the character study appealed to an age fascinated with authenticity and the cult of personality. Additionally, for Henri's circle the Dutch drinkers and tavern goers signified living the good life. Laughter, gaiety, drinking, the relaxing of social mores, and the uninhibited display of emotions were especially admired and prized among the hard drinkers and partiers of Henri's bohemian circles.³²

³⁰Stott, *Holland Mania*, 34-35. Known as *De Naar* in Henri's era, the Rijksmuseum's *Buffoon Playing a Lute*, is today regarded as a copy by an unknown artist after Hals' *The Lute Player* (1625-26; Louvre, Paris); see Claus Grimm, *Frans Hals: The Complete Work*, Jürgen Riehle, trans. (New York: Abrams, 1990), 236, 274. The Louvre acquired the picture in 1984, before which time the Rijksmuseum's copy was much better known than the original; see Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, in association with Ludion, Brussels, 1989), 168-71.

³¹A number of versions of *Malle Babbe* were attributed to Hals in the early twentieth century. One of these was the source of a famous copy by Courbet, another realist painter whom Henri admired; see Slive, *Frans Hals*, 1:134. Additionally, the *Malle Babbe* character was widely known through prints and was influential on at least one of Henri's colleagues, as seen in several paintings by George Luks depicting an old hag interacting with animal friends, such as *Pals* (1907; New Britain Museum of American Art) and *Woman with Macaws* (1907; Detroit Institute of Arts).

³²Witness, for example, the many celebratory descriptions of George Luks as a rowdy drinker and barroom brawler, whose reckless behavior eventually caused his death; see, for example, Ira Glackens, *William Glackens and the Eight: The*

Moreover, Hals's images of carefree laughing children conveyed the innocence of childhood and the freedom experienced by people living in pre-industrial or rural societies, a concept that was a lynchpin in Henri's personal and artistic philosophy. How Hals and his generation may have viewed these characters, especially the laughing children, is a subject that has engendered much debate among recent scholars. Some, like Seymour Slive, have suggested that Hals himself intended them to symbolize the happy and free life away from the pomp of town life. Others, such as Claus Grimm, Susan Koslow, Mary Durantini, and Martin Berger, propose that such pictures of common people, peasants, beggars, drinkers, and tramps were moralizing pictures of amusing types to be laughed at and derided by the upper classes.³³ Yet, during Henri's day, Hals's intentions were

Artists Who Freed American Art (New York: Horizon Press, 1957).

³³Grimm, *Frans Hals*, 217-21. While Slive echoed the views of Henri's era in praising Hals's depiction of "character" (for example, in his discussion of *Malle Babbe*), he also presented a more interpretive view of the pictures shared by other art historians who question the "realism" behind the Dutch painting in the last few decades. Hals's drinkers may have been intended as depictions of the five senses. The fisherchildren may have been viewed either as scenes of a happy and free life away from the restraints and temptations of town life (Slive, *Frans Hals*, 1:144). Alternatively, they may have been depictions of laziness, based on contemporary emblem books; see Susan Koslow, "Frans Hals's *Fisherboys*: Exemplars of Idleness," *Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 418-32. Martin Berger, (*Ways of Seeing*, 103-04), suggests that "the painted poor smile as they offer what they have for sale. (They smile showing their teeth, which the rich in pictures never do.) They smile at the better-off-to ingratiate themselves, but also at the prospect of a sale or a job. Such pictures assert two things: That the poor are happy, and that the better-off are a source of hope for the world." Durantini (*The Child in Seventeenth Century Dutch Painting*) suggests that many scenes incorporating children were not so much

either unknown or irrelevant, for throughout most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries art historians and the general public consistently viewed them as images of the good life enjoyed by members of all social classes in the Dutch Republic and focused their discussions almost exclusively on the artist's realism, brushwork, and ability to portray character.

The tourist's Holland

Due in large part to Hals's and Rembrandt's extremely vivid and lifelike portrayals, as well as to the exacting and detailed nature of Dutch still lifes, landscapes, and genre paintings in general, pictures by Hals and other Dutch painters were regarded a century ago as extremely true to life, honest representations of Dutch life and people, allowing viewers a glimpse of Dutch customs, social mores, and temperament. Hals in particular was viewed as the painter of the prosperous, democratic, and jolly Dutch for his many paintings of burghers as well as beggars, drinkers, and fools. The corollary of this also held: if Hals was seen as the painter of the happy, rollicking Dutch, the Dutch themselves were perceived to be the happy drunks as portrayed in Hals's pictures.

Caffin's *The Story of Dutch Painting* summarizes a number of widely held views on Dutch art at the turn of the century. First, Caffin underscores the popular

realistic portrayals of Dutch life, but didactic scenes which, through farce or through more serious ways, suggested both proper upbringing and acceptable adult behavior in the Dutch Republic.

belief that seventeenth-century Dutch art was extremely true to life in its portrayals of the Dutch, writing that the art of Holland supplied “a complete, exact, and for the most part unembellished portrait of the country, its people, and their habits of life.”³⁴ Further, he viewed portraiture as the most important and characteristic type of Dutch painting and identified Hals, “the epitome of the genius of the Dutch race,” as the genre’s most important practitioner for his ability to attack his subject with gusto and imagination and enkindle that enthusiasm in the spectator. The painting that Caffin viewed as most representative of Hals’s conceptual framework was the ever popular *Jolly Toper*, a reproduction of which accompanied Caffin’s text. But Hals was not just realistic, he was also lighthearted. “If ever there was an artist to whom, as revealed in his work, the epithet ‘jolly’ were appropriate, it is Frans Hals.”³⁵

A few years later, Sadakichi Hartmann echoed Caffin’s views on Hals in a series of articles considering the Dutch influence, among others, on contemporary American portraiture. Characterizing the Dutch republic as “rich and pleasure loving,” he noted that as a group Dutch portraits “all excel in realistic

³⁴Caffin, *Story of Dutch Painting*, 49. This commonly held view of Dutch “realism” has been challenged in the last twenty-thirty years, and the literature on this topic is vast. See for example, Lyckle de Vries, “The Changing Face of Realism,” in *Art in History, History in Art: Studies in Seventeenth Century Dutch Culture*, ed. David Freedberg and Jan de Vries (Santa Monica: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1991): 209-44; and Wayne Franits, ed., *Looking at Seventeenth Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁵Caffin, *Story of Dutch Painting*, 49-55.

interpretation of character. Love of pleasure and rugged health laugh from all their faces." In particular, Hals was "the most illustrious exponent of this bold, fresh and carefree way of looking at life," as again exemplified by the Rijksmuseum's popular *Jolly Toper*.³⁶

Clearly, in his paintings Henri seized Hals's spontaneous painting style, and the desire to capture fleeting emotions and personality traits in a smile or laugh, a gesture, or a glance. Henri's many laughing Dutch children seem almost to echo Hals's *Jolly Toper* as "rollicking character sketch[es]", as Hartmann characterized the portrait. It is almost as though to paint in the Hals style, one must not only adopt Hals's characteristic brushwork and compositional style, but also paint laughing characters, who thereby come to represent "Dutchness."

As an artist and teacher, Henri's views of Holland likely stemmed largely from art historical sources such as Caffin, whose own ideas were based largely on well-known earlier works by Hippolyte Taine, Théophile Thoré, Fromentin, and others, and of course on Dutch art itself.³⁷ This perception of the Dutch as physically attractive, blond-headed, smiling, kind folk parallels popularly held views on the Dutch people and their national character at the turn of the century. Such stereotypes of Dutch temperament proliferated in myriad sources, from

³⁶Sadakichi Hartmann, "The Ten Leading Styles of Portraiture No. 2: The Dutch School: Realistic Interpretation of Character," *Portrait* 5 (December 1913): 10.

³⁷See also Stott, *Holland Mania*, 23-35.

studies of Dutch art and literature such as Caffin's and Hartmann's, to tourist guidebooks, popular journals, and other mass media representations. In fine art as well as popular illustrations and advertising, Dutch children in particular were frequently depicted as rosy cheeked, happy, and healthy little tots, corresponding to views of the "happy Hollander." Henri's laughing Jopie, for example, recalls the laughing blond boy used to advertise the Dutch Boy paint brand as well as the countless frolicking Dutch children decorating postcards, children's literature, guidebooks and travelogues.³⁸

As many of his letters from Holland reveal, Henri clearly shared this popular notion of the jolly Dutch, particularly as characterized by Hals's happy children. In 1907, he enthused in a letter to his mother: "These little Dutch children are wonderful to paint. --No wonder Frans Hals painted such smiling people--all Holland has red apple cheeks, white heads, smiles--they are very kind--happy people--my old view of them is all changed."³⁹ In another letter discussing his more somber painting of a Spanish *guitarrera*, *Blind Spanish Singer* (figure 2.14), Henri contrasts the serious personality of the Spanish with the jollier Dutch, and in other letters about Cori and Jopie he comments repeatedly on their tendency for fun.

³⁸Created in 1907 to sell Dutch Boy paints, the Dutch Boy logo quickly became associated with the fast-selling, nationally recognized paints. See Stott, *Holland Mania*, 207-08, 262-63. In light of the popularity of the smiling Dutch boy stereotype, it is not surprising that Henri's portraits of Cori, especially the Whitney's *Laughing Girl*, were often seen as portraits of a boy, not a girl.

³⁹Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, July 15, 1907, Beinecke, Box 16, folder 386.

This general perception of the jolly Dutch is of course exemplified by his many paintings of Cori and Jopie breaking out with laughter.

The burgeoning tourist industry was another source for popular (mis)conceptions about Dutch culture. Because Dutch paintings were so popular with Americans and other Europeans, and because, as Caffin espoused, people believed that Dutch paintings presented a truthful view of Dutch life, visitors expected to see a Holland that corresponded to seventeenth-century portrayals of the country and its people. Guidebooks and travel companies encouraged these preconceptions, funneling visitors away from modern, industrialized cities like Amsterdam into small, quaint fishing villages such as Marken, Volendam, and Haarlem, where villagers retained traditional costumes and carried on time-honored ways of life. Correspondingly, many artists selected views and people that corresponded to these preconceived notions. Especially in the many artist colonies that arose in Holland's picturesque villages, such as Volendam and Haarlem, Stott writes that

the artists' increased contact with Dutch country people contributed to the image they constructed of Holland as a premodern agrarian idyll. At the same time, barriers of language, culture, and occupation between Dutch and American residents in the art colonies furthered the tendency to rely on preconceptions and surface impressions. . . . [artists] portrayed the general characteristics that Dutch art and American literature had prepared them to see: independence, honesty, piety, strength, and endurance. They often focused on the outer trappings of lace headdresses and wooden shoes, formulating a

stereotypical and superficial Dutch image, even when painting portraits of specific people.⁴⁰

Seen in this context, paintings of Dutch subjects by Henri as well as many of his contemporaries reflect their participation in “ethnic tourism,” in which people and their quaint customs were the objects of tourism rather than historical sites or other landmarks. Many Dutch writers worked to dispel stereotypes of quaint Holland; despite their best efforts, tourist industry views often prevailed. For example, in his 1912 travel guide *Windmills and Wooden Shoes* Dutch writer Blair Jaekel lamented that many tourists visited Holland primarily to witness the quaint, traditional ways of the Dutch people. “Probably the majority of travelers go to the Netherlands,” he wrote, “not for art, nor for scenery, nor even for history, but for windmills and wooden shoes (to epitomize the characteristics of the country and its peoples).”⁴¹ Stott’s research confirms Blaekel’s observations, for she notes that day trips from Amsterdam to Marken and Volendam were favorite tourist destinations and that witnessing, and even purchasing, the traditional costumes worn by the villagers of these towns was an important part of the tourist experience.⁴² Following the tourist’s propensity to exotic or strange outward appearances, as Jaekel identified, artists commonly employed typical Dutch props or settings in their pictures--traditional clothing, hats, wooden shoes, milk pails,

⁴⁰Stott, *Holland Mania*, 44.

⁴¹Quoted in Stott, *Holland Mania*, 141.

⁴²Stott, *Holland Mania*, 145-57.

tulips, fishing and other traditional occupational activities—to situate their subjects in Holland.

Henri has long been intimately associated with images of urban life, yet in Holland he greatly preferred the smaller towns to the teeming Amsterdam. His favorite contemporary Dutch artist was Christian Breitner, a painter and photographer of modern urban scenes, but Henri himself found Amsterdam itself to be less than clean, and its Jewish quarter “a slum of slums” full of throngs of people “playing cards[,] scratching fleas (and dispersing them).”⁴³ In contrast, Volendam was “an odd place past a line of quaint little [D]utch houses a harbor full of fishing boats and a very handsome big set of fishermen and women.”⁴⁴ “This is one of the great ‘picture’ places of Holland where the people wear the costume of antiquity almost too surprising to believe.”⁴⁵

Henri clearly recognized the shallowness of the touristic image of Holland. In Haarlem in 1907, for example, he noted that his students, “ha[ve] done very strong work in spite of some being quite disappointed that Haarlem was not more picturesque or more sunny—or something they had imagined it would or should

⁴³On Breitner, see diary, July 30, 1910, Henri Papers, AAA; on Amsterdam, see Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, August 11, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 387.

⁴⁴Henri, Volendam, to his mother, July 9, 1907, Beinecke, Box 16, folder 386.

⁴⁵Henri, Volendam, to his mother, July 29, 1910, Beinecke, box 16, folder 390.

be.”⁴⁶ In both 1907 and 1910, Henri also spent some weeks in Volendam. There he observed the hordes of tourists, which “come in troupes every day from Amsterdam on a steamer—and drag their weary curiosity through the town, take snap shots of the ‘types’ and purchase postal cards[,] wooden shoes and other junk.” He also noted the town’s popularity with artists, “some of them working some of the time,” many of whom, like Henri, stayed at the Hotel Spaander and painted the town’s more picturesque sights and scenes. “In fact,” he reported, “at this moment an [A]merican is sitting opposite me at the table working on a water color of a bit of the sea, old fish houses and a fish wife in costume.”⁴⁷

While his letters often registered this sense of ironic detachment—clearly Henri did not include himself among the daytrippers and artists looking for picturesque scenes to view or to paint—he was unable to avoid completely the romantic atmosphere of old Holland that so appealed to visitors. He could not resist sketching and painting their quaint costumes and reveling in the pre-industrial quaintness and artistry of their design and manufacture. He made a number of portraits of the locals, including *Dutch Fisherman* (figure 3.4), *Fish Market Man* (1910; unlocated), *Dutch Match Woman* (figure 3.8), and numerous sketches of people in traditional costumes, including one of “an old woman dressed in the costume of the neighborhood—gold ornaments in the hair and lace

⁴⁶Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, August 11, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 387.

⁴⁷Henri, Volendam, to his mother, July 29, 1910.

cap—a portly lady.”⁴⁸ A few of these evoke the traditional Dutch village lifestyle through quaint costumes or descriptive titles; all recall seventeenth century Holland in their imitation of Hals. For the most part, however, Henri avoided an overt reliance on exotic costumes, customs, or interiors that marked the works of contemporaries such as Hitchcock, McEwen, Melchers, or the many popular illustrators who depicted picturesque Holland.⁴⁹ Rather, usually comprising only a face against a spare, monochromatic, often dark, background, his portraits attempted to record a sense of Dutch “character,” and for this reason, they were generally regarded as straightforward, honest portrayals of Dutch folk. Similarly, his occasional city views, such as *Volendam Street Scene* (figure 3.9), nod to both mainstream and “insurgent” attitudes: while it is first of all a depiction of a popular tourist destination, it presented a fresh view of the town that dodged clichés through a Whistlerian tonalist blurring of details of type and costume.

One major factor, of course, for the tourists’ interest in Volendam, Haarlem, and other Dutch villages lay in their nostalgic atmosphere, which created an exotic contrast to the increasing urbanization and industrialization of much of the United States and Europe. The villages’ backwardness and picturesque appearance, its

⁴⁸Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, July 15 and 28, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 386.

⁴⁹See, for example, Iris M. Andrews’s sketches of “Three Dutch Types from Volendam,” which depicted a smiling milkmaid, a woman knitting, and a fisherman, all dressed in the characteristic balloon clothing and clogs of Volendam; Iris M. Andrews, “Three Dutch Types from Volendam,” *Century Magazine* 71 (November 1905): 128-31.

reliance on age-old customs in clothing and the subsistence fishing economy, lent urgency to painting it before its demise.⁵⁰ Even Henri preferred the old-time aura to the contemporary, noting that in nearby Scheveningen “the native fisher and peasant folk [are] so quaint. . . these [D]utch are a very handsome and dignified people in the beautiful old costumes. . . . they are far finer than the Brittany folk—much higher order of humanity—but in modern costume they have no figures fatty dollopy—thick heads less dignity.”⁵¹ Though tourists were attracted to Volendam’s picturesque scenery and traditions, ironically much of this quaintness was exaggerated or manufactured by the locals, who even in Henri’s day recognized the importance of retaining a traditional appearance to attract visitors. Henri implicitly recognized this difference when he noted that the “old costume [of the Volendammers] was the design of an artist—the new is the design of a merchant.”⁵² Even today Volendam and neighboring village Marken draw busloads of visitors to see its boat-filled harbor, tiny streets, picturesque houses, and traditionally costumed villagers—the same attractions that drew Henri and his

⁵⁰Stott, *Holland Mania*, 52.

⁵¹Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, July 15, 1907.

⁵²Henri, Haarlem, to his mother, July 15, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 386. John Higinbotham similarly noted in 1908 that nearby Marken “is another place that has been spoiled into self-consciousness by too much attention. Old customs and costumes are retained on this tiny island, but you feel that their preservation is a matter of revenue and not reverence. The children beg for pennies, and the women clamor for positions in front of the camera”; see John Higinbotham, *Three Weeks in Holland and Belgium* (Chicago: Reilly and Britton Company, 1908), 76-77.

contemporaries. While the town names are now commonly associated with “tourist trip” and “Packaged Holland and Costumes to Go,” the villagers find tourism a necessary alternative to a nearly extinct fishing industry (it was cut off from the North Sea by the enclosure of the Zuiderzee).⁵³ This uneasy balance of ethnic tourism and traditional lifestyles and economies highlights the differences between past and present, industrial and preindustrial, civilization and primitive, as well as the contrast between authenticity and reconstructed authenticity that is at the crux of many of Henri’s portraits.

The working class: Dutch and American parallels

Seemingly a major departure from Henri’s portraits of Dutch children are his portraits of working class adults. Though a small percentage of his production, working class subjects have received attention from critics and scholars, such as John Cournos and Charles Wisner Barrell, who desired to emphasize Henri’s socialist and anarchist tendencies, as associated with his realist style. Yet like the Dutch children, Henri’s portraits of working class adults display widely acknowledged aspects of the Dutch character, showing them to be hardworking, honest, and diligent; lovers of drink and merry company; and defenders of democratic ideals--stereotypes based both on portraits by Hals and his

⁵³George McDonald, *Frommer’s Belgium, Holland, and Luxembourg*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 339-40.

contemporaries and on popular conceptions of Dutch disseminated through artists, historians, travel writers, and tourist agencies.

Dutch Soldier (figure 3.10), a portrait of a uniformed calvary officer seen in three-quarter profile, recalls Hals's *Laughing Cavalier* (figure 3.11) and, indirectly, his many other portraits of militia companies as well as Rembrandt's famous *Night Watch* (1642; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).⁵⁴ The subject matter can be linked with a general American respect and admiration for the Dutch independent spirit in their defeat of over the Spanish and their establishment of a legal republic at the Peace of Münster in 1648. In Henri's day, this aspect of Dutch history was often mentioned in studies of Dutch art and culture as a parallel to the American colonists' defeat of the British in the Revolutionary War. Further, Holland's democratic, rather than aristocratic, principles, which were based in the seventeenth century, were seen as a foundation for the United States. As Charles Caffin saw it: "Practically everything that we recognize to-day as characteristic of the modern spirit in politics, religion, science, society, industry, commerce, and art has its prototype amid that sturdy people; being either the cause or the product of their struggle for independence and their self-development."⁵⁵ It was this

⁵⁴Slive (*Frans Hals*, 1:21) called *Laughing Cavalier* (who incidentally is not really laughing) "one of the most familiar characters in the history of Western painting." Henri must have seen the painting through reproduction, if not in person. In a letter to his mother (August 4, 1907, Beinecke, box 16, folder 387), Henri noted painting several Dutch soldiers.

⁵⁵Caffin, *Story of Dutch Painting*, 3.

democratic aspect of the period that most appealed to Americans, who drew numerous parallels between Dutch and United States history and culture.

The Rum, a dark portrait of a slightly smiling, rosy-cheeked old man, recalls, in subject matter, if not in appearance, famous Dutch paintings of tavern goers by Jan Steen, Adrian Brouwer, Judith Leyster, Hals, and others. While the man portrayed is not holding a glass in his hand, as do many of Hals's merry drinkers, his pink face as well as the painting's title suggest heavy drinking.⁵⁶

The Stoker, *The Blue-Eyed Man* (figure 3.12), *The Working Man* (1910; private collection), *Dutch Match Woman*, *Fish Market Man*, and others are essentially portraits of common individuals whom Henri met on the street. They are not identified in titles by name but by occupation ("fish market man") or physical description ("blue-eyed man"), suggesting that they are meant to be read as types. Their weather-beaten faces may have suggested to American viewers a number of qualities commonly attributed to the Dutch character, such as honesty, diligence, fortitude, and endurance. (Mary Fanton Roberts, for example, found that Henri's Dutch portraits exemplified "the sturdy, imperturbable fundamentals

⁵⁶"Rum" is an American slang term that has been associated with heavy drinking for more than a century and a half. Variations include "rumbag" (a drunk; 20th century American), "rum-dum" (a heavy drinker; 1930s and later), "rumhead" (a drunkard, especially a rum-drinker; late nineteenth century and later), "rum hound" (a heavy drinker; 1910s-1950s), and "rummy/rummie" (a drunkard; 1850s and later; a fool, or dupe; 1910s and later); see Jonathan Green, *The Cassell Dictionary of Slang* (London: Cassell, 1998).

of Holland.”⁵⁷) These qualities were widely admired by interpreters of Dutch culture, including Taine, who believed that the Dutch character was formed through the harsh climate and years of conflict with the sea. A typical assessment of Dutch character at the turn of the twentieth century included such characteristics as patience, determination, self-denial, toil, suffering, cleanliness, ingenuity, and practicality.⁵⁸

The view of national character as being integrally related to climate was very common at the turn of the century. This particular interpretation of Dutch character, perhaps most popularly propagated by Taine, is paralleled by similar evaluations of American character, the best-known of which may have been Frederic Jackson Turner’s famous 1893 essay on the American frontier, which attributes the development of American character to the forge of frontier life. Following the habit of writers and artists to conflate the history and culture of Holland and the United States, many viewers interpreted Henri’s portraits as depictions of Dutch character, while others also associated them with American character.

The Dutch were also connected to Americans through immigration history. Not only were the Dutch among the most prominent founding fathers of the country (most notably in Pennsylvania and New York), but significant numbers

⁵⁷Mary Fanton Roberts, “Speaking of Art: The Henri Memorial Exhibition,” *Arts and Decoration* 34 (March 1931): 44.

⁵⁸Stott, *Holland Mania*, 101-02.

had settled in the United States in the following centuries, peaking in the years 1911-1915. Among the immigrants of many nationalities who settled in the United States, the Dutch were seen as among the most desirable, not only because of the many perceived parallels between Dutch and United States history and the many positive qualities popularly ascribed to Dutch temperament, but also because their physical attributes—light skin, blond hair, blue eyes—allowed them to easily blend in and assimilate within American culture. In short, in many ways, the American character was the Dutch character.⁵⁹

Still other viewers may have viewed Henri's working class portraits with a more political bent. As with all of Henri's portraits, "the stoker" is not seen performing any work nor even wearing recognizable work clothes; rather, the title alone may have been enough to suggest links with contemporary labor issues. The picture also had artistic parallels in Constantin Meunier's controversial sculptures of miners and stokers as well as other contemporary American sculptures on laboring themes such as Chester Beach's *The Stoker* (1907) and Mahonri Young's *Brevet Arthur—A Laborer* (1904) and *Stevedore* (1904).⁶⁰ For the socialist art critic

⁵⁹For more on perceived links between the United States and the Netherlands, see Stott, *Holland Mania*, chapter 3, "Rewriting American History."

⁶⁰Connections between Beach, Young, and Henri are numerous during this period. They exhibited in the same galleries, including Macbeth; were championed by the same critics, including Curnos, Barrell, and John Spargo; were promoted by the same art journals, such as *Craftsman*; and even shared influential patrons, such as Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The parallels between these artists are discussed in Melissa Dabakis, *Visualizing Labor in American Sculpture: Monuments, Manliness, and the Work Ethic, 1880-1935* (New York: Cambridge University

John Cournos, works such as these espoused a socialist view of laborers as downtrodden members of society. Cournos described *The Stoker* as

a dignified head of a labourer of middle age, whose sad eyes tell the story of a hard past; there is no expectation in them of anything else from life but life itself, life with its numbered days one of which is like another, life with all its weariness and labour and love. This man is an individual, yet a type. You and I have met him somewhere. It is his eyes that grip you. In them lies the sadness of all the stokers of the earth since men began to work at furnaces. Mr. Henri himself would call this portrait 'a statement of life.' And like every effectual statement it is its own comment.⁶¹

Views such as this, showing sympathy with oppressed humanity, echo those of Emile Zola, Honoré de Balzac, and other literary naturalists who inspired Henri earlier in his career. Yet Cournos's reference to the hard life suffered by industrial laborers must have struck a deeper note with some readers sympathetic to the labor movement, especially in the wake of the Colorado miner's strike, the "Ludlow massacre", and the controversial Meunier exhibition of 1913/14, which brought long-simmering issues regarding American workers to the fore.⁶²

Press, 1999), chapter 6.

⁶¹Cournos, "Three Painters of the New York School," 240-41. Homer (Robert Henri and His Circle, 244) presents the opposite view, asserting that Henri "did not caricature them as downtrodden masses exploited by the capitalist system. Rather, he emphasized their dignity, their worth as individuals who, though only workers, were endowed with as much human value as wealthy, social prominent businessmen. Indeed, the working classes were somehow more 'real' to Henri as a result of their integrity and genuine lack of affectation."

⁶²As Dabakis noted (*Visualizing Labor*, chapter 5), there were obvious connections between Meunier exhibition tour of 1913/14 and the Ludlow massacre, but interpretations by the public varied. Images of diligent, strong, hardworking laborers may have also presented a reassuring image in a period of workers' strikes and other class conflicts, increasing sympathy for workers and

Considering Henri's deep admiration for the writings of Petr Kropotkin, Zola, and other socialist and anarchist writers, it seems surprising that he painted so few of these sympathetic portraits of workers. Perhaps he felt more comfortable making less overt political statements and producing works that could appeal to critics and collectors with a range of political views.

Conclusion

What was the American response to Henri's Dutch portraits? Judging by the critical response and sales, the laughing children were by far the most popular. Though Henri exhibited pictures of both children and adults throughout the 1910s, the laughing children were purchased more often by more important collectors. For example, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney purchased *Laughing Child* from the exhibition of *The Eight* in 1908. Following her lead, the Dallas Art Association purchased *Dutch Girl, Laughing* (also known as *The Happy Hollander*) in 1909; Albert Barnes toyed with the idea of adding *The Red Top* to his collection in 1912 (it found another purchaser the next year at the Armory Show); Kansas City collector Sallie Casey Thayer acquired *Laughing Girl* from MacBeth galleries in 1913; Milwaukee collector Samuel O. Buckner bought *Dutch Joe* in 1916 to complement his collection of Dutch and American art; and Duncan Phillips bought *Little Dutch Girl* in 1920.

reinforcing the status quo regarding the role of workers in American society.

In contrast, *Fish Market Man*, *Blue-Eyed Bum*, and *Working Man* were exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts annual exhibitions in 1911, 1912, and 1913, respectively, as well as other national venues, but these more sober works remained in Henri's collection until his death, reflecting a lack of interest in them by patrons. Perhaps sales influenced Henri's choice of subjects later in his career, for his portraits of Dutch adults were not repeated, while the Dutch children found themselves endlessly reformulated into Henri's Irish portraits after 1913.

Certainly, Henri's portraits were much less formulaic and clichéd than many depictions of the Dutch produced by his contemporaries. The most popular views of Holland were genre scenes or vignettes of people wearing quaint costumes and performing characteristic activities, for example, women knitting, men and women working with flax, mothers caring for children, or persons involved with fishing or dairy occupations.⁶³ Even single figure, full-length, iconic portraits of Dutch types, such as Gari Melchers's *La Brabançon* (c. 1904-05; Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island) or *The Communicant* (figure 3.13), which are similar in format to Henri's earlier full-length and Spanish portraits, rely on "characteristic" Dutch props, settings, and costumes. In contrast, the nearly complete absence of props in Henri's portraits was consistent with Hals's and Rembrandt's style but unusual in Henri's time. His sitters' essential "Dutchness" was signified by their solid character

⁶³Stott, *Holland Mania*, 69.

or jolly personality and by the distinctive speedy brushwork, dramatic lighting, and emphasis on “character” associated with Hals and Rembrandt. They were clearly not the prosperous burghers of the Dutch republic that Hals and Rembrandt had painted, or that the Americans Frank Duveneck and Chase invented in their homages—yet the hardworking and jolly Dutch of Henri’s era was widely believed to be identical to his or her seventeenth-century ancestors. Few of his contemporaries imitated so closely the compositional and paint application techniques of their seventeenth century models, and with such success.⁶⁴

Moreover, aside from the obvious nod to the style of Hals and Rembrandt, Henri’s realism, honesty, and unabashed depiction of ugliness and common values were themselves qualities commonly associated with Dutch painting and the Dutch people. Thus, Henri’s works served mainly as condensations of Dutch character and Dutch history and culture, not of superficial appearances, like Melchers’s.

Nonetheless, Henri’s works do accommodate popular conceptions of the Dutch, focusing on physical attributes and character traits seen as typical: laughing, happy personality; blond hair, blue-eyes, light skin and general good looks; solid character; love of drink and merriment. And, one can rightly ask, would Henri have found occasion to visit Holland if not for the widespread interest

⁶⁴Chase, Duveneck, J. Frank Curier are possible exceptions, but they produced such paintings in the 1870s and 1880s and were not associated with “character” as much as Henri was. Charles Webster Hawthorne imitated Rembrandt, but purposely tried to get away from that kind of imitation; Stott, *Holland Mania*, 74-76.

in the country during his day? As with many of his paintings, Henri's Dutch portraits both resisted and accommodated popular stereotypes of the Dutch to appeal to a broad range of tastes. Those who sought an insurgent painter noticed an emphasis on brushwork, character, and sympathy toward humanity; those with more pedestrian tastes found that his subjects—especially his cute little children—were not so unusual and in fact accommodated rather than challenged contemporary views about Holland.

Chapter 4.

Henri on Achill Island: Irish nationalism and the myth of the Irish peasant

I cannot imagine anyone with any sympathy or receptiveness who would not recognize Ireland—her reticence, wit, naïveté, sadness, from Henri's paintings . . . Because, after all, it is the people, individually, who create and express the nation and it is through Henri's individual portraits that I feel he expresses the lives of the people he knew so well.¹

Among his portraits of common individuals and types, Henri is probably best known for his portraits of Irish subjects, painted during the summers of 1913 and 1924 to 1929. These many portrayals of rural Irish folk were clearly popular during Henri's lifetime, for as Mary Fanton Roberts commented, they were seen as embodiments of Irish culture and history, and as such offered viewers a seemingly authentic view of the Irish nation and people. In the last half of the twentieth century, however, Henri's Irish portraits have received mixed reviews. Because Henri painted such a large number, especially in the 1920s, and used many of the same sitters repeatedly, some art historians have dismissed them as repetitive and formulaic, as the work of a retired and declining artist. Alternatively, the portraits have represented an almost ubiquitous presence in the art market (and in new acquisitions in public collections) in the last few decades. Despite their popularity with collectors and the museum-going public, their subject matter and symbolism has not yet been investigated in detail. How might the portraits express a nation,

¹Mary Fanton Roberts, "Speaking of Art: The Henri Memorial Exhibition," *Arts and Decoration* 34 (March 1931): 44.

as Roberts asserted, and why was this important for viewers in Henri's day? How do they embody Henri's attitudes on race and national and ethnic identity, particularly in relation to the Irish? The aim here is to resituate these works within their original historical context in order to recover the multivalent meanings they once held for Henri and his audience.

Henri's Irish paintings, especially his 1913 canvases, may be understood in the context of Irish nationalism and the Irish Literary Revival, associated movements that made their greatest impact in the first few decades of the twentieth century with the poetry of William Butler Yeats and his contemporaries. Even before his first visit to Ireland, Henri was deeply invested in the Irish national identity as portrayed by the revivalists, through his close friendships with John Butler Yeats, the poet's father, and other Irish expatriate friends in New York. These men introduced Henri to contemporary Irish literature, reinforced his identification with the basic philosophical tenets of the Irish Renaissance, and inspired his desire to experience firsthand and to document the "real" Ireland. His impressions of Ireland were recorded in an extended series of portraits of the residents of Achill Island, situated on Ireland's far west coast. Though Henri's portraits themselves assert an authenticity founded in the artist's personal experience of his subjects and their environment, they in fact embody a mix of fact and fiction, reflecting both the real Ireland and the mythical one invented by Irish cultural nationalists. This romanticized, or primitivized, image of traditional Ireland was intended to counter centuries of British oppression in Ireland through

an emphasis of positive Irish national characteristics as well as to posit a pure, pre-industrial rural idyll that countered the perceived ills of urban life in the modern age. As such, the movement's and similarly Henri's broader appropriation of Irish peasants as a critique of modernism constituted a significant aspect of Henri's cultural primitivism.

Achill Island

Art historians have suggested several reasons for Henri's visit to Ireland in 1913: a desire take refuge in a "distant and isolated land" to escape the "embarrassment" of the Armory show, and a need to reassess his artistic career in the wake of the Armory Show's celebration of European modernism are the most common.² In fact, there were numerous distant and isolated lands Henri could have visited, including his regular haunts in Holland and Spain. Yet no doubt Ireland topped his list in 1913 because his Irish expatriate friends, foremost among them John Butler Yeats, Charles FitzGerald, and Frederick James Gregg, had often fondly recommended their homeland.³ What's more, Henri and his wife both claimed Irish roots: Marjorie was an Irish native who had not returned to her

²Bennard Perlman (*Robert Henri: His Life and Art* [New York: Dover Publications, 1991], 110-11); William Innes Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, rev. ed. (New York: Hacker Art Books, 1988), 247-49; and Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Orlando, Florida: Orlando Museum of Art, 1994), 31-32.

³Perlman, *Life and Art*, 110.

homeland since emigrating at age thirteen and Henri counted among his ancestors Lady Fingall of Killim Castle.⁴

Henri's diaries and letters have provided many of the basic facts of his travels. He and his wife sailed to Ireland in June 1913. After landing at Queenstown, they traveled across southern and western Ireland, visiting Cork, Bantry and Glengariff on Bantry Bay, Kenmore and Killarney in County Kerry, Limerick, Galway and Connemara. They intended to settle for a time in rural western Ireland, and had considered staying in Clifden or another coastal village in Connemara at the end of the railway line. On a visit to nearby Achill Island, however, Henri struck up a friendship with the proprietor of the Slievemore Hotel, an artist, who helped convinced him to stay on Achill for the summer.⁵ Though island life in general was very primitive, they found a large mansion, Corrymore House, to rent which was sited at the top of a hill above the coastal villages of Dooagh and Keel. The house was once owned by Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott, whose harsh treatment of his tenants had spurred them on to protest in a fashion that coined a new word; this famous historical connection was often

⁴Marjorie was born in Ireland in 1886. Her father created wallpaper designs for a living in Ireland and, after about 1900, in the United States; Perlman, *Life and Art*, 85-86.

⁵Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, July 2 and July 13, 1913, Beinecke, box 16, folder 394.

mentioned by Henri in his letters to friends and acquaintances.⁶ Henri settled into a large studio in Corrymore and alternated his time between trout fishing on Keel Lake, tramping across the island's hilly terrain, entertaining friends and visitors (including Marjorie's sister Vi), and painting portraits of the locals. After this first trip in 1913, the Henris purchased Corrymore House in 1924 and returned to Achill each year until Henri's death in 1929.

A large island situated off Ireland's west coast, Achill was known at the turn of the century for its immense wild and beautiful scenery and for its isolated, traditional way of life. Its diverse scenery incorporates steep mountains, placid lakes, and dark bogs, as well as the spectacular Croaghan cliffs, which rise up 2,000 feet from the sea. Squeezed between steep coastal mountains, Achill's central flatlands were densely inhabited, despite a shortage of arable land. There, the islanders practiced ages-old methods of subsistence farming and fishing; as

⁶Captain Boycott (1832-1897) lived on Achill from 1857 to 1877, during which years he built a large house and farm with numerous outbuildings and employed tenant labor to cultivate the fields, shear the sheep, etc. A brutal landlord known for exacting harsh fines of neighbors and tenants for small infractions—being late to work, allowing fowl or livestock to stray onto his land—and even trying to prevent fishing in Keem Bay (bordering his land), Boycott suffered his downfall when he refused to lower rents during the 1879-80 land agitations. When Boycott and other Achill landowners refused to sell land to islanders, they refused to work for him and local suppliers refused to sell him food, thus coining the term “boycott” (see Theresa McDonald, *Achill Island* [Tullamore, Ireland: I.A.S Publications, 1997], 232-33, 315).

Henri observed, “they fish and they worry out of a reluctant soil the potatoes necessary to existence.”⁷

Henri made a number of small oil sketches recording Achill’s picturesque attractions, including the Menaun Cliffs, the island’s characteristic thatched houses, and Corrymore House.⁸ He was, however, most interested in the Irish people, whom he portrayed over the years in hundreds of canvases, following the distinctive portraiture style he had developed in his portraits of Spanish and Dutch subjects.

The portraits of Johnnie Cummings and his wife, *Himself* (figure 1.2) and *Herself* (figure 4.1), *Old Johnnie* (1913; Baltimore Museum of Art), and *Old Johnnie’s Wife* (1913; Indianapolis Museum of Art) are among the best-known portraits of Henri’s career.⁹ Seated against indistinct dark backgrounds, Old Johnnie and his wife regard the visitor with a mix of bemusement and boredom.

⁷Henri, New York, to buyer of *Cafferty*, March 26, 1926; quoted in Sotheby’s, New York, sale catalogue, May 25, 1995, no. 17.

⁸According to Homer (*Robert Henri and His Circle*, 247-48), landscape scenes comprised about one-third of Henri’s 1913 production. These scenes include *The West Coast of Ireland*, 26x32 (Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York); *On Slivernore Road*, 12x16 (Christie’s, New York, May 23, 1990, no. 73); *Irish Cottage*, 12x16 (Butterfield and Butterfield, San Francisco, April 1, 1992, no. 71); *On the Road to Corrymore*, 12x16 (Berry-Hill Galleries, New York, 1986); *By the Turf Stack*, 12x16 (Berry-Hill Galleries, New York, 1986); *By the Turf Stack*, 13x18 (Estate of Robert Henri); *Corrymore*, 20x24 (Berry-Hill Galleries, New York, 1986); *Meenaune Cliffs, Achill Island*, 26x32 (Chapellier Galleries, New York, 1991); and *A Bit of Ireland* (Barnes Foundation, Merion Station, Pennsylvania), a vignette of an Achill girl sitting on a traditional Irish stone fence.

⁹Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 249.

Mrs. Cummings is quite bundled up in layers of colorful skirts, shawls, and head scarves, as was customary for Achill ladies, her pink face peeping out from the colorful fabrics. Mr. Cummings sports a brown vest and two-toned jacket. Both hold the slim walking staffs, or shillalahs, that were ubiquitous on an island with few passable roads.¹⁰

Henri seems to have been interested in the Cummingses primarily as interesting characters to paint:

Yesterday I painted an old lady. . . very fat and with a jovial red round face—she is over 75 but still has perfectly black hair and a sturdy stride—but she is full of all the perfections and imperfections of Irish pride, vanity and prejudice—she tells you she is of a quality superior to the natives here—she came about 55 years ago from a miserable little town on the mainland—called Westport—a great city no doubt to these people—she was a runaway match—her folks objected—his folks objected. So they run away—that is I suppose—they “took up” and so the mighty families had to agree and they were married—13 children resulted and for the 55 years they have been in a state of admiration and fondness for each other punctuated at close intervals with quarrels that have been for the 55 years the interest and amusement of Dooagh. I have a painting of him, too. He is best known as “johnny” altho[ugh] I think she speaks of him as Mr. Cummings. He fishes, wears a coat turned wrong side out—a brown vest and has under his long and broad upper lip and antique clay pipe and a brush of yellow red whiskers.¹¹

¹⁰Henry recounted that walking was the primary form of transportation on the island for everyone, even the old and infirm; see Paul Henry, *An Irish Portrait: The Autobiography of Paul Henry* (London, New York, Toronto, Sydney: B. T. Batsford, 1951), 85. Shillalahs were typically associated with the rural Irish; see Plummer F. Jones, *Shamrock-land: A Ramble through Ireland* (New York: Moffat, Yard & Company, 1908), 121-22.

¹¹Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, August 16, 1913, Robert Henri Papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven (hereafter cited as Beinecke), box 16, folder

He found another interesting character in Brien O'Malley, a coachman and a well-known local guide to Croaghan, the mountain on which Corrymore House was built. Henri thought him quite an eccentric, "one of the great characters of the Island," as he wrote his mother. "He is 76, is quite certain that the earth stands still and does not revolve, and can take his tourists' extra luggage on his back and climb up like a goat leaving his young followers to puff and heart fail [sic]. He has seen ghosts, fairies and gnomes . . . and claims descent from the celebrated lady who once ruled over this part of Ireland."¹²

A wiry, energetic man with a gaunt, weathered face, O'Malley sports the costume of a typical rural Irishman: a well-worn suit and vest made of rough, dark fabric, a derby hat, a hawthorn walking stick, leather gloves, and a pipe. *My Friend Brien* (figure 4.2), originally painted with a rough rock wall as a background, suggests O'Malley as he might appear to visitors to the island.¹³ *My Friend O'Malley* (1913; location unknown) suggests O'Malley the guide, framed by the distant

395. Tom McNamara, an Achill resident and local historian, notes (letter to author, August 6, 2000) that the family name is not Cummings but Commins. He has not been able to confirm Henri's accounts of the Commins or find any descendants of their large family, despite inquiries broadcast on local radio stations and published in local newspapers.

¹²Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, undated [1913], quoted in Leeds, *My People*, 32.

¹³In March 1926, Henri replaced the original rock wall background with its present green/blue variegated color; Martha Mayberry, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, email to author, July 27, 2000.

hills, lush green foliage, and clear blue sky of the Achill landscape.¹⁴ *Guide to Croaghaun* (1913; Cummer Gallery of Art, Jacksonville, Florida) is more of a studio portrait, presenting O'Malley in his Sunday "best" clothes, with white shirt and bow tie more in evidence, and focusing the viewer on his haggard face and large, aged, veiny hands.

O'Malley must have made a great impression on numerous visitors. Paul Henry, a Belfast artist who lived on Achill from 1910 to 1919, recalled him as a graceful and distinguished natural gentlemen who cut a striking figure on horseback, always wearing his leather gloves and battered bowler hat. Henry spent many a congenial hour with O'Malley, tramping across the Achill countryside and listening to his friend's endless accounts of local history and folklore, which included tales of his personal exploits as an under-bailiff and body servant to Captain Boycott. Over the years, O'Malley had worked for various visitors to the island, including an ornithologist studying the local bird population, and seems to have been a general guide for hire.¹⁵ He took Henry, a landscape painter, to many a picturesque spot on the island, including the famous Croaghaun mountain,

¹⁴*My Friend O'Malley* is illustrated in *Robert Henri and His Circle*, forward by Leon Kroll (New York: American Academy of Arts and Letters, 1965), no. 11.

¹⁵According to McNamara (letter to author, August 6, 2000), O'Malley's customers would have been mainly wealthy visitors, many of them British, who stayed at the Slievemore Hotel in Dugort, on the eastern side of the island. McNamara notes that there was at least one other guide on the island at the time.

whose precipitous cliffs were populated with agile wild goats.¹⁶ Henry called him “a tireless walker, although well over 60.”¹⁷ There are a few extant drawings of O'Malley by Henry. One, like Henri's portraits of the old man, depicts O'Malley not as the colorful, energetic character evoked in the artists' written accounts, but as a haggard old gentleman, seated on a stool, his downcast eyes and bored expression suggesting a passive outlook.¹⁸

Recent appraisals of Henri's Irish portraits, particularly the representations of O'Malley and the Cummingses, hinge on Henri's growing facility with color, in contrast to his darker canvases of earlier years. Clearly, Henri demonstrated his eye for color harmonies in, for example, the rosy pink shirt, slate blue apron, dove grey shawl, and multicolored head scarf worn by Mrs. Cummings in *Herself*, and this

¹⁶Croaghnaun mountain is one of the natural wonders of Achill. Though Slievemore, on the northern coast, is the island's highest summit, Croaghnaun's sheer 2,192 feet cliffs are also quite dramatic from both sea and land, and some say, among the finest natural scenes in Ireland (see Brendan Lehane, *Wild Ireland: A Traveller's Guide* [New York: Interlink Books, 2000]). The rocky, knife-sharp cliffs are beautiful and dangerous, home to wild goats and, in the nineteenth century, sea eagles. Achill would indeed have attracted numerous adventurous tourists, but the wild and sometimes dangerous terrain of the island, which had few roads, necessitated hiring a seasoned guide such as O'Malley.

¹⁷Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 72.

¹⁸*Brien O'Malley* (n.d.; location unknown) is illustrated in Paul Henry, *Further Reminiscences* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press in association with the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, 1973), 36. Another, *My Good Friend Brien* (n.d.; National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), is a pencil sketch of O'Malley's blank face, topped by a bowler hat.

bold use of color was enthusiastically noted in his day.¹⁹ Yet critics were equally fascinated with Henri's portrayal of Irishness and of general character, which was one of the most admired abilities of the portraitist. The portraits received widespread acclaim when exhibited at the 1914 annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. One critic noted that *Himself* and *Herself* were "two of the most delightful pictures of all. The bewitching old man and the apple-cheeked old woman. . . are as real to the life and the sod of the old country as can be. They are not consciously posed, but captured in a state of suspended animation, perhaps, but there is no torpor of the nimble wits of them."²⁰

Sadakichi Hartmann tempered this general enthusiasm for the portraits when he asserted in 1918 that *Himself* was above all a theatrical performance, an image of a "curious eccentric personality" that overemphasized character, while the title indicated "that unmitigated truth was the main purpose of [the] representation." "It is curious," he wrote, "how many portrait painters are fond of

¹⁹See, for example, "Paintings on View at the Academy of Fine Arts Exhibit," *Press*, February 8, 1914, clipping in Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter cited as PAFA Records), reel P56, frame 183: "For all their brightness of color Henri's canvases never shriek out at one; quite possibly his present delight in color is a reaction against his one-time dull browns and grays. At all events, the four pictures he exhibits this year [*Himself*, *Herself*, *Irish Lad*, and *Mary O'D*] are an unalloyed delight."

²⁰"Striking Pictures at the Fine Arts Exhibition," *Philadelphia Ledger*, February 8, 1914, clipping in PAFA Records, reel P56, frame 183.

mentioning as one of their special accomplishments their ability of interpreting character. They point to all sorts of types that they have delineated, and seem to be particularly proud of the contrast and diversity of appearances that these performances convey."²¹ (These comments echo those of critic Arthur Hoeber, who in 1914 complained that *Herself* was not a portrait but a character study, and as such should not have won the Pennsylvania Academy's annual award for portraiture.²²) Hartmann's comments acknowledge the complex mix of fact and fiction in such "character" portraits as *Himself*. Such strategies demonstrate Henri's nod to popular perceptions and expectations in composing his portraits and contributed greatly to the portraits' critical and popular success.

Though the portraits of O'Malley and the Cummingses were tremendously successful back with American critics, these half a dozen canvases were in actuality atypical of Henri's production on Achill. The great majority of Henri's Irish works were in fact smaller-scale (usually 24 x 20 inch) compositions featuring the children of the towns of Keel and Dooagh. Several portraits of Mary O'Donnell, the daughter of the caretakers of Corrymore House, exemplify the 1913 canvases. In these works, Henri repeated the basic formula that Henri perfected in Holland with his portraits of Jobie, Corie, and Martsche, posing Mary against a dark, indistinct

²¹Sadakichi Hartmann, "Pictorial Aims of Modern Portraiture: III. The Importance of Character Delineation," *Portrait* 9 (March 1918): 8, 12.

²²Arthur Hoeber, "Philadelphia Pictures," *Globe*, February 9, 1914, clipping in PAFA Records, reel P56, frame 185.

background, the light illuminating the right side of her face to reveal her fine features. In *Irish Girl* (figure 4.3), the brilliant cranberry red color of Mary's blouse and her rosy, flushed cheeks demonstrate Henri's growing flair for color, yet Mary's fine features, timid glance, and sad pale grey eyes stand out above all. Framed by unkempt light brown hair and simple, almost ragged, clothes, Mary's face suggests a shy and reserved nature shared by many of Henri's Irish children.

The portrait itself reveals little about Mary as a person, but Henri typically provided more biographical information to inquisitive patrons. In a letter to John T. Spaulding, who purchased the painting from Macbeth Galleries in 1919 and later donated it to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, he wrote a lengthy description of Mary's life on Achill, which included this information:

Mary gathered sea grass, walked miles to milk the cow which could not feed nearer home, wore the cloth of their own making from their own sheep's wool, cut and gathered turf, which she carried in baskets saddling the horse on whose rump she rode with her hair down her back and her strong legs and bare feet showing. She was shy and speechless in the presence of strangers, but she had a voice and a form in [E]nglish which can[']t be equaled in the world—In my opinion this is true of all these Achill folk.²³

Arguably, these portraits of Mary and the other Achill children are less theatrical, more immediate than Henri's portraits of O'Malley and the Cummingses. Painted on smaller canvases, they are more subtle than the attention-grabbing performances of the Achill adults. The best, such as

²³Henri, New York, to John T. Spaulding, Boston, November 28, 1921, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Archives.

Mary (1913; Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts) and *Catharine* (figure 4.4), are wonderfully realistic portrayals of actual children, though others, such as *Irish Girl (Mary Lavelle)* (figure 4.5), seem merely to evoke sentimental stereotypes of the Irish, especially Irish children, as timid, withdrawn, and melancholic.

The Irish Renaissance and Irish cultural nationalism

To be sure, Henri's portraits owed much of their success to their convincing realism. At the most fundamental level, they serve as seemingly authentic visual records of actual Irish individuals. More important, however, Henri hoped the portraits would reveal larger truths. He intended them to serve as representations of the Achill Islanders' simple life and as symbols of the true spirit of Ireland, which he greatly admired as an ancient, traditional, and mysterious culture. This reading is suggested by numerous interviews and letters which described the individuals portrayed in the portraits, but put greater emphasis on the general culture and lifestyle which they represented.

As such, Henri's portrayals of Irish folk were integrally linked to the concept of Irish identity as created and promoted by his Irish expatriate friends, who were themselves close associates with the leaders of the Irish literary and cultural revival centered in Dublin. While Henri scholars have long acknowledged his friendship with Irish expatriates in New York, the significance of this connection and the degree to which these men's deeply held beliefs on Irish national identity affected

Henri's own view of Irish culture has been greatly underestimated. Henri's Irish portraits, then, cannot be understood apart from the context of Irish nationalism and popular attitudes regarding Irish character and Irish identity.

In the early twentieth century, Irish nationalism comprised two main fronts, political and cultural, both of which aimed to throw off centuries British oppression and rule in Ireland.²⁴ Foremost among the goals of political nationalists were the reform of outdated laws on land ownership and agricultural markets, which for centuries had favored British landowners and the British government at the expense of the Irish people, and Home Rule, or total independence from Britain. The nationalist movement, which had begun slowly in the post-famine years of the mid-nineteenth century, gathered greater momentum in the 1880s under Charles Stewart Parnell, the influential leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The fight would come to a head in the 1916 Easter Rising and the 1919-21 Anglo-Irish War, and culminate in the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921.

As an alternative to constitutional nationalism, Irish cultural nationalism associated Irish independence with the Irish past, specifically with Gaelic language, traditions, song, poetry, and folklore. All things Irish assumed increased

²⁴Of the vast body of literature on Irish history and nationalism around the turn of the twentieth century, I found most helpful R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin Books, 1989); R. F. Foster, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); F. S. L. Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1982); and Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

importance in the nationalists' eyes; in contrast, industrialization, British laws and educational methods, the English language, and "civilization" was associated with British colonial rule and oppression. An important milestone in the cultural revival was the 1893 founding of the Gaelic League by Eoin MacNeill and Douglas Hyde, which aimed to preserve traditional Irish language and customs and to eliminate the sense of shame and inferiority suffered by native Irish speakers. As first president of the League, Hyde argued in his inaugural address "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland" that there was an indissoluble link between a nation's language and its culture and claimed that to mimic English ways and habits of thought was to betray a cultural weakness. The League's specific objectives included introducing Gaelic into the educational curriculum at all levels, campaigning for bilingual street signs, and popularizing Irish entertainments such as fiddling, piping, dancing, or reciting poetry. Hyde accentuated the program through his own writings based on Irish folklore, including *Beside the Fire* (1890), an anthology of tales in Gaelic with facing English translations.

Hyde's interest in honoring and preserving Gaelic tradition and folklore was mirrored by the writers and playwrights associated with the Irish literary revival, a core group which included William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, Lady Gregory, George Russell [AE], James Stephens, George Moore, and others.²⁵ Yeats

²⁵ Among the many treatments of the literary revival, see David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism, and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Edward Hirsch, "The Imaginary Irish Peasant," *PMLA* 106 (October 1991): 1116-33; Declan Kiberd, *Inventing*

first worked with Hyde to produce *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888). In the next several decades he produced a number of plays and books of poetry based on Gaelic history and legend, including the play “Cathleen Ni Houlihan,” which made a great impression on Irish nationalists, and co-founded the Irish National Theatre Society and the Abbey Theatre as venues for the performance of plays on Irish subjects. A prolific writer and a tireless supporter of the Irish revival, he believed that to jump back into the past through Irish language and folk lore was to reconnect with Irish psychology, and he strove to create a common and communal mythology which would embody the essential characteristics and deep structures underlying Irish life, literature, and culture.

If Yeats was the poet who best defined the literary revival, Synge was its major playwright. His extended visits to the Aran Islands and other western districts resulted in a number of works based on rural Irish life and culture, including *The Aran Islands* (1907) and the plays *Riders to the Sea* (produced in 1904) and *The Playboy of the Western World* (produced 1907). Though Henri may have been familiar with a number of Synge’s works, he was most impressed with the *Playboy*, which had gained widespread notoriety when it was performed in Dublin in 1907 and in New York in 1911. Though the riots that erupted upon the play’s performances were prompted by a complex set of circumstances, Henri and

Ireland (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995); Philip O’Leary, *The Prose Literature of the Gaelic Revival, 1881-1921: Ideology and Innovation* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1994); and Robert Welch, *Changing States: Transformations in Modern Irish Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

his friends clearly identified with the artist against what they perceived as a culturally backward and uneducated mob. (Sloan called the protestors “brainless cowards.”)²⁶

Henri was also a great fan of the works of naturalist novelist George Moore and poet and mystic James Stephens, both of whom were also connected with the Yeats circle. Moore’s early naturalist works were modeled in part after Emile Zola, but after 1900 he wrote a number of works relating to Irish life and culture, including the short-story collection *The Untilled Field* (1903) and *Hail and Farewell* (1911-14), his three-volume history of the literary revival, considered his masterpiece. Stephens’s best-known book, *The Crock of Gold* (1912), an Irish fairy tale about leprechauns, a beautiful maiden, a Celtic god, philosophers, and others, was noted for its combination of realism, fantasy, and meditation. Henri often recommended it to friends. Later books of poetry recreated famous Irish legends and folklore.

Many commentators on Irish nationalism identify the years between 1891 and 1916 as the height of Irish cultural nationalism, a period when Irish writers and cultural leaders such as Hyde, Yeats, Synge, and others filled a vacuum in political leadership left by Parnell’s death. While this view is debatable (Irish historian R. F. Foster, for example, sees the political nationalists and the cultural

²⁶ John Loughery, *John Sloan: Painter and Rebel* (New York: Henry Holt, 1995), 163. The *Playboy* riots are discussed in Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 183-88, among others.

nationalists as working side by side in this period),²⁷ it nonetheless identifies the period of Henri's greatest association with Irish literature and culture as the seminal moment in Irish cultural nationalism.

Who were Henri's Irish friends and associates? Dubliners Frederick James Gregg and Charles FitzGerald had been members of Henri's close circle of friends and associates since around 1900, when they began writing art and literary criticism for the *New York Sun*. As art critics, Gregg and FitzGerald were two of Henri's and *The Eight's* most ardent supporters; as friends, they were often in attendance at many gatherings of the Henri crowd at Henri's or Sloan's studio or at local hangouts such as Café Francis or Petitpas. As John Loughery has suggested, "Rarely has a group of artists enjoyed such a warm alliance with the press as the Henri circle did with these two influential men. Both the painters and the writers saw themselves as breaking down barriers of style and advancing freedom of subject matter."²⁸ Yet in addition to their interest in new forms of visual art, they were also avid supporters of contemporary Irish literature. Gregg had been a schoolmate of William Butler Yeats. A scholar and a gifted poet, in his youth Gregg

²⁷Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 431-32.

²⁸For more on FitzGerald and Gregg, see John Loughery, "The *New York Sun* and Modern Art in America: Charles FitzGerald, Frederick James Gregg, James Gibbons Huneker, Henry McBride," *Arts* 59 (December 1984): 77-82.

was called “Ireland’s hope in poetry” by Irish poet AE; as an adult he had a deep love for the writings of Yeats, Joyce, and Synge.²⁹

The most revered Irishman in Henri’s circle was clearly John Butler Yeats, who joined Henri’s sociable group in 1909. By profession a portraitist, Yeats was also the father of the poet William Butler Yeats and the painter Jack Yeats and an active proponent of the Irish literary revival. An engaging lecturer and essayist, he supported the efforts of the revival by conducting American lecture tours and writing numerous articles on the subject of Irish art and culture. An entertaining conversationalist, he often presided over congenial gatherings at Petitpas’s restaurant in Manhattan, as depicted in Sloan’s famous group portrait *Yeats at Petitpas* (1910; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). He was also a regular guest at Henri’s and Sloan’s studios for evenings of socializing and discussion, which were often highlighted by Yeats’s inspired readings of poems or plays by his son, by Lady Gregory, or by Synge, or by his reports of the Irish scene from letters or from memories. John and Dolly Sloan’s close relationship to the fatherly Yeats is well-known; in the years 1908 to 1911, for example, Sloan mentions Yeats in his diaries almost daily.³⁰ For his part, Henri also greatly enjoyed Yeats’s company and

²⁹Loughery, “The New York Sun,” 78-79.

³⁰Henri and Sloan first met Yeats through Mary Fanton Roberts and her husband. Yeats was at that time in New York on a lecture tour to read his son’s poetry. According to Loughery (*John Sloan*, 149), Henri and Sloan were already quite familiar with Yeats and contemporary Irish literature: “Anyone who had met George Moore, Lady Gregory, and the other principals of the Irish Literary Renaissance was automatically of interest to Sloan.” For more on Yeats’s

painted his friend's portrait (1909; Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.) in December 1909. During his trip to Ireland in 1913 he made a special visit to Dublin just to view portraits by the elder Yeats, whom he afterward proclaimed "the greatest British painter of the Victorian era."³¹

A more peripheral figure, though one whose strong ties to Irish literature and theater would have nonetheless strengthened Henri's own sympathies with the movement, was the Irish-American lawyer and art patron John Quinn, whom Henri met through Yeats and Sloan. An important sponsor of the Yeats and other Irish artists and writers, Quinn was largely responsible for educating the American public on contemporary Irish arts. He sponsored American lecture tours by John Butler Yeats and Douglas Hyde; facilitated American publications and performances of works by William Butler Yeats, Synge, Stephens, Lady Gregory,

relationship with Henri and his friends, see Loughery, *John Sloan*, 147-50, passim; Robert Gordon, *John Butler Yeats and John Sloan: The Records of a Friendship* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1978); Douglas N. Archibald, *John Butler Yeats* (Lewisburg, Pennsylvania: Bucknell University Press, and London: Associated University Press, 1974), 68-71, and passim.

³¹Henri, Achill Island, to Sloan, New York, [September 1913], in John Sloan and Robert Henri, *Revolutionaries of Realism: The Letters of John Sloan and Robert Henri*, ed. Bennard B. Perlman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 219. Henri also considered Yeats to be a better portrait painter than John Singer Sargent or George Frederic Watts "because of a fuller humanity." Yeats in turn considered Henri "the best painter in America" and wrote his son Jack that "I am not sure if he is not one of the finest painters anywhere, and he is the most delightful companion anywhere"; see William M. Murphy, *Prodigal Father: The Life of John Butler Yeats (1839-1922)* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 429-30, 360.

and other Irish literary talents; and arranged an American tour of the Abbey Theatre troupe in 1911.³² Yeats's relationship to Quinn has been described as "an old penniless tutor and his wealthy, autocratic patron." Yet both benefitted from the friendship: Yeats received the financial support needed to remain in the United States and Quinn benefitted from Yeats's connections with numerous artists, including Henri and Sloan and, later, other organizers of the Armory Show.³³

While Henri admired and appreciated the plays and novels of his Irish contemporaries, he also clearly identified with them as fellow bohemian artists, as misunderstood outsiders working against the grain. Moore, for example, had begun his career as a painter, studying in many of the same Paris studios Henri frequented as a student. Both were highly influenced by French literary realism, particularly Zola. Like Henri's, Synge's personal and artistic philosophy was

³² Among other activities, Quinn started a short-lived New York branch of the Irish Literary Society (modeled on Yeats's local societies formed in Ireland) as a place where New Yorkers of Irish origin and sympathies could feed their hunger for Irish culture; organized United States lecture tours by John Butler Yeats (1903) and Douglas Hyde (1905) on the topic of the Irish literary Renaissance and the Gaelic revival; arranged a 1904 New York exhibition of Jack Yeats's work at Clausen's Gallery; subsidized John Butler Yeats's residence in New York after 1907; and organized the Abbey Theatre troupe's United States tour in 1911. He also purchased numerous art works by both Yeats and by other Irish artists. Quinn would later take on an important role in the organization of the Armory Show; while he never bought from Henri, his large art collection eventually included works by Sloan, Arthur B. Davies, Maurice Prendergast, Ernest Lawson, Walt Kuhn, and other artists associated with the Henri circle. For more on Quinn, see B. L. Reid, *The Man from New York: John Quinn and His Friends* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968).

³³ Archibald, *John Butler Yeats*, 71-74.

inflected by his study of Kropotkin. As R. F. Foster noted, Yeats, Moore, and Synge were all marked by their “eccentricity, a slight air of the *déclassé*, and a formidable talent for publicity.”³⁴ These were certainly qualities Henri would have related to.

Considering Henri’s close association with these ardent supporters of Irish culture, especially in the four years previous to his 1913 trip to Ireland, it is hardly surprising that he desired to visit that country, and particularly the rural western coastal regions, which the nationalists posited as the “real” Ireland. In the Irish and Irish-American mind set of the time, the “cult of exile,” which associated emigration with involuntary exile, imposed a strong and persistent pull.³⁵

According to Homer, “John Butler Yeats . . . had often spoken of the special qualities of Ireland, praising the country like a minstrel far from home by quoting his son’s poetry. Henri once remarked that reading certain poetry—Browning and free verse in particular—made him feel like a horse on roller skates, but the poetry of William Butler Yeats, as chanted by his father at Petirpas, infused warmth, wonder, and vision into the inspired lines.”³⁶ Undoubtedly, this tendency to romanticize and pine over the Irish homeland colored the fond memories of Henri’s Irish expatriate friends and strengthened their connection to Irish culture and nationalism. In this context, Henri’s visit to Achill seems virtually a pilgrimage

³⁴Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 451.

³⁵Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 102-30.

³⁶Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 205-06.

of sorts, following in the footsteps of his Irish literary heroes whose poetic interpretations of rural Ireland so enchanted him and his friends. Further, Henri clearly associated Ireland with the land depicted by his Irish literary contemporaries. In numerous letters to friends and acquaintances he described Achill as the land of Synge and “the playboy”, or as “just such a place as . . . James Stephens in his beautiful books [has] described.”³⁷

Irish nationalism, Celtic psychology, and the myth of the peasant

If there is one country in the world where one man symbolises nearly all national life and nearly the whole content of the national struggle, that country is Ireland, and that man is the Irish peasant. All art and culture in a primitive society such as ours arose from the people; from the great yeoman, from folk music and folk lore, from

³⁷The Henris’ letters from Ireland in 1913 typically mentioned Synge and the playboy: “Dear Sloans—We’re settled here in the Western World in a modern castle, with large Hall 4 times too big for a Studio—They say Singe [sic] stayed here & that the Play boy was founded in something that happened here;” Marjorie Henri, Achill Island, to John and Dolly Sloan, New York, July 5, 1913, in Sloan and Henri, *Revolutionaries of Realism*, 216-27. Even as late as 1921, Henri evoked the infamous playboy to popularize his portraits, writing to one collector that “I have some good evidence that Synge had Douagh [sic] as the cite [sic] for the Playboy. Synge spent some time in Douagh, as a native told me: ‘studying the [G]aelic.’ And there are certain evidences. . . . However, its all just like the Playboy and like nothing else”; Henri to Spaulding. Henri’s views notwithstanding, Synge’s connection with Achill has been debated. According to Deborah Diane Fleming (“The Irish Peasant in the Work of W. B. Yeats and J. M. Synge,” Ph.D. diss., Ohio State University, 1985, 195), the events and characters described in the *Playboy* derive from Synge’s visits to the Aran Islands. Alternatively, McDonald (*Achill Island*, 239-42) has identified an Achill man named Lynchechaun as the character upon which Synge’s play was based. Stephens is mentioned in Henri’s letter to the buyer of *Cafferty* (see fn. 6).

communities and craftsmen in contact with the peasant and the soil.³⁸

The sentiments expressed by this journalist for *Ireland To-Day* exemplify the era's strong identification with the peasant and Ireland's rural tradition as the seat of Irish identity. Since British settlement had never extended as far as the Ireland's west coast, the Gaelic-speaking westerners had remained the least corrupted by British customs, language, and education. Having been virtually untouched by colonialism and modern life, the peasant represented a strong connection with Ireland's ancient Celtic past. Victorian-era England had often found Ireland to be a nation of backward, superstitious, uncivilized, peasants incapable of self-government and caricatured the Irish as bumbling, ignorant simians.³⁹ These negative stereotypes were also repeated for much of the nineteenth century in the United States to characterize Irish immigrants. After the turn of the century, Irish nationalists, especially Yeats and Synge, turned these stereotypes on their head. Their self-image of Ireland as pastoral, mystical, and admirably primitive aimed to express Ireland to herself rather than to exploit it for foreigners. Thus, they

³⁸Quoted in Brian P. Kennedy, "The Traditional Irish Thatched House: Image and Reality, 1793-1993," in *Visualizing Ireland: National Identity and the Pictorial Tradition*, ed. Adele M. Dalsimer (Boston and London: Faber and Faber, 1993), 17-18.

³⁹See, for example, L. Perry Curtis, Jr., *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997); and Danielle N. W. Pelfrey, University of Virginia, English Department, "The Raced Celt, 1840-1890: An Electronic Primary Text Sourcebook," 24 May 1996 <<http://www.people.virginia.edu/~dnp5c>>

portrayed an Ireland characterized by timeless peasantry, childhood innocence, egalitarian and family-based communities, organicism and closeness to nature, supernatural folk lore and imaginative rather than material wealth.

Henri's views on the Irish people closely mirrored those of Yeats, Synge, and their colleagues. Yeats, for example, admired the peasants for their full-blooded expressiveness, their spontaneity, their natural dignity and their "aristocratic" respect for traditional values, and their freedom from the narrow constraints of the materialistic class. He believed them to be highly imaginative, and based much of his early writings on traditional Gaelic folk tales and bardic poetry, desiring to tap into their symbolism and mysticism in order to reform and reawaken Ireland to the glories of her past. Moreover, Yeats also saw the Irish peasants and Gaelic traditions as an antidote to the crass materialism of industrial society; he hated the notion of "progress" and hoped that the rural Irish would serve as models for the rejuvenation of society.⁴⁰ Similarly, Synge viewed peasants as "natural artists" who were in tune with nature's rhythms and talented at many things because of the resourcefulness, skill, and dexterity demanded of them by their harsh environment.

It is likely that much of the intelligence and charm of these people is due to the absence of any division of labour, and to the correspondingly wide development of each individual, whose varied knowledge and skill necessitates an considerable activity of mind.

⁴⁰See James W. Flannery, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre: The Early Abbey Theatre in Theory and Practice* (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada, 1976), 58-100; and Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 139.

Each man can speak two languages. He is a skilled fisherman and can manage a curragh with extraordinary nerve and dexterity. He can farm simply, burn kelp, cut out pampooties, mend nets, build and thatch a house, and make a candle or a coffin. His work changes with the seasons in a way that keeps him free from the dullness that comes to people who have always the same occupation. The danger of his life on the sea gives him the alertness of a primitive hunter, and the long nights he spends fishing in his curragh bring him some of the emotions that are thought peculiar to men who have lived with the arts.⁴¹

Such utopian views of Irish peasant life were frequently echoed by Henri, who wrote that the Achill residents “fish and . . . worry out of a reluctant soil the potatoes necessary to existence. Otherwise they take life easily and quite beautifully. In fact, they live in a romance which would be impossible to people who travel in subways and live the complex life such as we have in the cities.”⁴² Other frequently expressed themes include praises for the beautiful, wild scenery of Ireland, the primitive lifestyle of the islanders, their eccentric beliefs and traditions, and their “exceptional character” and “fine imagination.”

The overlaps between Henri’s philosophical beliefs and those of the Irish revivalists are even more numerous than I am able to discuss here. Their common views, however, were informed by a deep and fundamental respect for the peasant

⁴¹Synge, *The Aran Islands*, quoted in Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 489-90. As Kiberd notes (489-09, see also 288), Synge’s interpretations of the Aran Islanders was based on his readings of Kropotkin and Marx’s *Kapital*. These same thinkers were also highly influential for Henri’s personal and aesthetic philosophy; see Linda Jones Gibbs, “Robert Henri and the Cosmopolitan Culture of Fin-de-Siècle France,” PhD diss., City University of New York, 1999.

⁴²Letter to buyer of *Cafferty*.

and working classes as the embodiment of national identity and their resistance to modernity through their connection with ancient traditions and lifestyles. Above all, for Henri, the Irish peasants represented a living link to the past and a viable alternative to the crass materialism of modern life. Like the gypsies of Spain, they possessed a natural intelligence and imagination that was not crushed by repressive institutions, such as school and religion. Like the fisherfolk of the Netherlands, they resisted the superficiality and alienation of modern life by clinging to time-honored traditions and communal values.

But how were Henri's views on Irish life embodied in his portraits of the Achill Islanders? As discussed in previous chapters, a sense of authenticity was a crucial ingredient in Henri's portraiture. Likewise, this realism was also an important focus for the Irish revivalists. For example, the Abbey Theater players conjured up convincing visions of life in western Ireland with almost anthropological detail, striving to capture local mannerisms and dialects and incorporating real three-legged stools, spinning wheels, creels of turf, Aran cowskin pampooties, and the like into their props and scenery.⁴³ In contrast, Yeats often forewent these accumulations of detail and strove to capture his subjects' most essential qualities.⁴⁴ As a portraitist, Henri was more like Yeats than the

⁴³Fintan O'Toole, "Going West: The Country Versus the City in Irish Writing," *Crane Bag* 9:2 (1985): 112-13.

⁴⁴According to Robert Welch (*Changing States*, 78), Yeats's greatest achievement was to offer "a rhetorical space in which a complex and mature intelligence contemplates what seems to lie at the root of questions of culture.

Abbey Theater players, for he left out characteristic landscapes or interior settings that might provide additional clues to his sitters' identity, instead striving for a more suggestive verisimilitude by focusing on character. For Henri and his critics, the foremost criteria of a good portraitist was the ability to crystalize his or her sitters' essential qualities, those that revealed them as a unique individual, as members of their racial or ethnic group, and as humans. These many distinctive characteristics—a subject's inner thoughts, psychological makeup, personal history—could only be signified by exterior appearances, such as the cut and quality of clothing, facial expression, gesture, skin color, and the like.

In other words, Henri's characteristic portrait style relied less on factual details than on suggestive exterior signifiers to tell the viewer something about the subject. The viewer was meant to fill in the gaps through his or her own experiences. Therefore, the vision of Ireland that Henri desired to evoke in his Irish portraits necessarily relied for its impact on viewers' familiarity with Ireland and its people. To be sure, most American viewers would have had some conception of Ireland and Irish character, not only through contact with Irish immigrants or their American-born descendants or with a growing nationalist movement in the United States, but also through numerous tour guides, travelogues, and popular journal articles that proliferated information and opinions about Irish history and

What he see there is, at bottom, quite simple: he thinks that a culture embodies a nation's basic patterns or characteristics. Art is most authoritative when it concerns itself with these central characteristics."

geography, Celtic psychology, national characteristics, and other aspects of Irish life.⁴⁵

What did Irish character consist of? For many critics, Henri's Irish portraits were only as authentic as their approximation to Yeats and Synge, or more specifically, to characters in Irish stage productions or literary works. For one *Sun* reviewer, Henri's portraits fell short in this respect:

It is impossible to acquire in one short season in Ireland the rich brogue of a J. M. Synge or a Frederick James Gregg, and in returning thence with his spoils Mr. Henri must have felt this. The pupils, who are loyal or nothing, enthused as usual over the Irish brush strokes, but the great wide world clamored for the brogue, and being denied, passed along.⁴⁶

Another critic enthused that the characters depicted in *Himself* and *Herself* were indeed quite authentic: "The bewitching old man and the apple-cheeked old woman might have come forth bodily from Synge's plays—they are as real to the life and the sod of the old country as can be."⁴⁷

⁴⁵The number of volumes published in Henri's day as "sketches" of Ireland and its people suggest an uncommon interest in that country. Some examples from the era include Jones, *Shamrock-land*; T. W. H. Crosland, *The Wild Irishman* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1905); George A. Birmingham [James Owen Hannay], *Irishmen All*, illus. by Jack Yeats (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1913); Sophie Bryant Willock, *The Genius of the Gael: A Study in Celtic Psychology and its Manifestations* (London and Leipsic: T. F. Unwin, 1913); Alice Dease, *Down West, and Other Sketches of Irish Life* (St. Louis: Herder; and London: Manresa, 1914); Stephen Lucius Gwynn, *Irish Books and Irish People* (Dublin: Talbot Press; and London: T. F. Unwin, 1919); and A. E. [George William Russell], *The Inner and the Outer Ireland* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1921).

⁴⁶"What is Happening in the World of Art," *New York Sun*, November 22, 1914, 5.

⁴⁷"Striking Pictures at the Fine Arts Exhibition."

Viewers of Henri's portraits held a range of perceptions about Irish identity that may have often differed from Henri's, but even a cursory review of Henri's portraits reveal a number of essential qualities shared by his subjects. Many of his small children appear extremely shy and timid, their eyes downcast, almost ill at ease at being painted. For instance, in *Irish Girl (Mary Lavelle)* and *Irish Lass* (1913; Berry-Hill Galleries, New York), Mary Lavelle's furrowed brows, pursed lips, and hunched shoulders suggest sadness and anxiety. In *A Bit of Ireland* (1913; formerly collection of Albert Barnes), a peasant girl virtually shrinks into the scenery, hiding her face behind her large head scarf as she watches a stranger walk by on the road. Other children better engage the viewer with their gaze, perhaps managing a slight smile (*Irish Girl* [1913; Christie's New York, December 4, 1997, lot 69], *Catherine, Nora* (figure 4.6), *Michael* [1913; Washington County Museum of Fine Arts, Hagerstown, Maryland], and *Mary Kate* [1913; Christie's New York, November 30, 1990, lot 174]), but none display the bubbly exuberance of Henri's Dutch children.

One of the most typical qualities of Irish character commented upon by numerous visitors to western Ireland was their extreme timidity and modesty. Paul Henry, for example, commented that Achill women, especially the eldest, were so modest that they would cover their heads with scarves in the presence of strangers. Many islanders were extremely averse to being drawn or sketched, and

because of this he eventually learned to draw from memory.⁴⁸ Henri similarly observed that the Achill children were “generally in a state of speechless embarrassment when they pose—these people are not used to strangers—it’s impossible to break the ice with some of them—and those who can be induced to open their mouths generally do it in whispers.”⁴⁹ The characteristic reticence of Achill children speaks to their isolated life on a far western island. Having little contact with the outside world, familiar only with other members of their close-knit community, they represent the innocence and purity and untainted quality often attributed to the Irish peasant. Henry found the teenagers, having been exposed to the outside world as migrant workers, were much less shy and traditional, and therefore, much less interesting.⁵⁰

The Irish peasant was often described as sad and melancholy as well as timid. Some commentators attributed the “sadness and hopelessness seen on so many Irish faces” to the climate of “that strange island of the sea” or to “skies that

⁴⁸Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 52-53. One amusing anecdote about Henry’s attempts to make portraits of the islanders recounts his friendship with an old woman who relented to his request to sketch her, on the one condition that he tell no one about it. On the appointed day, however, she withdrew her permission, acknowledging that her modesty would simply not allow it; Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 55.

⁴⁹Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, August 18, 1913, Beinecke, box 16, folder 395.

⁵⁰Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 58.

often weep” and “the gloom of shadow-haunted skies.”⁵¹ These typical views on Irish character echoed Hippolyte Taine’s popular theory of the milieu, in which climate, history, and other locally specific conditions can affect a community’s or an entire race’s outlook on life; they were also confirmed by popular scientific conceptions of ethnoclimatology and anthrogeography.⁵² More recently, this perceived inherent Irish sadness has been attributed to real cultural distinctions. Irish tradition has long favored “localism”, an attachment to one’s place of birth, and a knowledge of the lore of places, which is rooted in Gaelic Bardic traditions. The “cult of exile,” which equated emigration with exile and banishment, was rooted in Gaelic history, songs, and poetry and perpetuated both by exiles longing for their homeland and by Irish pining away for friends and relatives who had emigrated. Alternatively, the passive, fatalistic world view of the Irish peasant was typical of peasant cultures in general, and also to Catholics, whose communal values countered traditional Protestant virtues of individualism, initiative, and innovation.⁵³

⁵¹Jones, *Shamrock-land*, 58; Catherine Nash, “Embodying the Nation’: The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity,” in *Tourism in Ireland: A Critical Analysis*, ed. Barbara O’Connor and Michael Cronin (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), 97-98.

⁵²As Nash noted (“West of Ireland,” 97), these pseudoscientific theories were also used to discourage emigration, for many scientists of the day believed that positive healthy characteristics produced by the challenging climate could also be lost when people moved away from the land of birth.

⁵³For the Irish culture of exile and Irish character, see Miller, *Exiles and Emigrants*, 102-30. Miller observed (107) that “in broadest terms, much evidence indicates that, in contrast to the Protestants they encountered in Ireland and North

Though many of Henri's sitters seem shy and reserved, they also appear quite healthy and vigorous. The clear, ivory skin, rosy cheeks, and pale eyes suggest the typical Irish traits and a healthy constitution and a vigorous, outdoor life, despite the extreme poverty of their lives suggested by their functional, ill-fitting, and torn clothing.⁵⁴ Concepts of Irish national identity were often embedded in the physical features of the Irish race, including health and bodily excellence as a product of the environment.⁵⁵

Further, the rural Irish were often thought of as imaginative, dreamy, and poetic by nature, and firm believers in banshees, mermaids, spirits, and "little people." While this "superstitious" nature may not be obvious in Henri's Irish portraits, it was a crucial part of the Irish makeup that he often referred to in his letters. After attending a small party in Dugort in 1913, Henri amusingly reported

America, the Catholic Irish were more communal than individualistic, more dependent than independent, more fatalistic than optimistic, more prone to accept conditions passively than to take initiatives for change, and more sensitive to the weight of tradition than to innovative possibilities for the future. Indeed, their perspectives seemed so premodern that to bourgeois observers from business-minded cultures, the native Irish often appeared 'feckless,' 'child-like,' and 'irresponsible': inclined to behave or justify behavior in ways which avoided personal initiative and individual responsibility, especially as to livelihood." The lore of places is also discussed in Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 107.

⁵⁴Plummer Jones (*Shamrock-land*, 222-23) typifies the standard view of Irish complexion and physiognomy: "Physically the Irish girl is a worthy specimen of what a woman living close to nature may be. . . . Their eyes are between a blue and a steel gray, bright and expressive in the extreme, and always cheerful and full of light. Their cheeks are highly colored, so much so that an American traveler at first suspects artificiality; but later he learns that it is the dampness of the climate and a luxuriant health which combine to paint these roses."

⁵⁵Nash, "Embodying the Nation," 86-114.

that some of the conversation had revolved around spirits and sightings of ghosts on the road: "Down near Dugort there is a fairy mound where fairys [sic] have been seen dancing."⁵⁶ Later, O'Malley was frequently Henri's guide to local lore; according to Henri, O'Malley had "seen ghosts, fairies and gnomes," and at the Lake of the Mermaid, he told Henri that "if the mermaid saw us before we saw her we would die within the year!"⁵⁷ The Irish association with the supernatural, with mysticism and folk lore, and with a primitive world view was emphasized by numerous Irish writers, including Hyde, Yeats, and Lady Gregory, who revived and reinterpreted ancient bardic tales and portrayed the Irish as natural poets and noble aristocrats. While their writings were meant to celebrate native Irish beliefs, and Henri's views seemed to echo this viewpoint, negative stereotypes of these traditions widely persisted. Plummer Jones, for example, found the Irish nature to be exotic and interesting, yet equated these qualities with backwardness, ignorance, and superstition:

Students of racial characteristics and of folklore say the remarkable belief in fairies in Ireland is due not only to the intensely emotional and imaginative natures of the Irish, but also to the fact that it is a very misty land, and almost every day and night the clouds and fogs and mists cling to the earth and assume strange forms which are easily misunderstood by an imaginative and primitive people.⁵⁸

⁵⁶Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, August 20, 1913, Beinecke, box 16, folder 395.

⁵⁷Henri to Spaulding; Henri to his mother, undated [1913].

⁵⁸Jones, *Shamrock-land*, 132; Jones later concedes (137) that "among the educated Irish such superstitions are no longer believed", but still there are those who declare that the belief in fairies led to the average Irishman's "slavish

Perhaps the most prominent aspect of Henri's 1913 portraits are their brilliant color schemes. Valerie Leeds has acknowledged the "pure simplicity" of these portraits "due to the use of primary colors and a less complex palette," and doubtless numerous viewers have admired the portraits for such aesthetic qualities.⁵⁹ However, Henri's color choices represent symbolic as well as aesthetic concerns. Throughout his career, Henri often tailored his palette to the places and people he hoped to express, using earthy browns and dusty tans to evoke the Spanish landscape, dark Rembrandesque colors to evoke seventeenth-century Holland, and now brilliant greens, blues, and crimson to evoke the landscape of Ireland.

Praising the "splendid harmony of greens" worn by Henri's *Irish Lad* (figure 4.7) in 1914, one reviewer asked "what could be more Irish than the mottled green of the jacket?"⁶⁰ Indeed, the color green is widely associated with Ireland's verdant hills, one of the most characteristic aspects of the Irish landscape. Other portraits take vermilion as their dominant color note. *Irish Girl* stands out for her deep red blouse and the rich rosy tones in her ruddy cheeks; *Nora* wears a red dress and is framed by a bicolor background of deep blue and green. These striking colors are not merely aesthetic strategies, however, but are in fact based upon the

obedience to the priest whom he is said to follow with genuinely superstitious dread."

⁵⁹Leeds, *Robert Henri: American Icon*, n.p.

⁶⁰"Paintings on View at the Academy of Fine Arts Exhibit."

actual colors of the Achill islanders' clothing, which was made with natural dyes taken from the island.⁶¹ These same colors were used to advantage by Paul Henry and his wife Grace Henry; for example, Paul's *The Potato Diggers* (figure 4.8) and Grace's *The Top of the Hill* (c. 1910-13; Limerick City Gallery of Art) derive their impact from the bold contrast of the earth-colored dresses and a rich cerulean sky.

Other portraits record the unique, handmade qualities of Irish costume: Michael's bright blue handmade sweater (*Michael*), Thomas in his 'red coat' (*Thomas in his Red Coat* [1913; location unknown]), whose unusual qualities-- "boys there are dressed in what they call a 'coat' but what to us would be simply a dress"--Henri carefully pointed out in a letter to an American collector.⁶² Henri's attention to the peculiarities of the Achill costume suggests at a concern with authenticity and aesthetics. Yet the costume contained much symbolic import as well. The brilliantly-colored, handmade clothing worn by the Achill Islanders and other rural Irish had long been a unique and prominent aspect of island life, and thus a signifier of their difference, usually in contrast to their British colonizers or

⁶¹Kenneth McNally (*Achill*, 196-97) has explained that "until well into the present century the dress of the islanders closely reflected the character of their environment--scarcely surprising, since the dyes used to give colour and life their heavy woolens were prepared from materials close to hand, being the rich variety of lichens found in abundant supply on the cliffs and mountains."

⁶²Michael Lavelle's home made sweater noted by Amy Metzger, Acting Curator, Washington County Museum of Art, letter to author, July 29, 2000. For Thomas's "coat," see Henri, New York, to William J. Johnson, March 13, 1914, National Gallery of Art files (*Catherine*).

the more Anglicized urban Irish. For Briton Reverend Caesar Otway, who visited in 1839, the island costume evoked connections with untamed animals.

It is curious to see how this western people assimilated the colour of their clothing to the brown and dingy-red of the bogs amidst which they lived; all wild animals in this way, have the colour of the glebe on which they lie. The grouse and the Connaught woman are attired in nearly the same colours.⁶³

Paul Henry made similar observations almost a century later, finding the shabby island homespun both picturesque and pathetic, exotic and barbaric:

The women's dresses always supplied a rich note of colour; most of them wore flannel homespun. This coarse material dyed vermilion, after wear and weather and washing, turned to a variety of tones, and a group of women working in the fields with a background of rich brown earth, made the strip of earth they were working on a riot of gay colour. Some of the more coquettish stitched a band of black velvet an inch or two from the ground, or sewed black velvet diamonds round the edge. The instinct for gaiety of colour to relieve the monotony of their lives always struck me as being rather pathetic. Paisley shawls with elaborate designs and with the orange and red of their smaller head shawls, gave them an almost oriental appearance, and the tiny rockstrewn fields with their stone walls completed the picture against the turbulence and savagery of the mountain peaks. The influence of these strong personalities who spoke in a language which I did not understand, the women in their colorful barbaric clothes, made a deep impression on me.⁶⁴

Clothing styles were important symbols of Irish identity, especially in the period of nascent nationalism. The rough, handmade, and colorful fabrics of the western Irish peasants were a primary signifier of the pure, traditional (read anti-modern) aspect of peasant life and, in this context, handmade clothes often

⁶³McNally, *Achill*, 197.

⁶⁴Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 51.

appealed to outsiders as exotic and picturesque, especially when shabby, ill-fitting, or torn. As Marjorie Henri wrote from Achill soon after their arrival in 1913, “Bob expects to do great things—millions of all kinds of children in the most primitive dresses—the[y] weave and dye their own goods—and the effects are stunning.”⁶⁵ In direct contrast to these unique costumes, mass-produced, factory-made clothing signified the encroachment of modern industrial society, with its dirty factories, alienated labor, and crushing of the human spirit.

Yet, significantly, the peasants themselves could be embarrassed by their handmade clothing because it betrayed their rural background; in contrast, they valued apparel purchased in the city because they perceived it as more sophisticated. Paul Henry, for example, lamented the imminent social change augured by clothing styles, noting that the “migratory girls”, the teenagers who left the island annually as migrant workers, often preferred to wear the “so-called latest fashions” purchased in the “cheap slop shops” in Liverpool or Glasgow rather than the traditional homespun. These girls might allow him to paint their portraits, but insisted on changing into their ‘best clothes’ first.⁶⁶ Henry preferred the old people of Achill, as the young were gradually abandoning the old ways: “I was

⁶⁵Marjorie Henri to John and Dolly Sloan, July 5, 1913.

⁶⁶Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 58. Likewise, Fleming (“The Irish Peasant”, 63) recounts how Synge, visiting the Aran Islands, wanted to photograph a friend in his colorful native homespuns. Synge was dismayed to learn, however, that his friend would agree to be photographed only in his Sunday clothes from Galway, which would not give him away as an unsophisticated provincial.

witnessing with sorrow the gradual discarding of the scarlet petticoat by the womenfolk.”⁶⁷

Occasionally Henri's portraits included more overt signifiers of the Achill islanders' traditional lifestyle. Props such as wicker baskets, fishing nets, and walking staffs, and titles such as “The Donkey Driver” and “His Fish Basket” indicate not only the children's daily activities and future occupations as adults, but also suggest a community-based subsistence lifestyle in which all members of the community gather together to perform necessary activities such as kelp gathering, fishing, farming, tending flocks, or building shelter.⁶⁸ Many of these portraits are very close in conception to Frans Hals's famous portraits of fisher children. As

⁶⁷Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 108. Later, however, westerners learned that their colorful clothing and traditional customs were strong attractions to tourists, and remain so even today. This dichotomy of identity—how insiders see themselves and wish to portray themselves to others versus how outsiders see them—is a crucial element in representation, especially when people are forging a group (national or ethnic) identity. Writing in 1973, McNally (*Achill*, 197-98) points out that “traditional” dress could still be seen on Achill: work clothes for fisherfolk and common laborers included “heavy woolen pullovers and tough serviceable donkey jackets as an essential protection against the penetrating wind and rain”; colorful head scarves were still favored by the women of the island for special occasions such as weddings, Sunday church, and the monthly fair, although they were one of the few surviving items of traditional dress.

⁶⁸Fishing implements are prominently displayed in *Fisherman's Boy* and *His Fish Basket* (both 1920s; unlocated; photograph, Peter A. Juley and Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.); *Cafferty* (1925; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Museum, Washington, D.C.); and *Mary Ann with Her Basket* (1926; Currier Gallery of Art). *The Donkey Driver* (1920s; unlocated; photograph, Peter A. Juley and Son Collection, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.) and *Little Irish Boy* (1920s; Chapellier Galleries, New York) both carry a walking staff.

discussed earlier, these pictures were often viewed, both in Hals's day and in Henri's time, as testaments to the purity and freedom of rural life as opposed to urban squalor.⁶⁹ Other children, girls especially, display not implements of labor, but prized possessions such as a pink ribbon, a new scarf, or a Sunday shawl, which would have been hard-won in a subsistence-based economy.⁷⁰ Significantly, many artists of Henri's day often titled portraits or figure paintings after accessories held or worn by their subjects; "the feather hat", "the pearl necklace", or other such titles emphasized not only the accessories but more important the subject's economic or social status. Henri's titles and his sitters' evident pride in small or cheap (often mass-produced accessories) at once laments the extreme poverty of their lives while scolding the wealthy subjects of society portraits for their crass materialism. Interestingly, these items appear in the portraits of the

⁶⁹Paul Henry (*An Irish Portrait*, 57, 59), for example, much preferred rural life to city dwelling, observing that fresh country air was much better than dirty London, and that the Achill people, though poor, were not as poor as those living in the city. Henri likewise contrasted the urban squalor of Cork and Limerick to the better conditions in rural Ireland (see Henri, Achill Island, to his mother, July 2, 1913, Beinecke, box 16, folder 394). Declan Kiberd (*Inventing Ireland*, 192) has confirmed that at the beginning of the twentieth century, Ireland's poor country dwellers were in fact much better off than poor urban dwellers. Dublin's poor, for example, were Ireland's worst-fed and worst-housed, and the city's death rate exceeded that of other major European cities.

⁷⁰See, for example, portraits such as *The Pink Ribbon* (1927; formerly Museum of Fine Arts, Boston); *The Green Ribbon* (unlocated; Inventory of American Painting, Smithsonian Institution); *Her Sunday Shawl* (1924; illustrated in *Robert Henri: Painter* [Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1984], no. 95); or *Sarah's White Muffler* (1926; illustrated in *Robert Henri: Painter-Teacher-Prophet* [New York: New York Cultural Center, 1969]).

1920s, not 1913, revealing the changes in Achill society over the previous decade, as Paul Henry had prognosticated.

The prevalence of children in Henri's Irish portraits, as well as Henri's views on childhood innocence in general, also mirrors the persistence of the theme of childhood in the writings of Yeats, Synge, and other revivalists. Yeats's *Tír na nÓg*, the land of the forever young, for example, symbolized a protected "privileged zone" of "innocence, unsullied and intense," a state of naivete, an escapist fantasy world of unspoilt nature, a way to escape the discontents of civilization. It also represented natural intelligence, in contrast to schooling, which was viewed as an agent of indoctrination enforced by British colonization. According to Kiberd, Yeats "believed passionately in education, which valued a child for its intrinsic sake" and "despised mere schooling, which concerned itself with producing the kind of adult the child must eventually become."⁷¹ These views closely parallel Henri's, as expressed in numerous writings and interviews, which criticize the American educational system, in particular art education, as a suppression of natural creativity and talent and which uphold unschooled children as a font of natural wisdom, insight, and freedom.⁷² Likewise, both Yeats and Henri drew parallels, both implicit and explicit, between children and primitive cultures—Yeats between

⁷¹Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland*, 101-02, 111.

⁷²See, for example, Robert Henri, "Only Out of Home's Narrow Confines is Full Growth Possible for Children, Says Robert Henri," *New York Tribune*, January 25, 1915, clipping in Robert Henri papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (hereafter cited as Henri papers, AAA), reel 887, frame 427.

childhood and Irish peasants, Henri between childhood and gypsies, native Americans, Irish peasants, and other preindustrial or primitive groups—and viewed them as a source for the reform of society if left uncorrupted.

Visualizing the west as Ireland: Paul Henry and Jack Yeats

Henri's evocation of a traditional Irish culture based on close-knit family-based communities, a primitive, subsistence lifestyle, and traditional folkways closely parallels the idea of Ireland conjured up by Irish nationalist politicians and writers. In many ways, his paintings also correspond to the Irish self-identity portrayed by visual artists such as Paul Henry and Jack Yeats, who represented the first group of Irish painters to shed identification with British or international culture by representing Irish subjects.⁷³ Like William Butler Yeats, Synge, and other literary revivalists, they also looked westward in their search for the "real" Ireland.

Henry's experiences most closely parallel those of Henri. Born in Belfast, Henry spent his formative years in Paris as an art student at the Academie Julian, though a decade later than his American counterpart. Like Henri, Henry was

⁷³Though I've found no references to Henri's personal acquaintance with Jack Yeats previous to his first trip to Ireland, Henri must have known his work. Yeats had a one-man show in 1904 at New York's Clausen Gallery and exhibited twelve paintings at the 1913 Armory Show. Additionally, a number of Yeats's works were owned by John Quinn. Henri's diary for October 1925, however, does record a side trip to Dublin to view Yeats's paintings and to meet with Yeats personally; Henri papers, AAA, reel 886, frame 796. No references to Paul Henry appear in Henri's diaries or letters, even though the two artists were living on Achill at the same time in 1913; Henri is mentioned in Henry's *An Irish Portrait*, but his brief comments suggest the two artists did not know each other personally.

strongly influenced by Whistler (Henry briefly studied with him at the Académie Carmen) and associated with influential young artists, writers, and thinkers (Yeats and Synge were among Henry's circle of associates). After 1900, Henry worked as an illustrator in London and exhibited with a number of progressive art groups, first becoming interested in western Ireland after reading Synge's *Riders to the Sea* (1905).⁷⁴

Henry and his wife Grace decided to visit Achill for a fortnight in summer 1910, but ended up staying for almost a year, returning again to settle there in 1912. Though Henry was most fascinated by the wild, isolated scenery, he was also greatly intrigued by the hardscrabble life of the island peasants, which reminded him of Jean-François Millet's canvases. Henry painted few portraits, instead concentrating on the Irish landscape or scenes of the Achill Islanders at work, such as *The Potato Diggers*, *A Boy on a Donkey Going for Turf* (1910-13; National Gallery of Ireland); *Launching the Currach* (1910-11; National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin); and *Lakeside Cottages* (c. 1923-32; Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin). Henry's autobiography, *An Irish Portrait*, is devoted largely to his life in Achill. His paintings and his writings characteristically glorify traditional island culture and its unspoiled Irish heritage, reveling in the picturesque qualities of Achill work, cultural traditions, architecture, and scenery.

⁷⁴Henry, *An Irish Portrait*, 48. On Henry, see also Henry's *Further Reminiscences*; and S. B. Kennedy, *Paul Henry, 1876-1958* (Dublin: Town House in association with the National Gallery of Ireland, 1991).

Yet Henry was not a strict realist, and the marvelous aesthetic qualities of his canvases—for instance, the deep, blood-red dresses of the peasants contrasted with the brilliant cerulean sky in *Potato Diggers*, the rhythmic repetition of forms working in unison in *Launching the Currach*—idealize his subjects and their hard lives by emphasizing their connection to the earth and their devotion to family and community. Extraneous details are expunged from the composition so that the impression is one of timelessness, one that emphasizes the figures as firmly rooted to the land, and the suggestion is that even a difficult life in beautiful scenery is preferable to life in urban surroundings. Significantly, many of Henry's paintings of western Ireland were later used as poster illustrations for the tourist industry, and his images of traditional Irish thatched cottages were considered ideal promotional images for the Irish government's visualization of Irish national identity.⁷⁵

Jack Yeats has been widely viewed as "Ireland's artist" for his long career dedicated to honest portrayals of Irish people and culture. Yeats established his connection with the west as early as 1905, when he accompanied Synge on a journey to Connemara and Mayo to report on the life of the inhabitants there for the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper. More of his depictions of western life were published as book illustrations in Synge's *The Aran Islands* (1907), Yeats's own *Life in the West of Ireland* (1912), and George A. Birmingham's *Irishmen All* (1913). The illustrations for *Irishmen All* depict the various types and occupations of both

⁷⁵Brian P. Kennedy, "The Traditional Irish Thatched House," in *Visualizing Ireland*, 174.

urban and rural Ireland, such as the police sergeant, the lesser official, the publican, and the politician. Those depicting the Aran Islanders demonstrate typical island activities, such as road building, kelp gathering, and turf collecting. Having a broader familiarity with Irish culture, Yeats depicted a wider variety of Irish types and activities than did Henri. In contrast, Henri did not represent his subjects against a landscape setting or performing characteristic activities, but rather focused his energies on evoking the character of the sitter, hoping the portrait would reveal the life spirit of the individual as well as his or her people.⁷⁶

The work of Seán Keating, Charles Lamb, and Sean Tuohy demonstrates the power that this vision of Ireland held for later generations of artists. Keating visited the Aran Islands in 1914, after which he called for a national school of painting which would draw upon traditional Irish life in the west. Works such as *Men of the West* (n.d.; Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin) situate Irish identity in iconic figures, such as fishermen, often painted from actual portraits to capture a sense of realism and authenticity. After the War of Independence, Keating's paintings became the primary visual icons for the developing Irish Free State. Tuohy's *A Mayo Peasant Boy* (1912; Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, Dublin) and Lamb's *A Lough Neagh Fisherman*

⁷⁶For more on Yeats, see John Booth, *Jack Yeats: A Vision of Ireland* (Nairn, Scotland: Thomas and Lochar, n.d.); and Bruce Arnold, *Jack Yeats* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

(1920; Ulster Museum), portraits very similar in conception and execution to Henri's, likewise situate Irish identity in the western peasant.⁷⁷

Reinventing Ireland: life on Achill and Irish identity reevaluated

Taken as a group, Henri's Irish portraits, as well as the works of Henry, Yeats, and other Irish artists, do give the viewer some idea of the life and people of Ireland. There is a great deal of verisimilitude in their images of Irish life, from the realistic and seemingly authentic representations of Irish character, costume, and personality presented in paintings and plays to their attempts at penetrating and capturing the essence of Irish character. But how truthful is the picture that Henri has presented? What's more, did the Irish peasant really represent the Irish as a nation, as Henri and the nationalists asserted?

Both Henri and the Irish revivalists repudiated the crass materialism associated with urban life and modernism. As an antidote to the ills of civilization and the constraints of contemporary society, they posited a naturally free, creative, and intelligent individual who prospered outside the bounds of society. For Yeats and the Irish, the Irish peasant and anti-materialism represented an anti-colonial gesture. For Henri, the identification with the Irish peasant, as well as children,

⁷⁷On twentieth-century Irish art, see James Christen Steward, ed., *When Time Began to Rant and Rage: Figurative Painting from Twentieth-Century Ireland* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1998); S. B. Kennedy, *Irish Art and Modernism, 1880-1950* (Dublin: Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery of Modern Art, 1991); and Adele M. Dalsimer and Vera Kreilkamp, *America's Eye: Irish Paintings from the Collection of Brian P. Burns* (Boston: Boston College Museum of Art, 1995).

gypsies, and other “primitives”, constituted an anti-bourgeois gesture, akin to his anarchist philosophy and his bohemian lifestyle, and an attempt to subvert and thereby to reform American society by providing alternative models for education, artistic creativity, and collectivist (as opposed to capitalist) economic systems.

Comparing Yeats’s and Henry’s views of peasant work with contemporaneous photographs taken by folklorists, Singhle Breathnach-Lynch has argued that the artists’ aestheticized, celebratory views of rural life were not based on real observations as much as they were shaped by “pre-existing artistic schema” and idealistic views of island life. Yeats’s line drawings of the Aran islanders gathering kelp, cutting turf, and building roads, for example, depicted the peasants as hardly ground down by their work, but rather “empowered by it.” This heroic image, which symbolized the new Ireland as it ought to be, necessarily avoided negative aspects of island life.⁷⁸

Likewise, Henri’s depictions of the Achill Islanders betray similar gaps between myth and reality. Henri repeatedly extolled the islanders’ resourcefulness and dexterity in obtaining all their daily needs from the island’s natural resources: turf for fuel, farming and kelp for food, sheep for wool, etc. His portraits of ruddy-cheeked, rotund folk suggest natural health derived from their intimate connection with the land and its natural cycles. The rosy life envisioned by Henri, however, is contradicted by statistics on island life, which reveal extreme poverty and

⁷⁸Singhle Bhreathnach-Lynch, “The Peasant at Work: Jack B. Yeats, Paul Henry and Life in the West of Ireland,” *Irish Arts Review* 13 (1997): 147, 150.

hardships endured by residents of the “Congested Districts,” regions of Ireland identified by the Irish government as overpopulated, underdeveloped, and in dire need of government intervention.

For much of Achill’s long history, the islanders had lived as subsistence farmers and fisher folk. This life, however, was imperiled by the famine in the mid-nineteenth century, which caused extreme difficulties growing and harvesting enough food to feed themselves year round. The poor quality of the soil was compounded by overpopulation and an unfair system of tenant farming, which favored landlords, often absentee landlords, at the expense of those actually tilling the soil. To offset this increasingly inadequate lifestyle, islanders resorted to emigration and seasonal migrations. By 1900 almost two-fifths of the Achill population, including girls and boys as young as 11 years old, were traveling to Scotland for five months each year to work as “tattie hokers,” or potato pickers. Though their earnings helped tide the family over for the winter and allowed many to remain on Achill instead of emigrating, the migrants also suffered extremely harsh and unhygienic working conditions, lived apart from their families half the year, and left few men on Achill to fish. The practice of booleying, the movement of livestock to the mountains in the summer months, likewise drained the town of people. Achill Mission priest P. J. Boyce observed in 1910,

When an exile returns to Achill to visit the scenes of happier days and feast his eyes on his native mountains, he invariably selects the winter season. During the summer few could be found at home to welcome him. . . . during the absence of these laborers, the married

women and children, the aged and decrepit, remain to guard the homestead

and to do the men's work.⁷⁹

Additionally, population statistics show that young people emigrated at a rate much higher than people of other ages. One study estimates that over 35% of young adults emigrated from Ireland's western counties between the years 1881-1911. For the post-famine Irish, emigration was often seen as a stage in life, en route to marriage or full employment. Often, those who remained at home received extra funds from relatives abroad and the "Christmas 'American letter' became an essential prop of the Western rural economy" after 1870.⁸⁰ While Bennard Perlman has suggested that the childless Henri tended to paint children more than adults because they in essence became surrogate children for him and his wife,⁸¹ Achill emigration and traditional work customs suggest that Henri would have found few available sitters aside from the very young or the very old. Those remaining adults who took responsibility for traditional island work would have had little time to sit for portraits.

⁷⁹Boyce, *A Forgotten Part of Ireland*, 160-62. Boyce's book, which describes history and social conditions of Achill, ends (164) with a heartfelt plea to the Irish government to "make life worth living for peasants in Achill Island." For social conditions on Achill island circa 1900, see McDonald, *Achill Island*, 224-28; Boyce, *Forgotten Part of Ireland*, chapter 14; and McNally, *Achill*, 200.

⁸⁰Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 353. On emigration statistics, see also Fitzpatrick, "Ireland Since 1870," in Foster, *Oxford Illustrated History of Ireland*, 215-16.

⁸¹Perlman, *Life and Art*, 112.

Just as Henri's romanticization of the Achill islanders' natural way of life glossed over their serious deprivations, the ruddy cheeks and healthy appearance of the children in his portraits avoided any mention of the island's high infant mortality rates. As Achill historian Kenneth McNally has reported, around 1900 the island was "seriously understaffed" by health professionals, and the islanders suffered dysentery, fevers, consumption, and smallpox, much of which "reflected the acute misery of living conditions at that time."⁸²

As these statistics demonstrate, Henri's conception of the Irish peasant was at odds with actual living conditions. Yet his intention was not to document their harsh lives but rather to capture the best qualities, and thereby the essence, of Irish life as he viewed it. As is often the case with concepts of identity, especially national identity, opinions vary as to which qualities best represent the sense of self or nation. In Henri's day, not all Irish agreed with the image portrayed by Yeats or Synge. Nonetheless, the pastoral image of Ireland resonated deeply throughout much of the twentieth century.

Recent scholars of Irish art and culture, though, have begun to question the revivalists' images of Ireland. Pointing out that the image of the timeless peasant and the idyllic life on Ireland's west coast was more myth than reality, historians such as Bhreathnach-Lynch, Fintan O'Toole, and Declan Kiberd, among others,

⁸²McNally, *Achill*, 200.

have called for a revision of the traditional image of rural Ireland.⁸³ In their search for an authentic Irish identity apart from British influences, they assert, Yeatsian revivalists merely substituted one stereotype for another. This myth of a timeless peasantry occluded and erased the very multifariousness of rural Irish life.

According to Kiberd,

Such a counter-image was false, if only because it elevated a single aspect of Ireland into a type of the whole. 'Connaught for me is Ireland,' said Yeats; but Ireland was not Connacht—rather she was a patchwork-quilt of cultures and fiefdoms, as indeed before the Normans invaded. . . [T]he folklorism of Yeats confirmed the traditional image of the Irish as subservient and menial—except that now they were deemed menial in colourful and interesting new ways.⁸⁴

Moreover, the mythological peasant was a creation of the Anglo-Irish middle class, urbanized descendants of country people whose nostalgia for their abandoned roots prompted this idea of a rural nation (Henri and his expatriate friends were clearly members of this class). The paradox of the movement was that the new nationalist regime would ultimately further victimize the landless poor whom it purported to save from its British colonizers.

Every repressive regime first crushes its victims; and having safely contained them, it sentimentalizes them and reduces them to the status of merely literary material. The myth of a timeless peasantry, like the conceit of a noble aristocracy, is a middle-class invention, purveyed by the *arrivistes* who were seizing the positions of power

⁸³See, for example, Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*; Steward, *Rant and Rage*; O'Toole's "Going West," 111-16; Desmond Fennell, "Choosing Our Self-Image (The Problem of Irish Identity)," *Crane Bag* 9:2 (1983): 191-96.

⁸⁴Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 316.

and influence in Ireland's cities and towns. And in the writings of the impeccably middle-class W. B. Yeats, these conjoint conceits found a trusty celebrant.⁸⁵

O'Toole has similarly asserted that much of the modern writing stemming from the revival echoed the language of the British imperialists, "and the fact that it was not seen as such is a mark of how effectively the revival had nationalised colonial attitudes, internalising a process which belonged to the colonial mentality and selling it back to the outside world as a reflection of Irish reality."⁸⁶

Similarly, Henri's portraits of the Irish incorporate a range of conflicting and contradictory views regarding Irish character. On one hand, his identification with Irish culture indicated a fundamental sympathy with Irish self-determination and a belief in the essential nobility and dignity of a people who had for centuries been oppressed and denigrated by their colonizers. On the other hand, his fascination with Irish peasants was indicative of the modern era's complex blend of primitivism, nationalism, anti-modernism, and ethnic tourism that viewed preindustrial and peasant cultures as entertaining exotics, as interesting material for tourism, popular culture, and the arts, and as an antidote to overcivilization

⁸⁵Kiberd, "Irish Literature and Irish History," 320. Of course, like Yeats the poet and his painter father, Henri's other Irish expatriate friends Gregg and Fitzgerald were also middle-class Dubliners with a middle-class Anglo-Irish perspective; lawyer and art patron John Quinn was a second generation Irish-American who supported the Yeats, Synge, and other Irish writers. Fleming's view is less harsh than Kiberd's; she finds that Yeats and Synge were motivated by romanticism and their strong dislike for modernity, which for them meant the decay of beauty.

⁸⁶O'Toole, "Going West," 113.

prevalent in more developed countries. He clearly viewed the Achill islanders as on a different level than himself and other Americans because of their quaint traditions and picturesque lifestyle. He admired what he perceived as their simple, natural life, free from the burdens of civilization, and thus romanticized anything that revealed their purity and innocence untainted by industrial society. Like many people living in modern (or in today's post-modern) societies, rural life appealed to Henri as a welcome contrast to the unrelenting pace and energy of the city. But further, Henri also believed that rural people had some innate, almost secret knowledge unavailable to urban dwellers:

Folk who live in remote places, and especially those who live on islands, are thrown on their own responsibility for amusement, and, in the general life, each one has to develop the power to entertain others and himself, and so they become exceptional people. There is a lot of detail of life in great communities which they do not know, but they become possessed, through the force of necessity, of facts of life which it would be desirable for any city man to know.⁸⁷

What these facts of life are Henri does not divulge, but clearly it is a case of the grass-is-greener-syndrome that induced countless modern artists, anthropologists, sociologists, and tourists alike to see rural life and pre-industrial societies through rose-colored glasses that blocked out the harsh realities of life. Despite the fact that Henri was and is widely regarded as a "realist" artist, and that his portraits

⁸⁷Mary L. Alexander, *Cincinnati Daily Times Star*, March 10, 1926, quoted in Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 206. Henri's reflections on the simplicity of rural folk and the romance echo similarly rosy views expressed in a newspaper article on Achill Island pasted in his scrapbook; see Dudley Nichols, "Life on Achill Island," *New York World*, undated clipping, Henri papers, AAA, reel 886, frames 1231-32.

were highly praised for their attention to detail and authenticity, it seems clear that his vision was selective at best, even fictionalized.

This fine line between emphasis of positive traits and fictionalization is precisely the dilemma faced by countless post-colonial cultures searching for a positive self-identity to counter the negative stereotypes perpetrated by their colonizers. This culture of resistance is part of the colonial process—reclamation, renaming, and reinhabiting the land; the search for authenticity; the search for national origins apart from colonial history; and new pantheon of heroes, myths, religions. Yet others have asserted that the revival was merely an acceptance of the stereotypes, whose overall result was to freeze Ireland in time and relegate all Irish to primitive rural farmers. One may rightly ask whether Henri, as a friend of Yeats and a sympathizer of the revival, was part of this culture of resistance, or whether, as an American, he was merely an outsider, a primitivist, taking advantage of the Irish through his romanticization of old Ireland and its myths. Perhaps both, for the lines cannot be clearly drawn.

Tourism and Irish identity

The continued popularity of Henri's Irish pictures over the years is due in part to the idyllic image they portray of Ireland that is, in fact, untruthful, or at best an incomplete picture of real life. This basic contradiction between fact and fiction and this tension between urban and rural life still persists in Irish culture as a major factor guiding Irish self-identity. Even today, many Irish still self-identify

with their rural heritage, despite the impact of major economic changes in the 1960s and 1970s which shifted rural Ireland to a provincial outpost of urban Ireland through penetration of TV and other mass media. Likewise, the tourist industry still relies heavily on this image of Ireland's rural past and wild, isolated scenery to attract visitors.⁸⁸

The isolated rural paradise Henri depicted in his portraits and letters actually belies the fact that he was actually among the vanguard of the Irish tourist industry. The island was a popular tourist destination as early as 1840, when the newly established Achill Mission Hotel (later renamed the Slievemore Hotel) actively solicited visitors in the *Achill Herald*. Though Henri maintained that he picked the island at random "by just looking at the map,"⁸⁹ in actuality he might have been recommended to go there by tourist literature, such as a guidebook produced by Midland Great Western Railway of Ireland, which by 1885 devoted a full three pages to the island. The building of a railway extension to Achill Sound in 1895 and the building of Davitt's Bridge across the sound in 1888 made the island even more accessible to outsiders. Later, inspired by the interest in rural Ireland demonstrated by the Irish cultural revival and Irish nationalism, the national tourist industry hoped to counter the deplorable conditions of life in the

⁸⁸Timothy J. White, "The Changing Social Bases of Political Identity in Ireland," in *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*, ed. Susan Shaw Sailer (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997).

⁸⁹Henri, New York, to Alice Klauber, San Diego, March 11, 1914, Robert Henri and Alice Klauber Collection, San Diego Museum of Art Library.

“Congested Districts” with the economic benefits that tourism could bring. By the 1920s, when the Irish government’s Congested Districts Board began to make much needed improvements in the island’s housing conditions, tourism had become fully integrated into the island economy. Henri’s stay on the island from early summer to late October generally corresponded with the tourist season on the island. His interest in trout fishing was also shared by other tourists to the island; other attractions of the island included the beautiful scenery and sea-angling.⁹⁰

Of course, as is the case with many tourist communities, the local economy has benefitted unevenly from tourism. Around 1900, the immediate effects of tourism were largely confined to the district around Dugort (on the side of the island nearest the mainland), “which prospered at the expense of the other parts of the island.”⁹¹ Paul Henry, for example, recounted that when he arrived in Dugort, “every second house seemed to be a hotel or boarding house and the place swarmed with tourists.”⁹² Accordingly, he chose to live in the less populated village of Keel, which was located at the opposite side of the island. Thus, Henri, Henry,

⁹⁰McNally (*Achill*, 209-15) provides a brief history of tourism on Achill. Paradoxically, though Henri’s view of Ireland focused on the isolated, wild qualities of the island, today’s Achill tourist literature emphasizes both tradition and lack of provincialism. The island is now called “the entertainment capital of Mayo” in summer and tourism is credited for bringing a “relatively sophisticated outlook on life” to the island. However, new construction is encouraged only for buildings reflecting native architectural styles; see McDonald, *Achill Island*, 46.

⁹¹McNally, *Achill*, 210.

⁹²Quoted in McDonald, *Achill Island*, 42.

and other visitors could marvel at the primitive lifestyles of the peasants living on the relatively untouched side of the island, while ignoring the existence of the tourist industry at the other side.⁹³ Moreover, while the Henris' letters suggest they felt very much a part of Achill village life, they were undeniably tourists, whose views of Ireland were unavoidably colored by their American citizenship and middle-class viewpoint. As renters and later owners of Corrymore House, they were a step above the peasants they interacted with, literally and figuratively: in Ireland, land ownership had always been a major dividing line between the haves and the have nots, between the Irish and their British colonizers. It was no coincidence that mansions like Corrymore House were situated high on a hill looking down on the rest of the island. More important, unlike the villagers, the Henris did not till the soil or fish the ocean for their daily food; rather, they paid the O'Donnells--the caretakers of Corrymore--and other villagers to supply them with many of the necessities of life, or they ordered supplies and other foodstuffs to be shipped from Dublin.⁹⁴

⁹³Henri's and Henry's experiences are typical. Gauguin, one of the most famous modernist primitivists, likewise forsook the privileges of the civilized parts of Tahiti to live with the natives on the undeveloped side of the island; see Peter Brooks, "Gauguin's Tahitian Body," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: HarperCollins, 1992): 330-45; and Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Going Native: Paul Gauguin and the Invention of Primitivist Modernism," *Art in America* 77 (July 1989): 118-29. See also James F. Knapp, "Primitivism and Empire: John Synge and Paul Gauguin," *Comparative Literature* 41:1 (Winter 1989): 53-68.

⁹⁴Though both artists lived on Achill for several years in the 1920s, Henry, an Irishman, seems to have integrated into the community more easily, and for a

Conclusion

As we have seen in this chapter, Henri's view of Ireland was heavily inspired by contemporary Irish literature as mediated through his friends and associates active in the Irish cultural revival. A key aspect of the Irish cultural revival was its role in Irish nationalism and the refashioning of Irish self-identity. William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, Jack Yeats, Paul Henry, and others were primarily writing and painting for other Irish, aiming to re-present the Irish to themselves in a positive light to counter the negative identity foisted on them by their British colonizers. Yet, Henri was a middle-class American portraying the Irish for a middle-class and upper-class American audience. What was the response to his portraits in the United States? What were the major influences shaping popular American attitudes about Ireland and the Irish?

The portraits' sense of national identity would certainly have appealed to many middle-class Americans of Irish descent, including FitzGerald, Gregg, Quinn, and other Henri patrons and supporters. Statistics estimate that 84% of Irish who

time held a position as area paymaster for the Congested Districts Board, a civil service post which allowed him to travel throughout Mayo County. Achill historian Tom McNamara has surmised as much in his research on individuals painted by Henri. "Henri would seem to have been very much Lord of the Manor, wealthy, with an appreciation of the good things in life whilst Paul [Henry] appears to have been continuously broke. Paul lived amongst the people whilst I have the impression Henri was a more remote figure"; see letter to author, August 6, 2000.

emigrated between 1876 and 1921 settled in the United States.⁹⁵ While in fact the Irish in America had suffered greatly from prejudice and discrimination throughout much of the nineteenth century, by 1900 the Irish constituted a privileged immigrant sector. Many Irish-Americans had successfully assimilated into middle-class America, working in politics, business, show business, civil service, journalism, and the arts. Some, like the “unsinkable” Molly Brown, were well-known millionaires. The many Irish in the United States were predisposed to waxing nostalgic over their homeland. In America, this “cult of exile” translated into a strong and continued identification with Irish culture and politics, especially resentment of British power, through American-Irish nationalist groups such as *Clan na Gael* and the National League of America. For instance, between 1919 and 1921, Irish-Americans raised over \$10 million for Eamon de Valera’s American Association for the Recognition of the Irish Republic.

Henri had only a few solo exhibitions before 1914, and these included a mix of figure subjects and landscapes. His early Irish works, like his Dutch and Spanish paintings, were never displayed together as a discrete group. Rather, they appeared here and there in large juried exhibitions at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, or other venues. Because reviewers of these shows could devote only a few lines of praise, if any, to Henri’s modest canvases, it is difficult to gauge the popular and critical responses to the early Irish

⁹⁵Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 355.

works. In fact, it was not until the 1920s that Henri's reputation became associated with his national or ethnic "types."⁹⁶ Moreover, he seemed to have found few, if any, consistent patrons who purchased more than one or two works apiece. (At his death, the large majority of his works remained unsold.) To be sure, more research needs to be conducted on Henri's patrons, especially with respect to their social class and their professional and political associations. But given both Henri's close association with Irish cultural nationalists living in New York and the overwhelming support that the movement enjoyed in the United States, and especially in New York, it is tempting to ponder the appeal of his Irish subjects to these groups.

Henri's romanticization of Irish peasants may have held special appeal to the Irish and Irish-American nationalists among his supporters, who had formed a stronger connection to their homeland and the ideals of Irish identity through the emigration process. For them, the portraits may have symbolized a longing for home and family, an identification with a traditional rural way of life, a support for Irish self-determination, or the "American dream" which allowed them to rise from poor Irish farmers to successful American businessmen. Additionally, numerous critical reviews explicitly linked Henri's portraits to other Irish revivalists, especially

⁹⁶Of course, in the years bracketing the infamous 1908 exhibition of *The Eight*, much of the press coverage of Henri and his works centered on his activities as an insurgent artist and revolutionary, his ideas for juryless exhibitions, and his teaching philosophies. As such, Henri's paintings themselves received little sustained critical attention during these years.

Yeats and Synge, and to the many literary and stage images of the Irish that proliferated in New York.

The open-endedness of his portraits, however, allowed them to accommodate diverse meanings. For a number of Henri's critics and patrons, his sitters' nationality mattered less than their class. Many of these progressive-minded patrons, Irish and non-Irish alike, saw in Henri's portraits a sense of democratic respect for people of all classes and ways of life, and enjoyed the Irish and Dutch portraits especially as reflections of good cheer. The portraits also seem to have appealed to a growing number of Americans who shared Henri's anti-modernist views. For these people, the existence of traditional peasant communities may have assuaged their fears about the rapid industrialization of modern society.

Chapter 5. Natives, Immigrants, and American National Identity: Henri in California and the American Southwest

As we have seen, Henri was an inveterate summer traveler, leaving New York for the relative solitude of distant European locales such as Madrid, Haarlem, Achill Island, or American east coast villages such as Monhegan Island or Ogunquit, Maine. His association with Santa Fe, New Mexico, however, would eventually turn into one of his longest and fondest associations with one locale; his four seasons of painting in California and New Mexico would be among his most prolific.¹ In La Jolla in the summer of 1914, he organized an exhibition of contemporary art in conjunction with the 1915 San Diego International Exposition and painted a number of portraits of local residents, including Chinese-Americans, Mexican-Americans, native Americans, and one African-American newsboy named Sylvester. In 1916, he became actively associated with the burgeoning art colony in Santa Fe. Returning the next several summers, he painted hundreds of portraits of local native American and Mexican-American residents; acted as an advisor for the art programs at the new Museum of New Mexico, where he occupied studio space and participated in local exhibitions; traveled the region to paint the landscape and attend performances of native ceremonies at local pueblos;

¹Henri produced an estimated more than 300 canvases during his four seasons in La Jolla and Santa Fe; see Valerie Ann Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest: His Work and Influence," Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 2000, 4.

exhibited with the nearby Taos Society of Artists; and enticed friends and associates, such as John Sloan, George Bellows, Leon Kroll, Randall Davey, and others, to join him in Santa Fe.

With the exception of recent studies by Valerie Leeds, this phase of Henri's career has been discussed only briefly by Henri scholars and historians of western American art. The former situated these works at the end of Henri's long career, viewing them primarily as evidence of his continuing interest in the diversity and inherent dignity of humanity; the latter situated Henri within the histories of the development of the Santa Fe and Taos art colonies. Following Henri's words that he wanted to capture the "spirit of the southwest", all of these studies, including Leeds's, have focused on Henri's realism, and interpreted his works as documents of specific native individuals and of regional character in general.²

Yet these traditional interpretations are at odds with recent studies that question the image of the Indian and the "myth of Santa Fe", and particularly the

²Henri scholars William Innes Homer and Bennard Perlman devoted only a few pages to Henri's southwestern works, while Valerie Leeds has focused on this period in *Robert Henri in Santa Fe: His Work and Influence* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Gerald Peters Gallery, 1998); and "Robert Henri and the American Southwest." For Henri within the context of western art, see, for example, Van Deren Coke, *Taos and Santa Fe: The Artist's Environment, 1882-1942* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1963); and Patricia Janis Broder, *The American West: The Modern Vision* (New York: Little, Brown, 1984). An exception to these biographical and archival approaches is Jennifer Lara Cohen, "Robert Henri: Portrait of the American Indian," Master's Thesis, Ohio State University, 1994, which investigated Henri's paintings within the context of early twentieth century attitudes toward native Americans.

integral role that artists played in producing that myth.³ Likewise, Henri's La Jolla "types," which art historians have long viewed as sympathetic portrayals of individuals of different ethnic backgrounds, have not been examined within the context of American attitudes toward immigrants. In his own time, Henri's California canvases touched a nerve with critics and viewers because they depicted a variety of American "types" and as such forced them to confront often uncomfortable issues of crucial concern to all Americans, including issues of race, the "melting pot" and assimilation, the existence of a unified American identity, and the endemic but seemingly unresolvable clash of indigenous and traditional cultures with the progress of modern industrial society.

In seeking to better understand Henri's California and New Mexican paintings, we might ask a number of questions. Were Henri's portraits intended as realistic portrayals, as scholars have asserted, or do they serve more symbolic or

³Influential early works on images of native Americans include Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America: A Study of the Indian and the Idea of Civilization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1953); Patricia Hills, *The American Frontier: Images and Myths* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1973); and Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978). More recent studies, particularly dealing with southwestern Indians, include Charles Eldredge, Julie Schimmel, and William Truettner, *Art in New Mexico, 1900-1945: Paths to Taos and Santa Fe* (New York: Abbeville Press; and Washington, D.C.: National Museum of American Art, 1986); W. Jackson Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde: A History of Cultural Primitivism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995); Leah Dilworth, *Imagining Indians in the Southwest: Persistent Visions of a Primitive Past* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1996); and Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe: Creating a Modern Regional Tradition* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997).

metaphorical functions? What was Henri's relationship to the native Americans, Mexican-Americans, and other cultures he encountered? His audience's? How did Henri's portraits participate in ongoing dialogue regarding native Americans, Mexican-Americans, and immigrants and their place in American society? How did Henri appropriate (or misappropriate) native American culture in his portraits?

This chapter will assert his portraits' role as largely metaphorical. Henri's representation of the native and immigrant groups of California and New Mexico, especially native Americans, not surprisingly reflected his recent explorations of national identity and primitivism in Europe's folk cultures. Just as he found Irish peasants, Dutch villagers, and Spanish gypsies as representatives of a natural, spiritual, communal, and anti-materialistic traditional lifestyle that was rapidly being replaced by a modern, urban, industrial society, so also he valued native Americans as a metaphor for a freer and more natural life that could be lived outside of mainstream America and its demands. Their perceived natural artistic abilities, manifested in spectacular ceremonial performances and artisanal traditions such as pottery making, weaving, and jewelry; their deep connection with and respect for nature; their focus on family and community; and their profound spiritualism, which pervaded all aspects of their lives, represented for Henri and others of his generation not only a welcome escape from modern society, but more important, a model for the rejuvenation of American society through a reintegration of art and spiritual values with daily life. Moreover, in an

era seeking a definition of American identity, the native peoples of the southwest were often viewed as the ancient ancestors, or the “ur” people of the American continent, providing Americans with a rich and deep history that rivaled Europe’s. As such, then, Henri’s depictions of native Americans represented a counterculture critique and a format for exploring significant issues related to American national identity and the nature of American society and moral values. While Henri’s portraits seemingly present an authentic image of the native American, his writings demonstrate that he wished to evoke a traditional, mythical image of Pueblo culture that was in fact quickly dying even in his own day.

Significantly, Henri’s exposure to California and the American Southwest coincided with these regions’ emerging national prominence. On a grand scale, the San Diego International Exposition, the San Francisco Panama-Pacific Exposition (both held in 1915), and growing tourism and development brilliantly highlighted for visitors, new residents, and Americans in general the region’s unique landscape, rich history, and local indigenous populations. While Henri’s cultural primitivist and nationalist philosophies, as well as a formula for representing them on canvas, were clearly already developed by 1914, his involvement with the Santa Fe art community represented the culmination of his exploration of these ideas. His interests dovetailed perfectly with the aims of southwestern tourism and development, as propagated by anthropologists, local boosters, the expositions, the Santa Fe Railroad, the Fred Harvey Company, and the arts and crafts reform movement. In Santa Fe, the mystical Indian provided a potent symbol for the city’s

unique history and identity, and formed the basis for the region's self-manufactured reputation as the "land of enchantment," an image that continues to attract visitors and settlers even today.

La Jolla's immigrant types

Henri traveled to the west coast during the summer of 1914 at the invitation of Henry Lovins and Alice Klauber, former students who now lived in Los Angeles and San Diego, respectively. Under normal circumstances he may not have chosen a west coast destination for his usual summer travels, but political unrest in Europe, which would soon throw the continent into war, certainly made seeing his own country much more appealing. California intrigued him, he wrote, because it offered the chance to "luxuriate in work and sunshine, fruit, flowers, good food, not have to dress, not entertain or be entertained, nothing but work and sun." He also hoped to find there some interesting new faces—"people whose character would be interesting to me to paint"--who would model for him for wages.⁴ Henri was not disappointed in his choice of locale, for the trip proved more fruitful than he expected. He rented a bungalow in a remote and picturesque spot on the outskirts of La Jolla, a small town fifteen miles from the center of San Diego, and from there painted a number of canvases depicting local types, including Mexican-Americans, Chinese-Americans, native Americans, and African-Americans.

⁴Henri, New York, to Alice Klauber, San Diego, April 14, 1914, San Diego Museum of Art Library Archives (hereafter cited as SDMA).

In general, Henri's La Jolla pictures stand out for their bold colors, which provided viewers with a dramatic contrast to his characteristic dark palette of past years. Though Henri had been experimenting with color in his recent work—choosing color schemes symbolic of the native landscape, for example, to complement the character and physiognomy of his Irish and Spanish sitters—his La Jolla portraits, including *The Beach Hat* (1914; Detroit Institute of Arts) and *Viv in Blue Stripe* (figure 5.1), are much more decorative and higher-keyed.

Of Henri's La Jolla canvases, his Chinese-American subjects, which comprise a dozen or so canvases, are perhaps his best known. More than most of his 1914 canvases, these portraits demonstrate Henri's interest in the decorative, expressive, and symbolic possibilities of color, for here color is used both as a critical design element and as a foil for the sitter's distinctive racial characteristics (particularly skin color). The typical composition is highly simplified, limited to only the sitter's head and shoulders, the forms reduced in order to amplify the effect of the brightly colored, contrasting, flat background. *Jim Lee (The Vegetable Man)* (figure 5.2) is a broadly brushed exercise in variegated colors, the blues of Lee's loose-fitting cotton jacket and blue-gray hair complementing the straw yellow tones of the skin and hat, but all melding into the yellow-green mottled background. *Chinese Lady* (figure 5.3) contrasts the large mass of the sitter, enveloped in a voluminous black silk robe, with a dramatic golden yellow background. *Tam Gan* (1914; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo) and *Chinese Girl with Fan* (figure 5.4) are especially stunning. Richly colored backgrounds of peach-oranges and lemon

yellows contrast a powder blue silk blouse, a yellow and pink fan, and the sitters' warm peach complexion. In each of the female portraits the features are finely drawn, emphasizing the sitters' dark, almond-shaped eyes, broad nose, and thick dark hair. In contrast, Jim Lee's more quickly painted smiling face highlights the weathered skin, high cheekbones, and squinting eyes.

Henri also painted several portraits of Mexican-Americans, including *Ramon* (figure 5.5), *Rita—A Mexican Girl*, and *Young Mexican* (1914; all location unknown).⁵ Rita Perez, one of his first sitters in La Jolla, was Henri's maid, who lived in San Diego's old town.⁶ Ramon Vasquez was described by Henri as "a fine Mexican" from southern Mexico who spoke little English: "he looks like an Indian and he looks like gipsy but not exactly like either."⁷ While these portraits are not extant, a contemporary description of *Ramon* as "an eloquent figure with a mahogany-hued face, sombrero and a dun-colored suit, all posed against a peacock blue background" confirms that the canvas was painted in the brilliant colors

⁵*Ramon* was exhibited in Henri's September 1914 solo show at Gallery of Fine and Applied Arts, Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles; *Ramon—A Mexican* (which may or may not be the same canvas), was exhibited in November that year at Macbeth Gallery in New York and in a traveling solo show that toured the United States in 1915 and 1916. *Young Mexican*, a portrait of a young man, either Ramon or another model, and *Rita, Mexican Girl*, were both shown in Los Angeles only.

⁶Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 86.

⁷Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, August 22, 1914, Robert Henri papers, Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven (hereafter cited as Beinecke), box 16, folder 399.

typical of Henri's other La Jolla works.⁸ This portrait may have been among Henri's favorites of that summer, for he chose it to illustrate several newspaper reviews as well as his own article, "My People," written for *The Craftsman* in 1915.⁹

Henri also painted several portraits of Sylvester Cunningham Smith, a local African-American boy who sold newspapers at the La Jolla train station.¹⁰ In contrast to *Eva Green* (1907; Wichita Art Museum) and *Willie Gee* (1904; Newark Art Museum), Henri's most famous depictions of African-American subjects, in which the sitters' faces virtually blend in with the dark, murky backgrounds, the pictures of Sylvester are higher keyed, more expansive in concept, and more experimental in the color and tonal contrasts. What stands out most in these pictures, *The Failure of Sylvester* (1914; Cheekwood Museum of Art, Nashville), *Sylvester Smiling* (figure 5.6), and *Sylvester* (figure 5.7), is the contrast of Sylvester's dark skin with his brilliant white shirt. As Bruce Weber has correctly pointed out, Henri's use of white here is unusual, since he believed in limiting its

⁸"Henri's 'Types' Creative; Canvasses Show Artist's Sense of Character and Sincerity," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 18, 1914 (clipping in Macbeth Gallery Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. [hereafter cited as Macbeth Records], NMc2:238).

⁹Robert Henri, "My People," *Craftsman* 27 (February 1915): 465; and "California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," *Town and Country* 19 (November 28, 1914): 27.

¹⁰Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 102; and Perlman, *Robert Henri: Life and Art*, 115.

use.¹¹ Yet Henri's contrast of bright whites and dark chocolate tones is quite in keeping with the diverse color experimentations seen in the majority of his La Jolla canvases.

According to Leeds, Henri was drawn to La Jolla's "types", and in painting them he "penetrated the surface, achieving a deep emotional resonance in authentic characterizations."¹² Yet one may well wonder how much Henri knew of the person behind the face. In contrast to his previous Irish, Dutch, and Spanish sitters, who represented for him a rich national and racial culture that he was able to experience in person on numerous extended trips, his California subjects seem to have appealed to him mainly for the novelty of their exotic physical appearance.¹³ As he had told Klauber, "of course I shall want to paint interesting people—I'm told you have them all the way from up to date class [meaning those willing to commission portraits] to the half breed and gipsy."¹⁴ During this time he experimented greatly with different palettes and color combinations, so it is not surprising that the skin color of his subjects, which ranged widely from Sylvester's

¹¹Bruce Weber, *Ashcan Kids: Children in the Art of Henri, Luks, Glackens, Bellows, and Sloan* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1998), 11.

¹²Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 101.

¹³While Henri's *Willie Gee* and *Eva Green* are often viewed as representative of his early career, Henri in fact painted only two other African-American sitters: Sylvester and a maid who appeared in *The Laundress* (1916; Phoenix Art Museum). New York boasted a large number of Chinese immigrants, LaJolla apparently provided Henri's first Chinese models.

¹⁴Henri, New York, to Klauber, San Diego, March 11, 1914, SDMA.

dark chocolate skin, to the sun-burnt brown of his Mexican-Americans, to the porcelain white of his wife and sister-in-law, were often used as a point of departure for his aesthetic experiments. In this sense, Henri's choice of these models seem to have had more to do with their physical appearance than with any inherent value as individuals or as representatives of certain races.

Clearly, Henri was proud of his summer's work, and reveled in the racial diversity available in La Jolla. He wrote to William Glackens that "I have brought home a tribe of indians a tribe of chinks and a tribe of greasers and I want to show them to you. I found the chinks mighty interesting looking people and I had a good time painting them."¹⁵ To illustrate his point, Henri sketched himself at work in the studio trying to capture the distinctive facial features of one of his Chinese models. His simplified sketch (figure 5.8), almost a caricature, reduced his model to a set of squinty eyes in a round face, the features Americans characteristically associated with the Chinese.

Yet even in searching for diverse types, Henri apparently had hoped to find more "pure" representatives of these races in La Jolla, and his Chinese models at least disappointed him in their level of acculturation. Their status as immigrants was not recorded by Henri, but he regarded them primarily as hybrids who had lost many of the most interesting and essential characteristics of their Chinese heritage. He summed up Jim Lee, for instance, as "a [C]hinaman—[but] hardly the

¹⁵Robert Henri, New York, to William Glackens, New York, October 24, 1914, Beinecke, Box 4, folder 91.

type I wanted, too middle class and too American, very little of the mystery of China—rather only the transition in him.” Instead, Lee was an “American Chinaman,” “very respectable but not improved by Americanization.”¹⁶ Lee’s daughters were also too Americanized for Henri’s taste. One declined Henri’s offer to play Chinese music on his victrola, telling him she preferred American music.¹⁷ In the portraits, however, Henri avoided mention of this assimilation process. He posed his subjects in traditional Chinese dresses, titled the pictures “Chow Choy” and “Machu” instead of using the sitters’ American names Mary and Minnie, and emphasized the more stereotypically Chinese details of his subjects’ appearance and clothing, such as the porcelain skin, the slanted eyes, the thick, dark hair, and the richly colored silk blouses.¹⁸ What characteristics Henri had expected to find in more “pure” Chinese that he did not find in his Americanized La Jolla sitters? Apparently, Henri felt that Americanization had forced the Chinese to abandon their own rich cultural heritage—the “mystery of China”—and to replace it with

¹⁶Henri, La Jolla, to Henry Lovins, [Los Angeles?], July 1914, Edgar L. Hewett Collection, Collection Number AC 105, Fray Angelico Chavez History Library, Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe (hereafter cited as Hewett MSS); Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, September 15, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 400.

¹⁷Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, August 3, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 399. Henri and other white Americans seemed to find this incident quite curious, for it was reported by Henri in at least one letter as recounted in several newspaper articles.

¹⁸For sitters’ American names, see Leeds, “Robert Henri in the American Southwest,” 92-93.

bland, mainstream, middle-class tastes. After La Jolla, Henri painted no other Chinese or Chinese-Americans.

Sylvester was also a disappointment. In *The Failure of Sylvester*, Henri posed the boy in an oversized green upholstered armchair, fantasizing his subject as an African prince on his throne.¹⁹ Yet, as Weber phrases it, the boy “comically ‘fail[ed]’ to stay awake.”²⁰ Unable to live up to Henri’s exalted image of him as African royalty, he now merely resembled the stereotypical lazy black boy who was unable or unwilling to fulfill his duties as a paid worker.²¹ In *Sylvester*, the boy stares dully at the viewer with blank and distant expression. *Sylvester Smiling* is perhaps the best of the three canvases. In this work, which presents a straightforward portrait of the young boy against an ink blue variegated background, Henri believed that he had “caught [Sylvester’s] grin in all its zest.”²² While the contrast of colors in the portraits lends aesthetic interest to the pictures, as portraits they tell us little about the sitter and are less sensitive and subtle than Henri’s masterful *Eva Green* and *Willie Gee*. Green and Gee possess a youthful

¹⁹Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, July 27, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 398.

²⁰Weber, *Ashcan Kids*, 11.

²¹Images of sleeping African-American workers proliferated in American art and visual culture in the nineteenth century; typical images that might come to mind include James Clonney’s *Waking Up* (1851; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston), William Sidney Mount’s *Farmers’ Noonning* (1836; Museums at Stony Brook, New York), and Currier and Ives’s popular lithograph *Holiday in the Country—Troublesome Flies* (1868).

²²Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art*, 115.

mixture of dignity, innocence, and self-assurance, and are portrayed without racial stereotyping even as their ethnic features are finely delineated; of the portraits of Sylvester, only *Sylvester Smiling* suggests these qualities.

The image of the Indian

Though Henri painted a number of diverse models in La Jolla, his interests in the southwest would eventually come to be dominated by native Americans.²³ His initial exposure occurred during the train ride to San Diego: "We were tremendously interested in the Indians in N[ew] M[exico] and Ariz[ona]." In Albuquerque and Lamy, "Indians come along the train when it stops . . . They are young and old and some are extremely good looking."²⁴ Soon after setting up his house and studio in La Jolla in mid-June, Henri began searching diligently for Indian subjects to paint. By July he had painted six women from the nearby town of Bishop, whom he identified as either Shoshone or Northern Paiute.²⁵ What

²³"Indian" and "native American" are contested terms. In this chapter I will use them according to the definitions suggested by Robert Berkhofer: "native Americans" designating the native peoples of the North American continent and "Indian" being the white American idea of the native American; see Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, xvii, 196. Also, Henri and others of his generation habitually used the term "Indian" to describe his native subjects; native American has only recently come into usage.

²⁴Henri, Los Angeles, to Klauber, San Diego, June 13, 1914, SDMA; Henri, Los Angeles, to his mother, June 12, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 397.

²⁵Almost nothing is known about these sitters, but according to Leeds ("Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 98), a woman named May was the subject of *Indian Girl* and at least three other canvases in this group. Portraits of

essential qualities of character and physiognomy attracted Henri to his Indian sitters? According to one letter, Henri believed he had “got the Indian” in his portraits by capturing traits such as reticence, power, noble carriage, and sphinx-like inscrutability, characteristics typically associated with the “noble savage.”

Last week I painted two Indian pictures—portraits of an Indian girl. She is young, perhaps 18, a powerful Indian type, deep copper color, wide cheek bones, straight nose—and a look of the sphinx. I think I got the Indian in the portraits—and am greatly satisfied with them,—and the people who have seen them are all quite enthusiastic. . . . This girl has a noble carriage and beautiful face—not perhaps visible to any eye or at once—but there just the same. Nor is the beauty in her face that of the magazine cover—nor would the appreciators of the magazine covers ever see the beauty of which I speak—in fact they would declare her decidedly ugly—but they would be either wrong or I am. She is reticent “as an Indian”—it’s mighty hard to get any words out of her but she seems a friend.²⁶

Aside from this group, Indian models seem to have been largely unavailable, a situation Henri lamented. “I wish there were more Indians available but ‘progress’ has probably changed things very much here in the last few years—at least people say things have changed very much.”²⁷ These comments indicate that, Henri, like many Americans, viewed Indians as a vanishing race whose traditional

May were reproduced *Arts and Decoration*, Dec 1914, and in Henri, “My People,” 464, though the latter article misidentified the painting as *Yen Tsidi (Ground Sparrow)* (Henri, New York, to Klauber, San Diego, March 1, 1915, SDMA).

²⁶Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, July 27, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 398.

²⁷Henri, La Jolla, to Lovins, [Los Angeles?], July 1914, Hewett MSS. Though he had lived on the Great Plains as a boy, it seems that he had never experienced any contact with local Indian tribes before 1914. Rather, by the late 1870s, when Henri lived in Nebraska’s Platte River region, the local tribes had already been relegated to the reservations.

ways were quickly being transformed, if not eradicated, by the inevitable march of progress. As with his Chinese-American sitters, he had apparently hoped to find models who retained evidence of the Indians' former greatness. However, it was difficult to find any who were not affected by the pressures to conform to white society. One model, for example, had just arrived from "Indian school," on loan from an acquaintance who had hired her as a maid.²⁸

Shortly after complaining that Indian models were far and few between in La Jolla, Henri jumped at the chance to paint six Tewa individuals from San Ildefonso Pueblo, located just outside Santa Fe, who were in San Diego that summer helping to construct exhibitions for the San Diego Exposition.²⁹ Henri counted these portraits among the summer's most successful works, and exhibited them widely later that fall and throughout the next year. Three canvases of this group are extant: *Tom Po Qui (Water of Antelope Lake)* (figure 5.9), *Povi Tamo (Dawn Flower)* (1914; Kennedy Galleries, New York), and *Po Tsi (Water Eagle)* (figure 5.10). The three-quarter length portrait *Tom Po Qui* is the larger and more successful of the two, painted in a large format that Henri typically used for

²⁸Marjorie Henri, La Jolla, to Henri's mother, August 3, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 399.

²⁹The models were arranged by Edgar L. Hewett, whom Henri had met through Alice Klauber. The details of the arrangement are unknown, except for a letter Henri wrote to his mother on July 27: "Had to get back on account of work tomorrow—got some Indians to pose in San Diego and must not loose [sic] the chance"; see Henri, La Jolla, to his mother, July 27, 1914, Beinecke, box 16, folder 398.

exhibition portraits; *Povi Tamo*, executed in a smaller, more simplified waist-length format, seems not to have been exhibited.³⁰ Both pictures stand out for their brilliant color schemes. In *Tom Po Qui*, Ramoncita Gonzales's costume of bright pinks, lime greens, and bold reds is complemented by a variegated wall of citrus yellow and bluish pinks. Similarly, in *Povi Tamo* Alfoncita Roybal's cream blouse, salmon-orange overdress, and green and blue beaded necklaces are highlighted by a dark turquoise green background. The bright colors of the costumes and backgrounds were typical of the experimentations of the summer's portraits. The jewelry and clothing styles, however, were characteristic of Tewa women: an underdress and contrasting overdress made from cotton fabric, tied over one shoulder and belted at the waist with a woven belt, and worn with a cape which covered the back. Both sitters wear silver rings, bracelets, and necklaces, including a prominent squash blossom necklace with a horseshoe pendant, to compliment their simple clothing. The hairstyle, cut short over the eyes, long over the ears, and tied up in the back in a large roll, was also typical of San Ildefonso women.³¹ While

³⁰The Tewa portraits listed in exhibition catalogs for 1914 and 1915 included *Pō Tse (Water Eagle)* [Julian Martinez], *Tom Po Qui (Water of Antelope Lake)* [Ramoncita Gonzales], *Profile of Tom Po Qui*, *Yen Tsidi (Ground Sparrow)* [Juan Cruz Roybal], *Girl of the Tewa Tribe* (possibly *Povi Tamo (Dawn Flower)* [Alfoncita Roybal]), and *On Wi Taa, by the Painted Rocks* [Crecencio Martinez]. Henri recorded the sitters' first names, Julian, Ramoncita, Juan Cruz, Alfoncita, Crecencio, and Florentino, in his record book; see Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 107. I have deduced their identities by consulting other sources on the Tewa.

³¹William Whitman, *The Pueblo Indians of San Ildefonso: A Changing Culture*, Columbia University Contributions to Anthropology, no. 34 (New York:

the costume, made primarily of machine-made fabrics gained through trade, may not have signaled to white Americans the women's particular tribal affiliation, the handcrafted jewelry, as well as the copper skin, thick dark hair, and relaxed but confident pose, certainly conveyed their racial identity as southwestern Indians.

Po Tsi (Water Eagle) is equally colorful. In this three-quarter size portrait, Julian Martinez gazes sternly out at the viewer, arms akimbo. Like Roybal and Gonzalez, Martinez wears a mix of traditional Pueblo and Anglo clothing: a maroon cotton shirt with salmon-colored sleeves, tied at the collar by a yellow neckerchief, and a white vest, probably of deerskin, decorated with geometric symbols and designs. Over his lap is draped a dark blue wool blanket accented with yellow trim. His long dark hair is styled in twin braids, each wrapped in dark green fabric; large silver hoops adorn his earlobes. The colorful accessories, particularly the deerskin vest, face paint, and braids, signified to white Americans Martinez's Indianness. They were not part of his everyday attire, which in reality consisted of overalls and heavy work boots, akin to that of Mexican-American laborers living near Santa Fe; rather, the vest and paint were especially part of Martinez's "Indian" costume, worn primarily for demonstrations and ceremonial performances but also for posed photographs and paintings in which he accommodated the artists' visions of the noble Indian.³²

Columbia University, 1947; New York: AMS Press, 1969), 6-7.

³²As will be discussed later, Martinez is routinely seen in a costume similar to this one in numerous photographs and paintings of the era, which depict him

Less engaging is the portrait of Juan Cruz Roybal, *Yen Tsidi (Ground Sparrow)* (1914; location unknown), which reveals less of the individual and more of Henri's conception of Indians as magnificently costumed but solemn individuals. The vermillion wool blanket and awkward, oversized feather headdress are the most prominent features of the portrait; Roybal's profile, in contrast, is underemphasized and marked by generalized hard features and an unrelenting gaze.³³ While the trade blanket was typically worn by Tewa men, the headdress was more typical of Plains Indian tribes; like Martinez's vest, it was likely part of a costume worn during Tewa ceremonies, such as the Eagle Dance.³⁴ It certainly was not part of Roybal's everyday attire.

Leeds has observed that in these 1914 Indian portraits "Henri tended to emphasize the exotic nature of the subjects by presenting them as ethnic 'types' of a 'foreign' culture"; as such, they resulted not in "penetrating psychological portrait[s]" but instead relied for their impact upon the "novelty" of facial

performing ceremonial dances or simply posing for the camera. The face paint was probably worn during the Eagle Dance, a dance performed often for fairs and other festivals; see Richard L. Spivey, *Maria*, rev. ed., (n.p.: Northland Publishing, 1989), 18-19.

³³*Yen Tsidi* was illustrated in [Henry McBride], "What is Happening in the World of Art," *New York Sun*, November 22, 1914, 5. In this article, which mistakenly captioned the painting "Indian Brave," the color of his blanket was described as "pure vermillion" and "royal red." For another discussion of the portrait, see also "Henri's 'Types' Creative."

³⁴Eagle feathers, for example, were worn during the Eagle Dance, a dance popularly performed for tourists. Interestingly, a number of Pueblo Dances were, in fact, borrowed from other tribes, such as the Comanche and the Sioux.

characteristics, dress, and accouterments.³⁵ As with Henri's other La Jolla portraits, these works recorded a generalized picturesque racial type, in this case, "Indianness," in skin color, facial features, and costume, emphasized by Henri's brilliant color schemes and flat, decorative backgrounds. Though Henri would have occasion to interact with these individuals on a more intimate basis later in Santa Fe, for many of them were closely involved with the archaeological and museological operations there, his interaction with them in San Diego was extremely limited. Indeed, it appears Henri himself knew little about his sitters or their culture.

Rather, up to this point, Henri's exposure to Native American life was highly mediated through the tourist industry and popular culture. Albuquerque and Lamy, where Henri had seen Indians alongside the train, were two stops at which the Santa Fe Railroad and the Fred Harvey Company hired Indians to perform and to sell Indian crafts and souvenirs to tourists. The Indian of Arizona and New Mexico was a potent image used to promote tourism by the railroad and by the Harvey Company, which commissioned hundreds if not thousands of photographs and paintings for use in postcards, calenders, playing cards, souvenir books, and pamphlets to attract tourists to the southwest. Whereas previous generations of travelers to the west had greatly detested the long, dusty, cross-continental train trip and feared contact with hostile Indian tribes, after 1900 railroad publicists

³⁵Leeds, *Robert Henri in Santa Fe*, 10.

increasingly touted the Indians as both peaceful and picturesque, celebrating them as the first Americans and “the keepers of an ancient American culture” and pointing travelers toward nearby ruins, architecture, and Indian communities. Some even compared native American culture to old world Europe. One 1915 guidebook, for instance, claimed that “the Hopis, Havasupais, Apaches, and Navajos are more picturesque than the Swiss, Irish, Serbian, or Russian peasants,” a typical comment of the era that emphasized both the national and the pre-industrial character of the native American population.³⁶ A Baedeker’s devotee, Henri most likely would have purchased a guidebook of the region before leaving New York, but in any case, he would have already been exposed to contemporary attitudes on Indian cultures through the ubiquitous articles in popular journals such as *Harper’s* or art journals such as *The Craftsman*.

Indeed, when it came to exhibiting his portraits later that fall, Henri sought to evoke a poetic and lyrical image of the Indian, rather than a more individualized representation. The titles of his portraits were intended to enhance this view. Writing to Edgar L. Hewett, who had connected him with the models, for his sitters’ Indian names, Henri explained, “I will use them either in the [I]ndian or

³⁶ Anne Farrar Hyde, *An American Vision: Far Western Landscape and National Culture, 1820-1920* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1990), 229, 208. For more on tourist industry use of Indian imagery circa 1900, see Hyde, *An American Vision*, 191-243; Dilworth, *Imagining Indians of the Southwest*, 77-124; and Sandra D’Emilio and Suzan Campbell, *Visions and Visionaries: The Art and Artists of the Santa Fe Railway* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1991).

the [E]nglish translation, whichever has the best sound in print. . . . I understand that their tribe is called 'Tewa'[,] [A]m I correct in that?" The Indian names, he believed, "will add considerably to interest and they will look well in the catalog."³⁷

Henri's models, like other Tewas, generally used their Spanish Christian names outside their own village, and often spoke both Spanish and English as well as their native Tewa.³⁸ Though Henri knew them by their Spanish names, his preference for their Tewa names signified his desire to emphasize above all their Indianness and to deny the fact of their many years of acculturation to Spanish and Anglo customs.

As a group, Henri's California portraits stand out mainly for their brilliant use of color, which is keyed in large part to his sitters' skin color and physical appearance. Owing to the highly decorative qualities of these canvases, the sitters' individuality and personality does not always show through. Because they focus on the sitters' outer appearance alone, the canvases seem to represent "types"; because they omit narrative or contextual settings or props that would provide information on his sitters' daily lives or occupations, these works do not tell us

³⁷Henri, New York, to Hewett, Santa Fe, October 18 and November 3, 1914, Alice Klauber letters, 1907-1946, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, reel 583, frames 732-35.

³⁸For Tewa naming conventions, see Sandra A. Edelman, "San Ildefonso Pueblo," in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 9, *Southwest*, ed. Alfonso Ortiz (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1979), 308; and J. J. Brody, *Pueblo Indian Painting: Tradition and Modernism in New Mexico, 1900-1930* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997), 65.

about, for example, native American life, but rather, only Henri's perception of Indian appearance and character. In fact, as Henri's letters indicate, he was not much interested in his subjects' lives, traditions, or cultural beliefs, in particular because "progress" had changed things too much, and he was unable to find models that represented "pure" and traditional cultures untainted by modern society and the pressures to assimilate. Instead, most of these pictures suggest that Henri attempted to capture what he believed to be the essential qualities of each race, the distinctive characteristics inherent to each group, and to ignore evidence of assimilation whenever possible. This attitude is quite in keeping with his portraits of European sitters, in which his main emphasis was placed on capturing unique and definitive racial traits. Yet, interestingly, critics and viewers of his portraits often interpreted them in quite different ways; the paintings were often criticized for their ambiguity, which allegedly resulted from Henri's failure to provide more information in his canvases than his sitters' mere physical appearance. Moreover, the American types engendered much stronger opinions than any of his previous portraits, reflecting the diversity of opinion in the United States regarding race, immigration, assimilation, and the essence of American identity.

Reviews of Henri's California "types"

Henri exhibited his California work in solo shows at New York's Macbeth Gallery and the Los Angeles Museum for Science, History, and Art, and at traveling

exhibitions across the country during the next several years.³⁹ These shows elicited a great deal of attention by the art world and the public in general. In his previous solos shows, Henri had exhibited a mix of landscapes and portraits, usually based on travels to one locale. This was the first time that he exhibited portraits exclusively, and they struck critics as a "remarkable collection" of "California types."⁴⁰ In their reviews, critics commented extensively on the racial character of Henri's sitters. The diversity of opinion expressed therein revealed a huge disjunction between Henri's and the general public's opinions on people of other ethnic groups and how they should be portrayed.

In general, critics concerned themselves first with the artistic merit of Henri's portraits, praising their color, brushwork, and design, and occasionally noting that the color might be a little too harsh and unnatural. Much of the color, especially the Indians' brightly colored costumes, was associated with the sunny California climate and the inherent picturesqueness of the native Americans living there, though, in fact, Henri had already been exploring the extended possibilities of color for several years. Other critics praised Henri's skill at capturing the finer

³⁹Gallery of Fine and Applied Arts, Museum of History, Science and Art, Los Angeles, September 1914; Macbeth Gallery, New York, November 1914; Art Association of Indianapolis, November 1915; Cincinnati Museum, December 1915; Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 1916; Syracuse, New York, May 1916. Leeds ("Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 135) lists additional west coast venues, including Seattle and Spokane, for the Los Angeles show.

⁴⁰"News of the Art New York World," *New York World*, November 22, 1914, 3M; "Art at Home and Abroad," *New York Times*, November 22, 1914, 5:11; "California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," 38.

details of his sitters' appearance. A writer for *New York Times*, for example, observed that "to see the subtle difference between the faces of two young Chinese girls is something. And it is hardly less of a feat to discriminate so convincingly among the Indian girls. It is art that repays attentive study."⁴¹ (Apparently, to many Americans, all Chinese and Indians basically looked the same.) A few years later, Guy Pène du Bois acknowledged the aesthetic interest embodied by the diversity of races portrayed in Henri's canvases, though he refrained from calling Henri an "ethnologist"; rather, he found the pictures to be "amiable or malleable objects or models for the ends of a design."⁴²

Most critics, however, commented on the people portrayed rather than on the portrayal, and used the portraits as a vehicle to speculate on the moral characteristics and intellectual capacities of Henri's subjects. The Mexican-Americans were treated the most harshly. While a *Brooklyn Eagle* reviewer called Ramon "a big, independent figure, which speaks of self-reliance,"⁴³ most other critics found that Henri's portraits encapsulated volumes about lazy, violent, and vain Mexicans. "With all the repulsiveness of that class of the Mexican character, at perhaps its worst, or at least in its most dissipated form, this picture [either *Ramon*

⁴¹"Art at Home and Abroad," *New York Times*, November 22, 1914, 5:11.

⁴²Guy Pène duBois, "At the Art Galleries," *New York Evening Post*, March 9, 1918, magazine section, 7.

⁴³"Henri's 'Types' Creative." The reviewer may have been Henri's former student, Helen Appleton Read, which accounts for the positive reception.

or *Young Mexican*] is really a masterpiece of character study . . . [and] tells a story that would take pages and pages to explain," wrote Los Angeles critic Alma May Cook.⁴⁴ One New York critic granted that Ramon was "a finer type than we are used to think of these men," yet others derided him with racist stereotypes, calling him "a type of the idle, cigarette smoking southerner with the hint of Old World tragedy in his eyes"; "dark and swarthy, in whose eyes are the smoldering fire of his race, touched with cruelty and romance"; "a conspirator and an outlaw"; and "a handsome fellow with a scar on his cheek" and a light in his eyes that suggested a violent nature.⁴⁵ The *New York Evening Sun* reviewer was more explicit in his linkage of the sitter to larger political and social problems in Mexico, observing that the portrait "offers a hint of the difficulties in the way of establishing a stable government in the country to the south of us."⁴⁶

⁴⁴Alma May Cook, "Exhibition of Robert Henri's Paintings at Exposition Park," *Tribune*, September 20, 1914, Museum Archives, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

⁴⁵William B. M'Cormick, "Mastery of Medium Shown in Henri's Exhibit of Far Western Types at Macbeth's," *New York Press*, Nov 22, 1914, 4:8; "Henri's Canvases at Museum Breathe Spirit of the West," *Syracuse Herald*, May 7, 1916 (887:426); "Works from Brush of Artist Henri Reveal Unusual Skill," *Grand Rapids Press*, February 5, 1916 (quoted in Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 102); Antony Anderson, "Art and Artists," *Los Angeles Sunday Times*, September 27, 1914, 4:3; "California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," 38.

⁴⁶"A Painter-Explorer That Went West. Ancient Egypt is Now at Home Here." *New York Evening Sun*, November 24, 1914 (Macbeth Records, NM2: 235).

Rita was similarly attacked. Everett C. Maxwell, the curator of the Gallery of Fine and Applied Arts at the Museum of History, Science, and Art in Los Angeles, where Henri's La Jolla canvases were first exhibited, described her as

a vain, over-developed young girl. . . arrayed in cheap American clothing of hideous design. Her black oily hair is parted in the middle and combed down around the ears in even waves. A monstrous hat with a string of gaudy beads completes the arrangement. Much of the bumptious arrogant pride and ill-bred conceit of a low caste are found in this work.⁴⁷

"You know her characteristics," Alma May Cook agreed, "for you see just that kind of a girl every day—dressed up and perfectly aware of it."⁴⁸ Many of these comments are not surprising, given that Americans had been inundated with images of chaos and lawlessness in Mexico in countless news reports, photographs, articles, and moving pictures of the Mexican Revolution, including a particularly racist and condescending series of *Collier's* reports filed by Jack London from U.S.-occupied Veracruz in summer 1914.⁴⁹

The Chinese-American subjects received only slightly less of a beating. Jim Lee was typically seen as an "oldish type of Chinaman, with half shut eyes, sinister

⁴⁷Everett C. Maxwell, "Art," unidentified newspaper clipping, Los Angeles, September 26, 1914 (Museum Archives, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County).

⁴⁸Cook, "Exhibition of Robert Henri's Paintings."

⁴⁹For American visual images of the Mexican Revolution, see James Oles, "South of the Border: American Artists in Mexico, 1914-1947," in *South of the Border: Mexico in the American Imagination, 1914-1947* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 57-75.

expression and ruddy yellow face."⁵⁰ The Chinese Lady was "stolid, patient, unawakened. . . the old type, the type into which the little 'Chow Choy' and 'Tam Gan' and the 'Chinese Girl with Fan' will never degenerate. She is the old, they the new, destined for a mental freedom which she could never comprehend."⁵¹ Yet, in contrast to the inscrutable adults, the children were often compared to beautiful little dolls and sweet maidens. "We catch so few glimpses of Chinese children here in the East that we are strange to their exotic charm, and the three that Mr. Henri has painted here have an effect of novelty that is as rich as their other qualities," one critic wrote. One of them "will be voted 'a dear' by every woman who visits the gallery."⁵² Inscrutable and mysterious, perhaps, but the Chinese were respected in a way that the Indians and the Mexicans were not: "Here we have a really civilized people, with eyes as civilized as any in Europe."⁵³ Another very imaginative reviewer even asserted that the "Celestials" were more than willing to sit until Henri "began to paint the Indians. When they discovered that he had so lowered his standards as to include the descendants of the American aborigines among his subjects the Chinese people refused to sit for him again."⁵⁴

⁵⁰"Henri's 'Types' Creative."

⁵¹"California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," 27.

⁵²M'Cormick, "Mastery of Medium Shown," 4:8.

⁵³*Evening Mail*, November 21, 1914, Macbeth Records, NMc2: 235.

⁵⁴"California Types Painted by Mr. Robert Henri," 38.

Critics were divided on Henri's Indian subjects, but generally regarded them as a social and historical problem. They were not viewed as actual individuals, but rather as noble but tragic representatives of a dying race, their demise sad but immanent in the face of progress. Henry McBride revealed both fascination and scorn for Indians; he loved their colorful costumes, but found them to be a sorry lot, a far cry from their noble and ancient ancestors.

The ordinary tourist who has seen these Mexicans and Indians skulking about the railway stations in the far West will be glad to see them again, with nothing in the way of vividness, of coloring left out. . . . [Yet] the Indian sun has almost set. The beaten people know they are beaten and for the most part live pitifully upon our 'bounty'. . . . It is all 'material for the artist,' the episode of grandeur which can still be seen by poets, and the sorry decline from the former standard that now hangs about the railway station.⁵⁵

Others expressed more charitable views toward Henri's Indian subjects, or at least for the specific individuals he had selected to represent the Indians' best qualities, though they too, clearly regarded the "noble savage" as a relic of the past and a distant relative of living Indians:

When [Henri] set out to paint Indians he looked for the kind who once thrilled a real frontier. He had as little use for the circus variety as for the dun, unwashed specimens who sit doubled up in rage on railway platforms in the alkalai desert. Subjects such as he wanted no longer roam abroad, and when he ferreted out those physically fit he probably had to burnish and costume them until he had them right. He put his fertility of invention in tune with the innate native notion of festival display, with the happiest results.⁵⁶

⁵⁵[Henry McBride], "What is Happening in the World of Art," 5.

⁵⁶"News of the Art World."

While William B. McCormick called the portraits “a revelation of personality that far surpasses anything even [Henri] has done before”, others such as the art critic of the *Evening Post* deemed them facile “novelties” whose “remarkable skill hides the glittering thinness of characterization.” For this writer, the pictures were merely

tourist pictures. . . . representing various types and nationalities of picturesque aspect. . . . Some of the paintings, such for example, as Pō Tse. . . or the war bonneted chief, are incredibly obvious. The characterization is strangely generalized. Not much more and these records would be caricatures. Most of the . . . Indian subjects have an air of being on parade, with all the points the tourists looks for noted with phenomenal skill, but seen too casually and superficially.⁵⁷

In contrast to these works, the portraits of Sylvester were virtually ignored. Still, the model was generally described in stereotypically racist terms as, for example, “a happy-go-lucky, grinning nigger boy” whose head was superbly painted, “from woolly pate to the lip curled back and showing its dusky coral inner coat.”⁵⁸

As these comments demonstrate, Henri’s reviewers knew little about the actual life of his subjects, particularly native Americans. Their interpretations, therefore, relied mainly upon stereotypes they had formulated either on trips to the west or through popular images of Indians found in postcards, the popular press, dime novels, moving pictures, or traveling Wild West shows. Not

⁵⁷M’Cormick, “Mastery of Medium Shown,” 4:8; “Art Notes,” *New York Evening Post*, November 21, 1914, 1:9.

⁵⁸Antony Anderson, “Art and Artists,” September 27, 1914.

surprisingly, then, critical interpretations of Henri's Tewa sitters differed radically. Some found *Po Tsi (Water Eagle)* colorful but superficial; others praised it as an astute characterization. Neither the portraits themselves nor the reviews really approached a more than superficial understanding of the subjects themselves. Martinez's stiff pose and stoic, almost stern countenance conveyed the dignified yet mysterious character typically associated with Indians, yet it was completely at odds with the lighthearted and convivial jokester described by friends. At the San Diego fair, for example, Martinez reportedly relished his role as a "tourist Indian," and flirted with white women by telling them "Me got no wife, lady. Me look for one. You marry with me, huh?" In fact, despite their appearances in Henri's portraits as colorful yet inscrutable and stoic individuals who were completely at odds with mainstream American culture, the Tewas were much more acculturated than many Americans were willing to believe. Covering events at the San Diego Exposition, one *San Diego Union* reporter was shocked to find that Florentino Martinez, the Tewa's spokesperson at the fair, had an excellent command of English; another was surprised to find steamer trunks and clocks decorating the interiors of the Indians' modest dwellings in the Painted Desert.⁵⁹

⁵⁹Richard Amero, "Panama-California Exposition, San Diego, 1915-1916: A History of the Exposition," from *The San Diego Historical Society Welcomes You to the Panama-California Exposition—San Diego—1915-1916*, 1996, San Diego Historical Society, February 2001 <<http://sandiegohistory.org/pancal/>>, chapters 2, 3. Like many Tewa, Martinez likely revealed his playful side only to friends. White observers at the fair noted that the Tewa building crew appeared friendly and jovial, "like school boys sometimes," around Jesse Nusbaum their supervisor, whom they knew from Santa Fe, but generally became quiet and reserved around

With reviews such as these, perhaps it is not surprising that none of the pictures from the 1914 solo shows were sold.⁶⁰ Critics and collectors were much more enthusiastic about Henri's European sitters—his Dutch and Irish children especially. While the European peasant and fisher children suggested a nostalgia for a simple rural life and the pre-industrial past, Henri's La Jolla pictures referenced the unpleasant circumstances of immigration and the social problems Americans were faced with at the beginning of the twentieth century. Moreover, European faces were much more familiar to American audiences, many of whose ancestors had emigrated from northern Europe. In contrast, the customs and faces of Asians and Latin Americans were much more alien to Americans; white Californians in particular had had a troubled and controversial relationship with non-white residents throughout the nineteenth century.

"My People": reading Henri's portraits of racial types

Henri clearly disagreed with the overall treatment his subjects received from the press. Appearing in the February 1915 issue of *The Craftsman*, his article "My People," seems to have been an attempt to respond to the negative criticisms and misinterpretations of his recent works and to help viewers better appreciate the

strangers.

⁶⁰Not only did none of the pictures sell from the 1914 exhibitions, despite all the publicity, but of Henri's entire 1914 oeuvre, only *Beach Hat* and *Tam Gan* sold during his lifetime. Henri attributed the lack of sales to the war; see Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 119.

paintings by illuminating his underlying intentions as a portraitist. Though the article was not explicitly identified as a rebuttal, this “Editor’s Note”, which began the article, suggested as much:

Robert Henri’s paintings of the people of France, Holland, Spain and Ireland are famous the world over. During the past summer he painted the people of most vital interest to him in California and the Southwest. The following article was written at the request of THE CRAFTSMAN, that our readers might more fully understand and enjoy his point of view as a painter of people.⁶¹

In contrast to critics who had accused that he captured the worst qualities of the Mexicans, Indians, and Chinese, Henri asserted his intention to depict only their best aspirations and achievements, their innate dignity, nobility, and greatness. Acknowledging that civilization (war, progress, religion, institutions, extreme nationalistic fervor) had destroyed much of these cultures, he asserted that his goal was to depict the essential greatness and beauty that could still exist. He portrayed real people, not generic types, he said, but he “always found the race expressed in the individual” (459). In each of them, he hoped to find “something of the order that will rescue the race and the nation” (467).

Art historians have generally interpreted “My People” as a manifesto of sorts explaining Henri’s humanitarian views and sympathy for all people, including the poor, and especially his focus on the individual in his portraits. Yet there are other important ideas expressed in the article that have often been overlooked. To be sure, “My People” is at times opaque, wandering, and conflicted. However, it

⁶¹Henri, “My People,” 459.

represents Henri's best attempt to explain his interest not in individuals *per se* but in indigenous and peasant cultures--specifically his most recent subjects, Mexicans, Chinese, Indians, and Irish--people who were generally looked down upon as worthless, ignorant, and offering no real contributions to civilization, whose traditions and customs were at once seen as picturesquely quaint and as obsolete in the face of progress. As such, it summarizes many of the ideas percolating in Henri's head in previous years relating to primitivism, race, national identity, and individual expression.

Moreover, the article addressed Henri's artistic approach to portraiture. While he is often viewed as a realist, his attitudes are actually more idealist, for he advocated that the artist should "select from all experience, not only from his own but from that of all ages, [and] essential beauty" (468). It was for this reason that he lamented that critics reproached him for not painting his sitters in more naturalistic settings that might provide more details about them as people. He never intended to portray the social reality of his sitters' lives or the actual conditions of their daily lived experience, he insisted, such as "the landscape, the houses, [or] the workshop of these people" (467). Rather, he strove for a reality behind exterior appearances, the racial character and the essence of an entire people that he believed was encapsulated in the individual.

All their lives are in their expressions, in their eyes, their movements, or they are not worth translating into art. I was not interested in these people to sentimentalize over them, to mourn over the fact that we have destroyed the Indian, that we are changing the shy Chinese girl into a soubrette, that our progress through Mexico

leaves a demoralized race like the peons. . . . I do not wish to explain these people, I do not wish to preach through them, I only want to find whatever of the *great spirit* there is in the Southwest. (467)

Henri's intentions to use his portraits as a vehicle to portray the best qualities of his subjects and their cultures exemplified his ideas about "primitive" cultures and their contributions to society. The article praises freedom of expression and individual creativity, asserting that it is in the nature of each individual of each race to attain great potential if it is not squashed by the evils of civilization. Thus, Henri's philosophy of his people, those "who hold the essential beauty", those "through whom the dignity of life is manifest, . . . who are in some way expressing themselves naturally along the lines Nature intended for them" (459), entailed a celebration of natural impulses and instinctual creativity. These were human qualities for which indigenous and pre-industrial cultures had long been admired. Of course, echoing the theories of Hippolyte Taine and other essentialists, Henri had specific ideas as to which qualities were inherently possessed by which races. To him, the Irish were natural poets possessing a "nobility of language and facial expression" whose "simplicity and humor have enriched my existence" (459). Children had a "nobility of impulse" (460); Indians a "nobility of poise, of gesture" (460). Greatness was found "in the eyes of a child. . . in the heart of a gypsy" (462). Henri's people, in other words, were children and "primitive" cultures who had not yet been corrupted by progress, civilization, or modern industrial society, and in these cultures he hoped to find and express the highest potential for humanity. In contrast to many Americans who found peasants

and “primitives” to be ignorant, stupid, dullards, as threats to social order, hindrances to American greatness, or pollutants of the American Anglo-Saxon gene pool, Henri reflected the views of a growing number of idealistic Americans (as well as those of other cultural nationalists in Europe) who sought spiritual and communal values, and through them, social renewal, in nearly extinct traditions and cultures.

In celebrating indigenous and pre-industrial societies, however, Henri presented an incomplete picture. He emphasized certain cultural values and characteristics that corresponded with his primitivist outlook, and avoided mention of other more negative, though equally typical qualities. In particular, he preferred to ignore evidence of social change in the societies he depicted, especially the deleterious effect of “progress,” including cultural assimilation and racial hybridity. The main problem with “My People,” and Henri’s portraits in general, then, is that neither the article nor the portraits clearly represented Henri’s attitudes, and they engendered many diverse responses and interpretations. Moreover, because Henri’s views represented those of a small minority of progressive intellectuals, some more mainstream critics and the American public misunderstood his intentions. For example, his views of Indians were right in line with those espoused by other primitivist modernists in the Santa Fe and Taos colonies, as we shall see, but East Coast viewers and art critics often did not share these ideas. Because Henri’s portraits did not provide information about his subjects’ lives and cultures, viewers were forced to supply their own preconceptions and

misconceptions about other people whom most had never encountered on a firsthand basis. As the 1914 reviews demonstrate, the subjects' physiognomies suggested different things to different viewers, and the same portraits could provide proof of the nobility or degeneracy of Indians, the wisdom or ignorance of Chinese, the violent temperament or solid character of Mexicans. Secondly, though Henri's letters often demonstrated a certain admiration and understanding of the cultures he depicted, he was still unable completely to shed his status as an outsider and a tourist. The characteristics he valued and desired to portray were those of a bohemian American artist. As such, his portraits ultimately presented his subjects in a half-light; they did not give a more rounded picture of his subjects' lives. Because many of his portraits were open-ended, and often relied on stereotyped codes for viewers to decipher them, they ultimately served merely to accommodate many of the stereotypes Henri wanted to undermine.

In addition to addressing his ideas on race and primitivism, "My People" reiterates a number of themes on national identity that Henri had discussed in earlier articles. In 1909 and 1910 he asserted his beliefs that American identity and preeminence in the arts could be developed only by allowing native talent to develop naturally and instinctually. Henri believed that national identity and character was "rooted in the soil" and located in the people and could not be imposed from above by critics or thinkers who would attempt to plan out or define what American character should be. Rather, art should be a spontaneous and natural expression of the people and their distinct temperament. In this sense, "My

People” reiterates his ideas that the essential qualities of each race and nation are expressed through the people, and these are the qualities that he hoped to capture in his portrayals of people of different races. At the same time, Henri believed that much of national or racial culture was predetermined, and he was not willing, he said, to “mourn” or “sentimentalize” over the fact that progress may have decimated some groups while advancing others, for “every race, every individual in the race must develop as Nature intended or become extinct” (467). Rather, his goal was to find the best of each race, to capture it in his portraits, and perhaps use these as examples for the rejuvenation of American culture.

Edgar L. Hewett and the Santa Fe colony

The views expressed in “My People” are clearly informed by Henri’s explorations of national character and primitivism in his portraits of Spanish, Dutch, and Irish subjects, and children of all sorts, but they also provide an important link to his interest in native American cultures that had recently emerged in La Jolla and that would be further pursued in Santa Fe. Of all his California “types”, Henri was certainly most interested in the Indians, who were abundant in New Mexico. While he hoped to summer in Santa Fe in 1915, at the invitation of Edgar Hewett, he was not able to make the western trip until the next year. As he wrote Hewett in early summer 1916, “I should like very much to so like a place that I would not have to worry every season over the question of ‘where shall we go!’ Santa Fe may be the place for I fare well in high, dry and sunlit

climates and I am sure there are people, children, and Indians I shall want to paint and who will be willing to be painted.”⁶² Moreover, Hewett had promised Henri a studio in the old Governor’s Palace and a superior creative environment in the burgeoning art colony.

Once settled in Santa Fe, Henri kept his socializing with other local artists to a minimum, and instead encouraged friends from back east to visit. Though by choice he was only marginally a member of the Santa Fe and Taos artist colonies, he did enjoy a number of group trips to attend dances and festivals at local pueblos and participated in local group exhibitions at the Museum of New Mexico and the Society of Taos artists. More important, however, his primitivist view of Indian life was completely of a piece with the image of Santa Fe and Taos promoted by Hewett, local boosters, and particularly the transplanted Eastern bohemian artists and literati who made these artist colonies their new home.

Of course, Henri’s curiosity about native Americans was piqued when he saw them on his westward journey and in La Jolla, but what seemed to have really fueled his interest was his association with archaeologist Edgar L. Hewett, whom he met in July 1914.⁶³ Hewett, director of the Archaeological Institute of America’s

⁶²Henri, New York, to Hewett, Santa Fe, July 15, 1916, Hewett MSS.

⁶³For more on Hewett’s anthropological career and association with Santa Fe arts and tourism, see George W. Stocking, Jr., “The Santa Fe Style in American Anthropology: Regional Interest, Academic Initiative, and Philanthropic Policy in the First Two Decades of the Laboratory of Anthropology, Inc.,” *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 18 (1982): 3-19; Beatrice Chauvenet, *Hewett and Friends: A Biography of Santa Fe’s Vibrant Era* (Santa Fe: Museum of New

School of American Research in Santa Fe, was then visiting San Diego in his capacity as Director of Exhibits for the upcoming 1915 San Diego Exposition, also known as the Panama-California Exposition.⁶⁴ Through the intercession of Henri's friend Alice Klauber, who chaired the exposition's Fine Arts Committee and was a leading advocate for women's participation in the organization of the fair, Hewett had enlisted Henri's assistance in organizing the fair's exhibition of contemporary art.⁶⁵ Though Henri was honored to be given the responsibility of organizing the fair's art exhibition, and would later act as an advisor to Hewett in the development of the art exhibits at the Santa Fe Art Museum, it was Hewett's

Mexico Press, 1983); Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 7-8, 13-23; J. J. Brody, *Pueblo Indian Painting: Tradition and Modernism in New Mexico, 1900-1930* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1997), *passim*.; Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 117-35; and Amero, "A History of the Exposition," chapters 2-3.

⁶⁴For more on the San Diego Exposition, see San Diego Historical Society, *The San Diego Historical Society Welcomes You to the Panama-California Exposition*; Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 209-34; F. Weber Benton, *Semi Tropic California* (San Diego: n.p., 1914); Christian Brinton, "The San Diego and San Francisco Expositions. I. San Diego," *International Studio* 55 (June 1915): CV-CX; William Templeton Johnson, "San Diego: The Panama-California Exposition and the Changing Peoples of the Great Southwest," *Survey* 34 (July 3, 1915): 302-07; William MacDonald, "The California Expositions," *Nation* 101 (October 21, 1915): 490-92.

⁶⁵For Klauber's and Henri's roles in the fair, see M.P., "Hidden Treasures: Works by Robert Henri," *Bulletin of the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego* 2 (October-December 1963), 4-5, 8-9; Martin E. Petersen, "Henri's California Visit," *Fine Art Source Material Newsletter* 1 (February 1971), 27-34; Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 120-35; and Amero, "A History of the Exposition," chapter 2.

interest in native American culture that made a deeper impact and produced longer-lasting effects on Henri's career.

In general, Henri's appreciation of native Americans centered primarily on his belief in the Indian's rich spiritual life and natural creativity, as expressed through his harmony with nature, his communal society, and incorporation of art into everyday life. These are the same qualities that Hewett stressed throughout his career in his promotion of the Indian. His plans for the San Diego Exposition had greatly impressed Henri upon their initial meeting in 1914. An expert on Mayan and Anasazi archaeology, Hewett aimed to revive popular and scientific interest in ancient America as the foundation upon which contemporary American culture was built, through displays of architectural and other material fragments. As Henri wrote to one friend, "the exposition here will be beautiful. Through Dr. Hewitt [sic] there will be a perfectly presented idea of the great art history of [A]merica—not that part of it that has come since [C]olumbus—but that great [A]merican art that came before (the specimens being from Chichen [Itza] and like places in Central America)."⁶⁶ As Hewett explained, "We must admit that the enthusiasm of the Spaniards was not without justification. The brilliancy of the new race suggested another Orient. The ruins of Central American cities seemed to entomb another Egypt." Yet Americans had lost sight of "the great works of the native American race which we know in its decadence. The object of the exhibition

⁶⁶Henri to Lovins, July 1914, Hewett MSS.

of Ancient America is to present a picture of the Golden Age of that race—a chapter of human history that is as worthy of study as are the records of its contemporaries of the old world.”⁶⁷

Hewett also desired to link the splendors of the ancient Americans with the achievements of their latter-day descendants, the contemporary native peoples of the Southwest. Accordingly, other exhibits at the fair included recent works by ethnographers Edward S. Curtis and Roland W. Reed; exhibits on the development of tool-making by primitive man; archaeological displays of Anasazi cliff dwellings; models of aboriginal life rivaling those at the Field Museum in Chicago and the National Museum in Washington; collections of pottery, rugs, baskets, and domestic utensils; and diagrams of Indian symbols. Accompanying these displays of native American relics and manufactures, Hewett planned displays of live Indians in a setting known as the Santa Fe Exhibit. Popularly known as the Painted Desert or simply the Indian Village, this six-acre mock-up of a Pueblo village and its desert environs was constructed specifically for the exposition. The Painted Desert was staffed by about 200 people from seven different southwestern Indian tribes, who were paid to live on the grounds and carry out their daily activities for the edification and entertainment of fair visitors. Their “performances” included herding cattle, sheep, goats, and horses into

⁶⁷Edgar L. Hewett, “Ancient America at the Panama-California Exposition,” *Art and Archaeology* 2 (November 1915): 67. See also Edgar L. Hewett, “America’s Archaeological Heritage,” *Art and Archaeology* 4 (December 1916): 257-66.

corrals; curing wood and hay on racks; cooking with authentic pots and utensils; creating jewelry and useful decorative objects such as rugs, baskets, and pottery (which they sold to visitors as souvenirs); performing ceremonial rituals and dances; and offering prayers from sunken kivas.⁶⁸ After walking through the construction site, Henri enthused, “they are going to have a fine [I]ndian village at the San Diego Expo. Hopi and Taos houses and landscape—we visited them with Dr. Hewitt [sic] while in process of erection by [I]ndians—very interesting.”⁶⁹

Hewett’s major goal in creating the Painted Desert was to showcase the artistic and architectural achievements of the Indians of the southwest, both past and present, in order to correct widespread American misconceptions and stereotypes about the continent’s indigenous populations. He hoped the display would highlight their talents, thus projecting a positive view of Indians as “colorful, gentle, and sensitive people.”⁷⁰ These were his aims in Santa Fe as well, where he was a politically astute and skilled promoter of the “land of

⁶⁸The seven tribes that participated were Apache, Navajo, Havasupai, Hopi, Keres (from Acoma), Tiwa (from Isleta and Taos), and Tewa (from San Ildefonso). The most complete description of the Painted Desert is found in Amero, “A History of the Exposition,” chapter 3; see also Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 6-9.

⁶⁹Henri, Santa Fe, to Bill and Mary Roberts, New York, August 17, 1914, Beinecke, box 9, folder 210.

⁷⁰Amero, “A History of the Exposition,” chapter 3. Hewett apparently later wrote (“A History of the Exposition,” chapter 5) that “my mother made me promise her when I grew to manhood, I would give all my efforts towards doing something for the American Indian that would let the world see him as he is, and not as the wild west shows, cheap-fiction and moving pictures present him.”

enchantment” and of the town’s cultural life. These goals were furthered through his influential position as the founder of the Museum of New Mexico, which opened in 1917, and as an important liaison between the tourist industry, local developers and boosters, the artists and literati of the artist colony, anthropologists, and the Tewa of San Ildefonso Pueblo.

More specifically, Hewett was largely responsible for developing Santa Fe as a tourist destination based upon the romantic desire for the primitive and for native American arts and crafts in particular. Hewett enjoyed a close relationship with the Tewa, who performed ceremonial dances for tourists and townspeople in the courtyard of the museum and at the annual Santa Fe Fiesta; demonstrated pottery and painting techniques in the museum; sold their wares at the museum and at local trading posts; and worked for the museum in various capacities as guides, interpreters, and janitors. He employed a number of Tewa men, including Crecencio Martinez and Julian Martinez—two of Henri’s 1914 sitters—to assist in archaeological digs of nearby ancient Anasazi sites, and sought their interpretations of the ruins, wall murals, and potsherds of their ancestors. Through Hewett’s guidance, the Martinezes and other members of their family would become known for their watercolor paintings reproducing Anasazi mural designs and depicting local ceremonial dances. Hewett also encouraged the best potters of the village, including Julian’s wife Maria and her sisters, to emulate in their own productions the superior quality and design of Anasazi pottery. In this way he hoped to revitalize the dying Pueblo pottery tradition and to create a cash market

for their art works that would replace their quickly fading traditional subsistence lifestyle. By encouraging the Tewa to study and to emulate the Golden Age of their ancestors, he hoped to reverse the “decadence” of living native peoples, and to help them approach the glory of their past civilization.⁷¹

Above all, Hewett was interested in promoting the native Americans of the southwest as authentic artisans, and in maintaining the quality of the whole range of indigenous crafts, which was, paradoxically, threatened by the high demand for these objects by tourists and eastern collectors. He believed in the importance of reviving indigenous forms and in keeping “the arts of each pueblo as distinct as possible” in an effort to maintain the essential quality of Indian design untainted by marketplace demands.⁷² These goals, and especially the focus on authenticity, were widely embraced by the purists of the Santa Fe and Taos colonies, especially the artists and literati like Henri, whose activities centered around their own search for authenticity as represented by the native American. Despite their rhetoric, however, Hewett and his colleagues met with commercial success mainly by adapting the image and productions of the Indian to accommodate popular taste.

⁷¹There are a number of studies of the Martinez family, the San Ildefonso pottery tradition, and the Santa Fe Indian painters. Among those I found useful are Rick Dillingham, *Fourteen Families in Pueblo Pottery* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994); Susan Peterson, *The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez* (Tokyo, New York, and San Francisco: Kodansha International, 1977); Spivey, *Maria*; and Brody, *Pueblo Indian Painting*. On Crescencio Martinez, see also Edgar L. Hewett, “Crescencio Martinez—Artist,” *El Palacio* 5 (August 3, 1918): 67-68.

⁷²Hewett, quoted in Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 17.

The native American as authentic artist

Given Hewett's strong beliefs about native American history and culture, and his major role as a leading proponent of indigenous crafts, it is not surprising that Henri was strongly attracted to Hewett's ideology. Both men found Indians appealed to be natural and instinctual artisans, whose collective culture was unconsciously but clearly and undeniably expressed through its art productions. Indian communities had no individual artists, they believed, only the expression of the people and their long and rich history; they had no "art for art's sake," but instead seamlessly integrated art into daily life through the creation of functional but beautiful objects and the performance of brilliantly choreographed and costumed ceremonials. While Henri apparently saw a limited future for the Indians, calling them a "crushed out race," he nonetheless found their communal culture a model for American society. He especially appreciated their innate artistic genius and the purity of their lives, and marveled at the mystery and beauty of their ceramics and textiles, which expressed to him "some great life principle" and "a bright spark of spiritual life." This was a message he wanted to project to his students and other artists, writing in a 1916 "Letter from New Mexico" that

Here in the pueblos of New Mexico the Indians still make beautiful pottery and rugs, works which are mysterious and at the same time revealing of some great life principle which the old race had. Although some hands lead, the whole pueblo seems responsible for the work and stands for their communal greatness. It represents them, reveals a certain spirituality we would like to comprehend, explains to a degree that distinction which we recognize in their bearing.

Materially they are a crushed out race, but even in the remnant there is a bright spark of spiritual life which we others with all our goods and material protections can envy.

They have art as a part of each one's life. The whole pueblo manifests itself in a piece of pottery. . . . Undoubtedly in the ancient Indian race, genius was the possession of all; the reality of their lives.⁷³

These strongly felt views were very much in keeping with his appreciation of other primitive and peasant cultures, such as the peasants of Achill Island, the gypsies, bullfighters, and flamenco performers of Spain, and the fisherman of Holland, who maintained important aspects of their traditional way of life in the face of encroaching modernism. Yet, in Santa Fe, Henri's primitivist philosophy found its highest expression in the artistic productions of the native American, whose non-materialistic, collective lifestyle and the integration of art within daily life served as potent models for the enhancement of American art and society. As Henri wrote to his former student, Henry Lovins, to encourage his work as a designer of decorative tiles, the highest goal of an artist is self-expression, which can be achieved only by ignoring market demands and the desire for material success. In this, the native American offered an exemplary model to emulate.

It is a great mistake many people make when they believe "high" art is only on canvas. Some of these [I]ndians here get a rare evidence, not only of themselves but of their race into the simple decoration of a piece of pottery or in the make of the pottery itself. Plainly their work is not merely a convention, does not aim at being a "design" or "work of art" but through design as a means they succeed in self

⁷³Robert Henri, "Letter from New Mexico," in *The Art Spirit*, comp. Margery Ryerson (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1923; reprint, New York: Harper and Row, 1984), 187-88.

revelation for that is their motive—the work of art is therefore a matter of course. Only from those who have intense love and the great desire, at whatever cost, to express that love, can the rare work of art come. To those who have definite purpose—the will to express just what fills them allowing no deflection to something nearly as good—to such as these invention in design is inevitable.⁷⁴

While Hewett's ideas were a potent influence on Henri's appreciation of native American arts and crafts, both men's primitivist outlook also mirrored the philosophy of American arts and crafts reformers who similarly aimed to integrate art with daily life. For decades, American progressive reformers and arts and crafts movement leaders had been staunch proponents of Indian handmade manufactures. One of the leading champions of Indian artworks was the magazine *The Craftsman*, edited by Henri's close friend Mary Fanton Roberts.⁷⁵ Henri echoed *The Craftsman's* philosophy of putting art within the reach of the average American, and incorporating art and creativity into everyday life. The magazine encouraged Americans to distance themselves from impersonal mass produced

⁷⁴Henri, Santa Fe, to Lovins, Denver, September 24, 1917, Hewett MSS. Several years earlier (Henri to Lovins, July 1914, Hewett MSS), Henri had exhorted Lovins to steel himself against the crass materialism inherent in modern society, encouraging him to "devote yourself to the delights of the art life. California will need men contented with sufficient cash, who having sufficient for moderate needs, will devote their energys [sic] to the finer side—to the deeper enjoyments. I see that the mass of the people will run money mad and the deadly aristocracy of the dollar will be a menace to the greatness of the country."

⁷⁵Roberts had for a number of years been an important art critic, writing, under her *nom de plum*, Giles Edgerton, for several New York newspapers as well as for *The Craftsman*, for which she was also the managing editor from 1906 to 1916. (After the magazine's demise, she edited *Touchstone* and *Arts and Decoration*.)

goods, to express themselves artistically, to personalize their creations, and thereby to get in touch with their own creativity by making and building things for themselves—whether houses, furniture, or household items. *The Craftsman* additionally stressed the importance of quality, functionality, and simplicity in design, values derived from the arts and architecture of numerous peasant and pre-industrial cultures, including Japan, China, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Sweden, and native American.

Among these, native American art was seen as particularly noteworthy, and *The Craftsman* writers hoped that emulation of the aesthetic philosophies of the original Americans would raise contemporary artistic standards. First, Indians were seen to be culturally “pure” with little, if any, influence from outside cultures. Second, their creative output was seen as simple and useful as well as decorative, and could be used in Anglo as well as Indian homes. Third, critics considered Indian craftsmanship to be superior, and these high standards were seen as exemplary for Anglo artists and consumers. Moreover, for critics the incorporation of Indian values—spirituality, nature, and tradition—into arts and crafts products made these works even more significant and meaningful, because they thereby were seen to represent moral as well as artistic qualities and revealed the interconnectedness of art with both daily life and important cultural beliefs.⁷⁶

⁷⁶Kent C. Boese, “‘Distinctively American’: Design Critics’ Use and Promotion of Native American Models in *The Craftsman Magazine* (1901-1916),” unpublished paper, 1997 Winterthur Conference on Material Culture <<http://www.angelfire.com/va2/boese/winterthur.html>>. See also Dilworth,

Many of these ideas were expressed by the journal's founder Gustave Stickley in an 1910 article entitled "Indian Blankets, Baskets and Bowls: The Product of the Original Craftworkers of This Continent."⁷⁷ This article praised "the only real handicraft this country knows, that of the Indians," which Stickley found to be "sincere" and "authentic" because it incorporated the artists' individuality and creativity as well as "the life, customs, and character of a fast-vanishing race." Most important, the works intrinsically incorporated Indian spiritual beliefs (Stickley called them "superstitions" and "mystic element[s]") in an expression of the native culture completely unaffected by market demands. Of course, Stickley's article demonstrated an incomplete understanding of Indian life and belief systems, and did not acknowledge the degree to which years of acculturation and contact with non-Indians, including white traders, tourists, and arts and crafts advocates, actually affected the form and design of Indian artisanal products. However, *The Craftsman's* outlook was significant in that it reflected and promoted a widespread American desire that emulation of pre-industrial cultures could reinvigorate American life. *The Craftsman*, as well as the arts and crafts movement as a whole, reflected an American desire for handmade, functional goods (as opposed to mass-produced), for artistic creativity unfettered by outside influences, and for nature,

Imagining Indians of the Southwest, 125-72, which discusses the "spectacle of Indian artisanal labor" in American culture circa 1890s-1920s.

⁷⁷[Gustave Stickley], "Indian Blankets, Baskets and Bowls: The Product of the Original Craftworkers of This Continent," *Craftsman* 17 (February 1910): 588-90.

spiritual beliefs, and daily life to be reconnected with artistic production. It was these aspects of Indian art and culture that most appealed to Henri.

Stickley's ideas were reiterated by Charles Eastman, an acculturated Sioux and frequent *Craftsman* contributor who published numerous books and articles explaining to white Americans the "mysteries" of native American culture and spiritual beliefs. Eastman's "'My People:' The Indians' Contribution to the Art of America," which appeared in *The Craftsman* only three months before Henri's "My People," did, contained many parallels with Henri's philosophy. Eastman argued that the sheer variety of native American arts—music, dance, pottery, and "useful arts"—was evidence of the natural creativity possessed by all Indians. Asserting that "in his sense of the aesthetic, which is closely akin to religious feeling, the American Indian stands alone" (179) and that "the average Indian child far surpasses the average white child" in natural creativity (183), Eastman celebrated the quality and sincerity associated with Indian arts. However, he cautioned that these values were increasingly endangered by progress, growing industrialization, and market forces, a popular view which Henri and *Craftsman* readers would have agreed with.

This native skill, combined with love of the work and perfect sincerity—the qualities which still make the Indian woman's blanket, or basket, or bowl, or moccasins, of the old type, so highly prized—are among the most precious things lost or sacrificed to the advance of an alien civilization. Cheap machine-made garments and utensils, without beauty or durability, have crowded out the old; and where the women still ply their ancient crafts, they do it now for money, nor for love, and in most cases use modern materials and patterns, even imported yarns and poor dyes!. . . . As the older generation

passes, there is danger of losing altogether the secret of Indian art and craftsmanship.⁷⁸

Like Eastman, Henri wanted to encourage, not destroy, creative human impulses. Though Eastman purported to speak only for the Indian, Henri's "people" encompassed a much broader group, claiming any primitive cultures who expressed the same natural freedom, creativity, and dignity as the Indians.

The use of the term "my people" in these articles is worth discussing briefly. One implication of the phrase is Henri's (and white America's) paternalistic though often well-intentioned reformist attitudes toward "primitives", immigrants, and other non-white people, who were believed to need guidance and education in order to function as American citizens. Eastman's use of the term also implies that he is speaking for Indians in general, eliding distinct differences between specific tribes in a manner characteristic of the era. In the context of cultural nationalism, the phrase "my people" was also commonly associated with "the folk," the unsophisticated rural people of a nation who were believed to be the storehouses of the nation's traditions and unique identity. In contrast, "the masses", another popular term of the day, was more politically charged, suggesting the urban poor, especially immigrants. While both terms essentially address the lower class, "the people" was certainly less threatening, more nostalgic, in its suggestion of an idyllic rural, pre-industrial past.

⁷⁸Charles Eastman, "'My People': The Indians' Contribution to the Art of America," *Craftsman* 27 (November 1914): 179-86.

Given his beliefs regarding the importance of native American arts as a model for the rejuvenation of American arts and society, it is not surprising that Henri focused on native American subjects more exclusively in the portraits he created in Santa Fe. In 1916 and 1917, Henri produced over one hundred portraits depicting Indians subjects, mostly smaller studies of Tewa children but also one large-scale portrait of Dieguito Roybal, a respected San Ildefonso elder and associate of Hewett, depicted in his role as a drummer of the Eagle Dance. As a group, these portraits have been praised for their vibrant use of color and design, which have been identified as marking a new phase in Henri's portraiture.⁷⁹ However, as Henri's brilliant use of color in his La Jolla pictures demonstrates, his color experimentations proceeded his arrival in Santa Fe, and were in fact toned down a notch to reflect the subdued New Mexican desert environment as well as the colors of natural dyes used in native blankets. Rather, it is the incorporation of Indian blankets as design elements, as well as Indian artisanal products such as baskets, bowls, and beaded jewelry, that provided the most significant departure from Henri's usual portrait style, which typically contrasted a single sitter against a spare monochromatic or variegated background. Perhaps in response to critics' interpretations of his La Jolla work, Henri's compositional changes may have

⁷⁹Rushing, *Native American Art*, 58; Perlman, *Robert Henri: Life and Art*, 125. Leeds ("Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 9), in particular, asserted that the "brighter and more vivid coloration, multi-cultural heritage of the indigenous people, and distinctive southwestern geography, yielded a powerful new visual effect on the work [Henri] produced there."

represented an attempt to provide viewers a more complete picture of his native American subjects by intimately linking their racial identity, as embodied by their physiognomy and demeanor, with their artistic heritage. Moreover, the inclusion of artisanal productions in Henri's portraits of southwestern Indians makes explicit the linkages he made in letters, articles, and addresses to students between native Americans and their artistic contributions to American culture.

Handwoven Indian blankets, used both as colorful backdrops and as elements of costume, are perhaps the most conspicuous addition to Henri's Santa Fe paintings. These blankets serve multiple esthetic and symbolic functions. For example, in *Indian, Ricardo* (figure 5.11), Ricardo's head seems to rise out of what W. Jackson Rushing called a "blanket mountain", decorated with zigzag forms suggesting mountain peaks. The blankets and their bold geometric patterns focus the viewer's attention on the sitters' faces while also evoking both the "geometry of Indian design and the landscape forms it evokes."⁸⁰ Similarly, the sitter in *Indian Girl (Tewa Indian Girl)* (figure 5.12) is framed by diagonal lines arising from the shape of the red and white blanket draping her shoulders; a white arrow woven into the blanket parallels the line of her sloping shoulders and points upwards, suggesting movement in an otherwise stable pyramidal composition yet also through its symbolic import clearly identifying the blanket as one of Indian origin and implicitly linking the sitter's racial heritage to indigenous art forms. Nearly all

⁸⁰Rushing, *Native American Art*, 60-61. See also Truettner, "Art of Pueblo Life," in Eldredge, Schimmel, and Truettner, *Art in New Mexico*, 78.

the portraits follow this almost iconic formula. Additionally, a number of sitters, particularly girls, are conspicuously adorned with silver jewelry and beaded necklaces, notably *Tesuque Papoose* (figure 1.1) and *Julianita, Indian Girl Ready for the Dance* (figure 5.13). In one seemingly unique portrait, *Gregorita with the Santa Clara Bowl* (figure 5.14), one girl wraps her arm around a large, black water jar and gazes confidently at the viewer.

This association of the Indians with artisanal products was no doubt meant to suffuse the portraits with southwestern ambiance as well as to suggest a genuine “racial spirit.” Within the era’s primitivist paradigm, it was widely believed that the Indians’ artistic skills were natural and hereditary, that all Indians shared a brilliant aesthetic sensibility, and that even one piece of pottery could express the Indians’ communal and spiritual character or, as Henri called it, the “great life principle” of the entire race.⁸¹ In this context, Henri’s compositional juxtaposition of native individuals with their indigenous crafts productions is hardly unusual. While the use of the blanket background was new in Henri’s work, as a visual conceit for the depiction of native American subjects it was virtually a commonplace by 1917, popularized by early ethnophotographs by John K. Hillers and others.⁸² The black olla was similarly appropriated in numerous paintings by

⁸¹Henri, “Letter from New Mexico,” 187.

⁸²Truettner, “Science and Sentiment,” in Eldredge, Schimmel, and Truettner, *Art in New Mexico*, 40-41. According to Truettner, artists after the turn of the century “painted Indian life with an almost subconscious awareness of recent anthropological studies. . . The effect was immediately discernable in their

Taos and Santa Fe artists, including Bert Geer Phillips's *The Mysterious Olla* (figure 5.15). While the olla was often used, as in Henri's *Gregorita with the Santa Clara Bowl*, to establish the subject's identity as an autochthon who draws inner strength from the bowl, and thus from the traditions of her ancestors,⁸³ the trade blankets and pottery seen in paintings were also themselves commodities to be collected and displayed in homes or anthropological museums; viewers may have read them both as "mysterious" ancient art traditions and as objects to be purchased as tourist souvenirs. (This secondary, commercial reference, however, may not have been intended by the artists.) The blackware jar, in particular, would come to be Maria and Julian Martinez's signature piece, and established their reputations as the leading potters of the southwest.

Moreover, given his association of Indians with artistic ideals, it is not surprising that most of Henri's Tewa subjects were young women. Native women made the blankets, baskets, pottery, and beaded items that were increasingly appreciated by enthusiastic tourists and collectors. Native men had long been associated with hunting and war; within Pueblo cultures, men began painting pottery and creating watercolor depictions of native ceremonies only in the 1910s, when drought and worsening economic conditions on the reservations made work

work, a blend of subjects and attitudes from both sources that would form a distinct iconography, as well as a revealing guide to Anglo perceptions of southwestern Indian life, over the next four decades."

⁸³Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant Garde*, 61.

as an artist more lucrative than farming. Photographic portrayals of native Americans had long been dominated by portraits of male warriors and chiefs; Henri's focus on women reflected a recent shift in public perception of the Indian as a peaceful artisan rather than a threat to public safety. Moreover, Anglo appreciation of native arts and female artistry reflected the separation of genders among white artisans in the arts and crafts era, which associated men with "high" art such as painting and sculpture, and women with "low" arts such as pottery, baskets, and domestic arts. In fact, arts reformers often cited the Indian woman's crafts production as a model for white women's production of textiles and art pottery.⁸⁴

While Henri included patterned blankets and other props to suggest the racial identity of his Indian subjects, he also attempted to embody in his subjects' expressions, physiognomy, and demeanor the overall temperament and personality that he believed was typical of the race. Accordingly, his native American sitters all share a similar somber nature that contrasts with the often colorful designs of the backgrounds. Most of the Indian boys, for example, in paintings such as *Indian, Ricardo; Tesuque Buck* (1916; Kirkpatrick Foundation, Oklahoma City); and *Young Buck of Tesuque Pueblo* (figure 5.16), appear sullen yet defiant, a mood which greatly contrasts the ebullience of many of Henri's

⁸⁴Constance Goddard du Bois, "The Indian Woman as a Craftsman," *Craftsman* 7 (July 1904): 391-93; and Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor: Ruskin, Morris, and the Craftsman Ideal in America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 101.

laughing children. Like many Americans, Henri believed the Indian to be serious, reticent, and inscrutable, with a “nobility of poise [and] of gesture,” and his Indian portraits seem to support this view.⁸⁵ His ability to capture this supposedly essential Indian characteristic was noted and praised by numerous viewers. Taos colony artist Victor Higgins wrote to Henri in 1917 that “you have caught to a great degree the silent immobility that we associate with the American Indian, a thing which seems to have escaped the other painters who have tackled the subject.”⁸⁶ A California critic, writing in 1914, noted that Henri’s portraits “indicate[d] that national characteristic of reserve and passivity”; in 1917, Santa Fe audiences likewise found that Henri’s portraits “were superb in their dignity, their spiritual qualities, [and] the success with which the artist had sensed the mysteries of the Red Man’s mind which glowed in their eyes and was reflected in their faces.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵Henri, “My People,” 460.

⁸⁶Victor Higgins, Taos, to Henri, New York, January 24, 1917, Beinecke, box 4, folder 97.

⁸⁷E. W. F., “Art and Artists,” *San Diego Union*, undated clipping [1915], Hewett MSS; “Week’s Review of Society: What Artists are Doing,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 14, 1916, 5. The belief that all native Americans looked and behaved alike and shared a specific psyche peculiar to their race was widespread and influential in Henri’s day, and appeared in such respected scientific works as Daniel Brinton’s *Races and People: Lectures on the Science of Ethnography* (1890), *American Anthropology* (founded in 1889), and the Bureau of American Ethnology’s *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* (1907-10); see Berkhofer, *White Man’s Indian*, 55-62.

Henri's appreciation for native American culture included not only baskets, blankets, and other artistic productions, but also ceremonial performances, which he attended frequently. Often his companions included other artists, folklorists, writers, and anthropologists from the Santa Fe and Taos artist colonies, as well as other local worthies. These one- or two-day trips to Acoma, Taos, Tesuque, San Ildefonso, Santo Domingo, and local pueblos to witness native American dances were often the occasion for large social gatherings for Anglos in the Santa Fe and Taos communities. For example, the itinerary of a trip to Taos Pueblo included a dance at Bert Geer Phillips's studio for all the artists in town that weekend; attending the festivities at the pueblo, which included dance performances, "[I]ndian relay races, [C]ochari antics, [and] the climbing of the greased pole"; another party, this one at Julius Rolshoven's studio; and a visit to the Mexican *sanctuario* at Chimayo.⁸⁸ In September, he visited San Ildefonso for the annual Buffalo Dance with about a dozen artists, plus Natalie Curtis, a musicologist who transcribed native American songs and music; her husband Paul Burlin, who, like Henri, had a studio in the Governor's Palace; and Winthrop Field "of the Chicago Marshall Fields who visits all the dances and Pueblos of New Mexico."⁸⁹ Henri and his colleagues valued these dances as natural expressions of native American

⁸⁸Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, August 2, 1917, Beinecke, Box 16, folder 407.

⁸⁹Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, September 18, 1917, Beinecke Box 16, folder 409.

creativity and artistic abilities, and his letters reveled in the beauty and the spectacle of the processions of dancers in their colorful costumes and the music of the drums and chanting against the backdrop of pueblo architecture and desert landscape.

The beating of the [I]ndian drums, the singing of the chorus, and the brilliant costumes in the sun as they came out in brave procession from the Kiva was a sight to see. The men half naked with feathers on one side and a horn on the other side of their heads held by a band over their loose hair. The women in brilliant silks and ornaments all of them, men and women carrying in their hands, and decorated with symbols of festive color and design—The men carried bows and arrows and two men had buffalo heads. The whole dance in its gestures symbolized the hunting of the buffalo, and was a prayer for good hunting. The dance is repeated with slight variation during the day at certain intervals. There are of course secret ceremonies in the Kiva to which whites are not admitted.⁹⁰

Henri was especially interested in witnessing authentic dances, not those performed for tourists, and thereby corrupted. At San Ildefonso, he wrote, “the dance is the best of anywhere. The [I]ndians there carry out their ceremony with great ability, having much pride in doing it well altho[ugh] they have no audience as in some of the other places. . . . Had none of us been there the dance would have been just the same.”⁹¹

Though Henri produced no paintings of these performances, as did a number of his colleagues in the Santa Fe and Taos art colonies, his views on their

⁹⁰Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, November 1917, Beinecke, Box 17, folder 411.

⁹¹Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, September 18, 1917, Beinecke, box 16, folder 409.

significance as an art form are recorded in numerous letters. In paintings, the reference to ceremonials was more oblique, and surfaces in portraits such as *Julianita, Indian Girl Ready for the Dance* and his full-sized *Dieguito, Drummer of the Eagle Dance, San Ildefonso* (figure 5.17), both of which depict Tewa subjects wearing their ceremonial costumes.⁹² In his portrait, Dieguito Roybal sits with drumstick in hand, pounding a large barrel drum. Perfectly self-possessed, he looks straight ahead at the viewer. The background--a tan-colored wall with a dark mass, perhaps a doorway, at left--suggests the adobe architecture typical of San Ildefonso. Roybal was the drummer for the Eagle Dance and a rain priest from San Ildefonso's Summer moiety--the group responsible for ceremonies regarding agriculture and rain.⁹³ While this full-length, seated, and frontal pose was unusual in Henri's recent works (one would have to go back to his full-length Spanish portraits to find precedents for costumed performers), the iconic quality of the portrayal suggests the seriousness of the activity and respect for the sitter.

Yet the painting is not only a portrait of an individual, but a reference to the colorful and exotic spectacles of the Pueblo Indians that drew numerous artists, anthropologists, and tourists to New Mexico, and as such it takes on an air of commercialism. While Henri presumably intended it as a tribute to Indian

⁹²Henri did make some sketches and drawings of dance ceremonies, including *Indian Dance* (1916-1917; Estate of Robert Henri); *At the Buffalo Dance, Tesuque* (1917; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York), and *Tesuque Pueblo* (1917; Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe).

⁹³David H. Snow, "Dieguito Roybal," *El Palacio* 88 (summer 1982): 14-16.

ceremonial traditions, to viewers today it suggests a blend of authenticity and stereotype, or what Dean MacCannell has termed “reconstructed authenticity.”⁹⁴ This term is appropriate here, since in Henri’s day many Pueblo dances were in danger of being banned as actual spiritual practices, though ironically their performance was encouraged as tourist entertainment. The Eagle Dance, in particular, was a popular Tewa ceremonial often performed for Anglos. It was one of the most popular native dances at the San Diego Exposition’s Painted Desert in 1915 and was often performed as part of the annual Santa Fe Fiesta. *El Palacio*, the journal published by the Museum of New Mexico, which sponsored the Fiesta, called it “one of the most graceful of the cycle of winter ceremonies of the Pueblos . . . [whose] beauty never fails to arouse admiration and amazement” and “as noble and lofty as any classic drama.”⁹⁵ Considering the huge popularity the dance enjoyed with visitors to New Mexico, it seems likely that many white artists, Henri included, were attracted less to the ritual significance of the Eagle Dance than to the picturesqueness of the ceremony as spectacle. For his part, Henri painted the portrait from “memory sketches”⁹⁶, having witnessed not the actual performance of the dance but a practice session or perhaps a demonstration for tourists, which took place in the plaza of the museum, near his studio.

⁹⁴Dean MacCannell, “Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 11 (1984): 375-91.

⁹⁵“The Santa Fe Fiesta,” *El Palacio* 7 (September 30, 1919): 130-31.

⁹⁶Leeds, “Robert Henri and the American Southwest,” 188.

This portrait is often interpreted as an “incisive characterization” and a realistic representation of the sitter.⁹⁷ While Henri believed that it was one of his “top notch [sic] canvases,” he himself admitted that the canvas was higher keyed than it should have been, an aspect of the painting which detracted from its naturalism and which accordingly drew the criticism of many viewers.⁹⁸ The chartreuse leggings in particular seem less than authentic, and suggest Henri’s color embellishments more than the actual color of deerskin. Moreover, while on one hand the full-length format and the large size of the portrait suggest the importance of Roybal’s role in the San Ildefonso community and the respect of outsiders for Pueblo traditions, on the other hand the portrait is a trope, similar in numerous respects to others which portray Indian men as the stereotypical “Indian chief” or the elder tribal statesmen. For instance, Bert Geer Phillips’ *Captain of the Buffalo Dance* (c. 1910; Anschutz Collection, Denver) is a full-length seated profile portrait of a somber yet dignified elder male, dressed in a buffalo robe, eagle feather bonnet, and deerskin moccasins; the performance he silently views is depicted by a line of dancers in the background. Joseph Henry Sharp’s *The Old War Drummer* (c. 1918; location unknown) utilizes dramatic lighting, an enclosed, cavelike space (a kiva?), and props such as drums to suggest the Indians’ ancient and mysterious spiritual traditions, much in the same way that *Dieguito’s*

⁹⁷Leeds, *Robert Henri in Santa Fe*, 13.

⁹⁸Henri, New York, to Hewett, Santa Fe, November 23, 1916, Hewett MSS.

hierarchal, formal pose suggests a sacral tradition distinctly different from white experience.⁹⁹ Likewise, the academic verisimilitude of Eanger Irving Couse's seated warrior *Elk-Foot of the Taos Tribe* (figure 5.18) creates the impression of an actual person, a dignified and respected individual; however, Couse took a number of liberties with the portrait, including dressing the Taos Indian in Plains regalia, which blurred the distinction between authentic portrayal and stereotype.¹⁰⁰

Henri wrote to Mary Fanton Roberts and her husband that "the painting of the drummer chief Diegito [sic] gave so much pleasure to the old warrior that when I presented it to the Museum he would sit by it for hours everyday enjoying without a smile or a sense of awareness the attention of the visitors in the Gallery."¹⁰¹ This phrase has often been cited to imply the portrait's accuracy and convincing realism: if the sitter himself liked it, it must be realistic. Yet Henri must have exaggerated. Would such an important figure in San Ildefonso have had the

⁹⁹Shown in 1918 in an exhibition of the Taos Society of Artists, *Old War Drummer* was featured on the cover of *El Palacio* 5 (August 10, 1918).

¹⁰⁰There are in fact a number of similarities between *Elk Foot* and *Dieguito*. Both were studio pictures of favorite models: Jerry Mirabel, who often posed for Couse and Sharp, and Dieguito Roybal, who posed for Henri and other Santa Fe artists. Mirabel's red blanket was of commercial, not native, manufacture; the moccasins are studio accessories; and the coup stick is related to a Plains, not Pueblo, ritual. Dieguito's ceremonial costume is more authentic, yet the bold colors were Henri's embellishments. Both sitters were chosen to represent the most characteristic and dignified traits of the Indian, qualities that were enhanced by the artists' inclusion of the coup stick and the ceremonial drum.

¹⁰¹Henri to Mary and Bill Roberts, 1920, quoted in Homer, *Robert Henri and His Circle*, 205. Henri donated the painting to the museum shortly after he complete it in 1916.

time or inclination simply to sit in the museum and stare at a portrait of himself for hours on end? In fact, Roybal, Hewett's trusted guide and liaison with the Tewa community of San Ildefonso, seems to have been quite a busy man, and would have enjoyed almost daily interaction with Henri and other artists and anthropologists working in Santa Fe. Hewett wrote in 1937 that "my own studies for more than thirty years have been assisted beyond measure by two remarkable Tewa men, now dead, for many years my guides and companions, Weyima (Antonio Domingo Peña) and Dieguito Roybal."¹⁰² Hewett not infrequently arranged for his Tewa friends—including Henri's 1914 sitters—to pose for white painters and photographers; Roybal himself was the subject of numerous photographs and paintings produced between 1914 and 1923. As in Henri's portrait, which is perhaps the most famous depiction of him, he was most often portrayed as the drummer of the Eagle Dance or as a rain priest, as shown on the cover of *El Palacio* in 1923.¹⁰³ David H. Snow has suggested that Roybal's popularity with artists was related to a major drought during those years, when Roybal's role as a rain priest was especially crucial to the people of San Ildefonso.¹⁰⁴ Yet few Anglos, especially the target audience of eastern collectors, would have recognized a connection between Roybal's ceremonial clothing and

¹⁰²Quoted in Snow, "Dieguito Roybal," 15. Hewett also recognized Crecencio Martinez's contributions to his work in Hewett, "Crecencio Martinez."

¹⁰³*El Palacio* 15 (September 15, 1923).

¹⁰⁴Snow, "Dieguito Roybal," 15.

local meteorological conditions. Instead, his ceremonial attire and his role as tribal drummer and rain priest, which alluded to the Pueblo peoples' ancient spiritual traditions, would simply have been more exotic and attractive to white artists than his actual everyday attire. Moreover, the frequency with which Roybal appeared as a model could be explained by the fact that, as one of Hewett's closest associates among the Tewa, he may have been more willing and available to model for photographers and painters who worked in Santa Fe than other Tewa males.

My point here is not to show that the image of Roybal or other Tewa sitters was inaccurate as a likeness, but that Henri's portraits in general, like those of many of his colleagues in the Santa Fe and Taos colonies, reveal the artists' highly selective vision of Pueblo peoples. Their focus on the most colorful and exotic aspects of native American life has been questioned by some scholars, who have noted the incongruity of the scenario in which painters who made their reputations as realists associated with the "ugly" and commonplace displaying a dominating concern with the picturesqueness of their subjects.¹⁰⁵ Others have suggested that realism requires a more well-rounded and inclusive depiction of native life.

Fact vs. fiction in portrayals of Pueblo peoples

Because Henri typically eschewed landscape settings or genre scenes and focused mainly on portraits of single figures, his canvases have been subject to

¹⁰⁵Brody, *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, 71.

much speculation and conflicting interpretations. His native American portraits in particular have often been seen in relation to the ethnological studies of native peoples and compared to the documentary photographs and paintings of native American subjects that proliferated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as countless artists and ethnographers flocked to the American west to document the “vanishing race” before its demise. The similarities are especially evident in Henri’s apparent realism and unflinching presentation of his subjects; the portraits’ single figure, head-and-shoulders format; the stilled, timeless quality of the works, which exclude evidence of modern life or white contact; the stoic demeanor of the sitters; and the emphasis on traditional native costume and crafts. Additionally, the profile poses in some of Henri’s works have brought specific comparisons to ethnophotographs of native subjects.¹⁰⁶

One fundamental question that continually arises in discussions of Henri’s southwestern portraits, then, is the issue of art vs. ethnography. Are Henri’s portraits realistic documents of Native American subjects in a scientific tradition? Or do they transcend documentation to rise to the level of pure art? Should they be interpreted as authentic and accurate portrayals of specific individuals? Or was Henri more interested in using the individual to evoke certain aspects of Indian culture that he deemed significant? Was Henri an artist or a mere recorder of a

¹⁰⁶For contrasting views of the relevance of the profile pose, see Cohen, “Robert Henri: Portrait of the American Indian,” 52-53; and Leeds, “Robert Henri and the American Southwest,” 186-87.

vanishing race? One reviewer in 1915 believed that in his 1914 Tewa portraits, Henri saw “the type of Indian of the particular tribe to which they belong, and he also expresses his personal conception of the abstract human being.”¹⁰⁷ Others saw mere postcard clichés. This conflict continues today. How much did Henri or his viewers actually know about the individuals he portrayed? How much did he really know about the cultural traditions he aimed to evoke? An astute characterization of Henri’s New Mexico pictures has been provided by W. Jackson Rushing, who points to the dual nature of Henri’s portraits as realistic on the surface, yet also highly symbolic, embodying the ideology of modernist primitivism.¹⁰⁸

Yet how realistic were Henri’s paintings as records of Tewa individuals or their lives? Like his portraits of Irish peasants, Spanish gypsies, and other subjects, Henri’s Tewa portraits ignore the social reality of his sitters, capturing them in an ahistorical setting that asserts a timeless presence. Living on their traditional lands, the Pueblo Indians were thought to be among the most stable tribes in the United States and the least in danger of losing their traditional ways. Henri’s portraits encourage this perception, for they still time and minimize or even eliminate evidence of outside cultural influences on the Tewa. Freezing sitters in the “ethnographic present”, the portraits suggest that the Tewa still live as their ancestors did and that they would always carry on their people’s traditions. Yet

¹⁰⁷E. W. F., “Art and Artists,” *San Diego Union*, undated clipping [1915], Hewett MSS.

¹⁰⁸Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 58-62.

even in Henri's day the Pueblo Indians and their way of life were greatly imperiled by drought, loss of land to American squatters and developers, erosion of communal society and traditions, and pressures from the American government to forsake traditional language and beliefs and to assimilate to American society. The life they lived was not the life suggested by the paintings of Henri and his colleagues in the Santa Fe and Taos colonies.

In fact, most of the Santa Fe and Taos artists combined a realistic or academic style with highly symbolic messages and inventive pictorial devices. Consider Ernest Bluemenschein's *Taos Indian Holding Water Jug* (1911; Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe), which depicts a Taos man dressed in a colorful blanket and Plains-type feather headdress peering down at a large pottery jar in his hands; Phillips's *Relics of His Ancestors* (n.d.; Koshare Indian Museum, La Junta, Co.), which presents a bare-chested man in leather leggings in a cavelike setting pondering the baskets and pottery shards on the ground before him; or the fanciful *The Mysterious Olla*, in which a bare-chested Indian youth gazes down into the mouth of a large water jar, ostensibly to discover the hidden mysteries contained therein.¹⁰⁹ Examples such as these typify the pastiches of props, figures, and settings painted in a highly realistic manner and meant to evoke a general

¹⁰⁹“Why has he climbed up on a carved and painted Hispanic chest, in a garment that would probably fall off if he made such an effort, in order to peer into a piece of blackware pottery?” Julie Schimmel asked. “The scene is incomprehensible, although it is one of Phillip’s most popular images”; see Schimmel, “Hispanic and Native Peoples of the Southwest,” in Schimmel and White, *Bert Geer Phillips*, 147-48.

“Indianness” for a white audience unfamiliar with actual native American life.¹¹⁰

Certainly, Henri’s portraits eschew the imaginative narrative typical of these and other Santa Fe and Taos colony paintings, yet they also shared oft-invoked tropes to signify the mysteries and ancient traditions of Pueblo culture and likewise avoided references to present day reality.

One atypical portrait, *Little Indian School Boy* (figure 5.19), stands out for its clear references to outside forces on Pueblo culture. The military uniform and short haircut mark the boy as a student of a government Indian school. “Before” and “after” photographs of Indian school students were ubiquitous in the popular press at the turn of the twentieth century, and were used by reformers to show that the wild Indian could be controlled through education. Native children were required to attend schools such as the Santa Fe Indian School, in which they were taught the English language, the tenets of Christianity, and the manners and dress of contemporary white society. They were forbidden to speak their native language and to practice their native religion and village traditions. After graduation, most were expected to leave their native community and enter white society as tradesmen, maids, or teachers.¹¹¹ Because of the government school’s emphasis on assimilation, San Ildefonso and neighboring villages were being

¹¹⁰Truettner, “The Art of Pueblo Life,” 63.

¹¹¹On the Santa Fe Indian School, see Sally Hyer, *One House, One Voice, One Heart: Native American Education at the Santa Fe Indian School* (Santa Fe: Museum of New Mexico Press, 1990).

slowly destroyed, even in Henri's day. As younger generations lost their fluency in their native tongue and more and more members moved away from home seeking employment, the pueblo found it increasingly difficult to carry on its traditional social organization and ceremonial rituals, many of which consequently died out.¹¹² Many of Henri's Indian sitters came from the Santa Fe Indian School.¹¹³ At least one girl, Gregorita Baca, was willing to pose because she didn't like school and its notoriously strict classes. While Henri painted the "Indian school boy" in his school uniform, he depicted the other children in native attire, even supplying some, including Baca, with "Indian" clothing from his studio.¹¹⁴ Henri apparently never exhibited the *Indian School Boy*, and it remained in his possession until his death.¹¹⁵ The romantic image of the traditional Indian was certainly more appealing to Henri and his audience.

In the Santa Fe and Taos colonies in particular, artists, anthropologists, and developers had a vested interest in preserving and disseminating the image of the

¹¹²According to Susan Edelman ("San Ildefonso Pueblo," 314), by 1910 76% of San Ildefonso children were enrolled at the government day school; 52% of San Ildefonso residents spoke English. By the 1970s, octogenarian Maria Martinez lamented that almost none of the San Ildefonso children spoke their native tongue; see Peterson, *The Living Tradition of Maria Martinez*, 84.

¹¹³Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, October 21, 1917, Beinecke, box 17, folder 410.

¹¹⁴Leeds, "Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 239.

¹¹⁵Leeds, *Robert Henri in Santa Fe*, 112.

traditional Indian. Indeed, a more accurate reading of Henri's southwestern works, as well as those of other Santa Fe and Taos painters, must acknowledge this inherent, symbiotic relationship between art, ethnography, and tourism in the southwest, for both towns and their art colonies. The continuity of traditions was of great concern to Hewett, Henri, and others of the Santa Fe community, who opposed government control and abolishment of native ceremonies, not only because they appreciated their beauty as spectacles and their value as traditional spiritual practices, but also because—and this secondary reason was often unacknowledged--New Mexico depended heavily upon the native tribes and their traditions for its very reputation as a popular tourist destination. As Hewett wrote to Henri in 1917, "I had been apprehensive that between the war and the church, the adverse influences might be too great for [the Corn Dance at Santo Domingo] and we would see this year, a great disintegration of the ceremony. Happily, the result was just the opposite of what I anticipated."¹¹⁶ Yet this concern rarely surfaced in Henri's nor his contemporaries' depictions of native subjects, which strove to preserve the image of the traditional Indian and avoided just such unpleasant evidence of change. A few rare exceptions exist in a number of works by John Sloan, such as *Grotesques at Santo Domingo* (1923; Kraushaar Galleries,

¹¹⁶Hewett, Santa Fe, to Henri, New York, August 8, 1918, Hewett MSS. In fact, many Pueblo dances were actually banned by the United States government in 1920, because they were part of the ongoing religious life of the Pueblos. However, they could be performed at the annual Santa Fe Fiesta, where they were considered "education and historical entertainment" and were being collected and preserved as part of American folk culture; see Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 208.

New York) and the etchings *Knees and Aboriginies* and *Indian Detour* (both 1927), which satirized the increasing tourist presence in New Mexico and the increasing commodification of Indian spiritual practices.¹¹⁷

Henri admired the Pueblo people as instinctual artists, whose pottery, textiles, and ceremonial traditions were the proof of their “great life principle.”¹¹⁸ In numerous letters he praised their innate artistic genius and their spirituality, creativity, and antimaterialism, and hoped these qualities might save the race as well as rejuvenate American culture in general. Yet defining native Americans as primarily artists blurred the complexities of Pueblo social organization. In fact, not all members of the village were artists, others were forced into making art in lieu of other economic opportunities, and those who did make blankets and pottery for trade or the market were actually paid very little for their labor. Moreover, the conflict between white concepts of artistic individualism and collective Indian identity was exacerbated by market forces, and not uncommonly put a strain on members of the Pueblo.¹¹⁹ As Sylvia Rodriguez has argued, Henri’s rosy, utopian view of the southwest was actually endemic to the Santa Fe and Taos artists, who preferred not to recognize any contradictions to their vision:

¹¹⁷For a discussion of Sloan’s Santa Fe work, see Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 62-68.

¹¹⁸Henri, “Letter from New Mexico,” 187.

¹¹⁹Edwin L. Wade, “Straddling the Cultural Fence: The Conflict for Ethnic Artists Within Pueblo Societies,” in *The Arts of the North American Indian: Native Traditions in Evolution* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1986), 243-54.

[they] sought and portrayed a world best understood in relation to the worlds it negated: the modern industrial city on the one hand and the stagnant rural ghetto on the other. . . . The reason for their imaginative transformation of the setting seems simple enough—no one would like, much less buy, social naturalistic paintings of the actual conditions which prevailed in the region: racism, poverty, alcoholism, and perpetual drought. But this was not a matter of conscious or cynical deception, because it is clear from their own testimony that the artists virtually saw what they painted. In any case, most of their work sold like hotcakes “back East” and advertised effectively for tourism.¹²⁰

Santa Fe's *Mexicanos*

Though native American subjects seemed to provide his most enduring interest in Santa Fe, Henri also painted a number of portraits of Santa Fe's *Mexicano* children. In contrast to his highly patterned, boldly colored portraits of Tewa individuals, or the bright colors of *Ramon* of 1914, the Santa Fe portraits of *Mexicanos* are characterized by subdued colors, simplified compositions, and sparse backgrounds. For example, the pictures of Lola, Francisco, and Bernadita are often executed in brown tones; the children's clothing is dark and non-descript and their facial expressions almost blank. Even in *Bernadita* (1922; San Diego Museum of Art), a portrait of Berna Escudero, Henri's most prominent subject of 1922, the subject virtually blends into the background, and as a result reveals little about the sitter's character or identity. While the portraits of Tilly (both 1917; Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida; and private

¹²⁰Sylvia Rodríguez, “Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45 (1989): 81.

collection) are more colorful, their warm orange-toned palette seems to have been selected mainly to complement the sitter's copper-orange complexion (Henri described her as a girl with "wild black hair, eyes that have looked into the sun and a face well burned by it"¹²¹). Likewise, Lola's fair complexion and dark hair and eyes are set off by a flesh-pink background and chocolate brown shawl. While the Tewa portraits were intended to reveal the racial character and "spirit" of his subjects, the *Mexicano* portraits are less obvious in their presentation of the sitters' ethnic heritage.¹²² As a result, these portraits are among Henri's least stereotyped portrayals. They are also among his least popular.¹²³

Clearly, Henri's Tewa portraits were motivated by his intense fascination with his subjects' spiritual life and rich artistic heritage; in contrast, Henri seems to have painted local *Mexicanos* not because of any deep seated interest in them as a people, but simply because they were more readily available as models.¹²⁴ While

¹²¹Henri, Santa Fe, to his mother, August 19, 1917, Beinecke, Box 16, folder 408.

¹²²As Leeds ("Robert Henri and the American Southwest," 293) has acknowledged, these portraits downplay the sitters' ethnicity through nondescript clothing and spare, monochromatic backgrounds.

¹²³Henri rarely exhibited his 1922 pictures, many of which portrayed *Mexicano* subjects, and among these only *Bernadita* sold before his death. *Pepita* (1917; Los Angeles County Museum of Art) was the only other portrait of a *Mexicano* subject to sell in Henri's lifetime.

¹²⁴In contrast to the *Mexicanos*, who lived in Santa Fe, the Indians lived in isolated villages several miles outside of town. While Henri made the long drive on dusty roads to the Santa Fe Indian School outside of town to get his Tewa sitters, the *Mexicano* children conveniently lived nearby.

his letters reveal a great respect for the folk life and spiritual traditions of the Indians of the southwest, they say virtually nothing about the local *Mexicano* community. Rather, his letters are dotted only by references to visits to local Mexican religious shrines such as Chimayo, outside Taos, and brief anecdotes about the Mexican-American children who visited his studio. While Leeds asserted that Henri rendered both groups “with compassion”¹²⁵, the more numerous, more varied, and more creative Indian portraits demonstrate Henri’s greater affinity for his Indian subjects.

In the context of contemporary views toward Mexican-Americans, Henri’s differential attitude is hardly unusual. While Santa Fe has often been described as a city of tri-cultural harmony, with Indians, Hispanics, and Anglos developing in parallel lines, the city’s *Mexicanos* in fact have long been relegated to the bottom rung of this triad. By the turn of the twentieth century, city boosters had found that tourists were attracted to the romance of the Spanish conquistadors and the region’s Spanish mission architectural heritage but were threatened by the presence of the Mexican working class, a feeling which was aided by anti-Mexican feelings instigated by Pancho Villa’s raids in 1916. Other artists, such as Georgia O’Keeffe, Raymond Jonson, and Marsden Hartley, noticed New Mexico’s *Mexicano* heritage only beginning in the 1920s, collecting devotional objects like *santos* and religious icons as folk art and incorporating them in their paintings to establish an

¹²⁵Leeds, “Robert Henri and the American Southwest,” 250.

exotic New Mexican flavor. Artists routinely depicted *Mexicanos* as devout Catholic peasants with a deep connection to the land, as heroic and persevering yet downtrodden and passive laborers, with heads bowed, shoulders stooped, and hands folded as if in prayer.¹²⁶ One of Henri's *Mexicano* portraits, *Mexican Girl, Maria* (figure 5.20), portrays just such this religious quality. Wrapped in a colorful white and green cloth with red accents (the colors recall those of the Mexican flag), the fine-complexioned young woman gazes to the side with soulful eyes in a pose reminiscent of a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe or other *santos* figures.

Yet images of Pueblo Indians clearly dominated the artistic output of the Santa Fe and Taos colonies. In contrast to *Mexicanos*, who were often ignored, if not outright denigrated as lazy, tawdry greasers, as reviews of Henri's 1914 portraits demonstrate, Pueblo Indians were celebrated for their racial purity and for their rich and highly distinctive culture. While the Indians were celebrated for their natural artisanship that spoke of pre-industrial, unalienated labor, Mexicans were often viewed only as wage earners, and associated with unpure, unauthentic labor, thus to view Mexican work was to question economic oppression and exploitation¹²⁷--a social critique that Henri and other artists generally desired to

¹²⁶On Santa Fe's Spanish and Mexican heritage, see Wilson, *Myth of Santa Fe*, 20-45, 48-52, 72-75, 146-68. For Anglo artists' depiction of *Mexicano* culture, see Julie Schimmel, "The Hispanic Southwest," in Eldredge, Schimmel, and Truettner, *Art in New Mexico*, 101-45.

¹²⁷Dilworth, *Imagining Indians*, 149; Rodriguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos," 77-99.

avoid. Only one of Henri's Mexican-American portraits references work: *Goat Herder* (1917; private collection, Minneapolis). Clearly, Henri's portraits do not reveal the contempt and pity for Mexican-Americans that was exhibited by some white Americans, yet they do demonstrate the greater deference and respect commonly accorded to local Pueblo cultures as mythical, mystical, primitive people.¹²⁸

Conclusion

As with most of his portraits of people of diverse races and nationalities, Henri's depictions of the immigrants and native Americans of California and New Mexico continued his exploration of the basic ideas of cultural primitivism and the nature of racial and national identity. Henri's La Jolla portraits of Chinese-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and African-Americans are primarily a study of the diverse physiognomies and temperaments of people of different races. On an aesthetic level, the range of skin colors of his sitters allowed him to experiment with color and the decorative possibilities of portraiture. On a symbolic level, his portraits record a search for the essential qualities of each race, embodied not only

¹²⁸Note that in reference to the *Mexicanos* Henri often used the term "peon", a term associated with unskilled laborers, farm workers, or menial workers, including those bound in servitude to landlord creditors. As such, they were hardly seen on an equal level with Indians or whites. He also called them "greasers" on at least one occasion; see Henri to Glackens, October 24, 1914. On the uneven treatment of New Mexico's *Mexicano* and native America populations, see Rodríguez, "Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos," 77-99.

in physical appearance but in less tangible traits of character and temperament. Moreover, in these portraits, and in the critical responses to them, Henri explored his ideas relating to racial essentialism, acculturation, and cultural homogeneity, and was moreover forced to deal with the racist stereotypes of many Americans in relation to less developed or darker skinned races.

While his La Jolla portraits seemed to be guided mainly by circumstance, in that his selection of models seemed to reflect opportunity more than choice, Henri's portraits of New Mexico's native Americans represent the embodiment, or perhaps more accurately, the culmination of his primitivist philosophy in relation to people of other cultures. In the Pueblo peoples Henri found embodied all of the essential qualities he admired in a traditional people—a rich spiritual life, an instinctual aesthetic sensibility, a collective society that favored the group over the individual, an authentic way of life close to the rhythms of nature and free from the artificiality of modern society, and a natural and distinct way of expressing history and racial tradition through a harmonious blending of daily life and artistic productions. He hoped to capture these qualities, and in general the “great *spirit* of the Southwest,” in each of his portraits of native American subjects, and to present them and their culture as models for the revivification of the larger American culture. While many of his portraits appear as realistic and detailed depictions of native American costume and physiognomy, they are primarily celebrations of the Indian way of life and therefore critiques of mainstream American culture.

Henri's utopian outlook was in many ways typical of the modernist era, and his interest in New Mexico in particular was matched and even exceeded by the many other bohemian modernist primitivists who flocked there to find an authentic life that was increasingly difficult for them to attain in American's urban centers. Henri's interest in Santa Fe and its local native populations was encouraged by Hewett, a tireless and astute promoter whose appreciation of native cultures was surpassed only by his abilities to capitalize on their mystical qualities and picturesqueness to further local development and tourism. In promoting native American art in his Museum of New Mexico, the School of American Research, and in the cultural and architectural development of the town of Santa Fe, Hewett hoped to create a unique destination for artists, scientists, and tourists who sought a more authentic life, centered around the artistic productions and spiritual performances of the local native American peoples. He encouraged artists to join the art colonies of Santa Fe and Taos and to portray the life of the Indians; these artists, he asserted in 1917, "are revealing to the world the beauty of the southwest [which is] subtle, mysterious, elemental. . . . We are particularly grateful that these artists appreciate our people. We know nothing . . . greater than the spirit of man striving to be in harmony with the forces about him."¹²⁹

¹²⁹"Art Exhibit Reveals Beauty of the Southwest (Address by Dr. Edgar L. Hewett at Opening of New Museum Art Galleries, November 24)," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, November 26, 1917, 4.

Yet Henri's vision of the Indian, like that of Hewett and others of the Santa Fe and Taos colonies, was predicated on a utopian view of primitive life, and his paintings were, as a result, "high art versions of souvenir snapshots of the exotic life in a romantic, faraway place," as Rushing has called them.¹³⁰ The Indian and his lifestyle and artistic productions were appropriated as symbols of American national identity, even as Pueblo people themselves were slowly being decimated and turned into relics of the past.

Henri's participation in the Santa Fe colony at this crucial juncture puts him in the vanguard of the wave of modernist primitives that are today associated with the development of Santa Fe and Taos, including John Sloan, who helped to promote the collection and display of Indian art in New York and the reclassification of native products as art, and most famously, Mabel Dodge Luhan and her cohorts, who were at the forefront of the development of New Mexico, and especially Taos, as the "land of enchantment." Yet all of these individuals were merely part of a longstanding American tradition of "playing Indian", as Philip Deloria has called it, by seeking in the idea of the Indian the individualism, freedom, naturalness, and liberty that they found missing in mainstream American culture.¹³¹

¹³⁰Rushing, *Native American Art and the New York Avant-Garde*, 61.

¹³¹Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

Conclusion

As William Innes Homer noted recently in “My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri,” a catalogue for an exhibition dedicated to a survey of Henri’s portraiture, various aspects of Henri’s life and career have been studied in depth—his New York career as leader of the Ashcan School; his teaching philosophy; his links to Walt Whitman, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and other nineteenth-century American thinkers; his involvement with The Eight exhibition; his theoretical connections with French naturalism and anarchism; his color theories—but his portraiture as a group has not been given the attention it deserves.¹ As this dissertation argues, none of these studies, including “My People,” conveys the complexity of Henri’s artistic philosophy in relation to his portrait production and choice of subject matter. The general view of Henri’s portraits still focuses predominantly on their uniqueness, individuality, and penetrating psychological insight; on the basic human qualities captured therein; and on the realism and authenticity of the portrayals. The most crucial aspects of Henri’s portraits—race, class, and nationality—have more or less been ignored. Admittedly the portraits are depictions of actual people, whose names are quite often known, yet as a group the portraits represent a collection of types, or people of different races, usually peasants, indigenous people, and other members of the

¹William Innes Homer, “Robert Henri as a Portrait Painter: An Introduction,” in Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Orlando, Florida: Orlando Museum of Art, 1994), 12.

underclass. On one level the group can be related to a display in an ethnological museum intended to reveal the diversity of mankind in the various permutations of skin color, physiognomy, expression, costume, and lifestyle. Yet the portraits are more than just records of the world's human diversity, but rather embodiments of larger concepts relating to Henri's and his era's views on race and nationality. As he reiterated numerous times, Henri was not out to capture the appearance of any particular individual, but to record the essential qualities of race they embodied. Henri's sitters were not merely "paintable types" from exotic cultures, as some scholars have viewed them, but individuals of certain races and nationalities who represented qualities that he admired and that he hoped would serve as an example for mainstream culture at large.

This study grouped Henri's portrait subjects according to their race or nationality—mainly Spanish, Irish, Dutch, and Pueblo Indian—in order to discuss early twentieth century concepts of nationality and national character. Yet national identity is only one thread that weaves throughout the entire dissertation; the broader context for Henri's portraiture is the shifting social hierarchies indicative of the modern era, particularly the interaction of white Americans with people of different races, classes, and cultures, and the inevitable clash of progress vs. tradition, change vs. stability. Thus, in addition to early twentieth century concepts of national identity, this dissertation discussed scientific racialism, ethnic tourism, and above all, cultural primitivism, as the social and historical frameworks by which we can better understand Henri's portraits.

At bottom, Henri's collection of diverse racial types reflects a major tendency of the modern era to view the world's people in terms of race. In an era of imperialism and expansionism, of nation building, and of unprecedented migrations—not only from country to country, but from traditional, stable, rural areas to rapidly expanding urban centers—Americans and Europeans alike were forced to confront the clash of different classes and cultures and thus to question their own individual and national identity. Racial differences were assumed not only to be readily perceptible but also ultimately unchanging, for Americans and Europeans commonly associated nationality with race, and assumed physical appearance, temperament, and character to be hereditary traits. People of different nations were believed not only to possess distinctly different religious and spiritual beliefs and societal customs, but a discernible outward appearance, psychological makeup, and world view. The essence of an entire nation or race (and they were basically seen as one and the same) was embodied then, in an individual's physiognomy, gestures, appearance, speech, and way of thinking, as well as in his or her customs and traditions.

Secondly, in selecting models for his portraits, Henri chose peasants, members of the working class, and primitives, not the upper classes or bourgeoisie. (Of course, he did execute numerous portraits of noteworthy, paying customers, but these were his potboilers, not his avocation.) As such, his portraits often directly or indirectly referenced cultural traditions as a primary signifier of the sitter's national or racial identity, as, for example, in his Spanish bullfighters and

flamenco dancers or in portraits of native Americans framed by handwoven patterned blankets. This representational practice reflects the widespread tendency of Henri and others of his era, including and especially leaders of nationalist movements, to locate national identity not only in the “folk” but more specifically in their arts, literature, and spiritual and societal traditions. In contrast, the bourgeoisie and upper classes were more educated, more homogenized, more Europeanized, and thus retained little sense of authentic national identity. Henri was interested in those subjects who he felt revealed natural creativity, embodied revered traditions, and signified a “pure” racial heritage, not those who aspired to conform to mainstream modern society.

Additionally, Henri’s portraits are souvenirs or reflections of his travels, and therefore, embodiments of his attitudes and experiences as a tourist. The role of tourism as a mediator in Henri’s views of his subjects is important in that during the modern era, and especially in the early twentieth century, tourism was increasingly associated with national identity, as situated in local folk traditions, customs, and character, and one of the primary means by which national identity was created, disseminated, and consumed. By means of the burgeoning tourist industry, which was often sponsored by government agencies, visitors from other countries (or geographic regions) could witness customs, traditions, and even personalities distinctly different from their own. In many cases, tourism promoted a sense of authenticity by presenting landscape, people, and traditions supposedly untainted by modern industrial society; in fact, it merely served to concretize

certain fictions which accommodated tourists' preconceived notions about national history and identity. Henri's portraits, then, embodied not only national identity, but a national identity mediated in large part through tourism.

Lastly, Henri's portraits of other national identities reflected the ongoing debates in the United States relating to the necessity for and the specific makeup of a unique American identity. For Americans, the ever-present need to define national identity stems from a need to distinguish America as distinct from its European roots; a strong sense that America's growing economic and military power must be paralleled by cultural successes; and the diversity of the country which challenges concepts of homogeneity and a unified sense American identity. While many European nations were acknowledged to possess rich and long-standing national traditions, as embodied primarily in their arts and literature, Americans felt that they, as newcomers to the world stage, could not compete culturally with other developed nations. In this sense, Henri's reflections on national identity can be read as ruminations on the essence of national identity and its integral components: How is national identity defined? How is America different than other countries? What aspects of other nations should America emulate? Who is an American? How can people with distinctly different appearances, temperaments, spiritual beliefs, and customs be assimilated into a unified American culture or, conversely, how can America be unique if it the result of the "melting pot" is a highly conformist and homogenized society?

In this context, further study of Henri's patrons, both during Henri's lifetime as well as today, would be instructive. Henri's Irish portraits, for example, may have held significant appeal to Irish-American patrons and critics who, despite their own successes in the United States, still longed for their Irish past. The native American and *Mexicano* subjects, however, seem to have been less attractive to patrons; apparently, few people wanted portraits of Indians or Mexicans in their homes, for they may have represented a declining and degenerate people, a social problem that Americans would rather hide away unseen on isolated reservations or undesirable land. Were the European subjects more popular because more familiar to a Eurocentric American population? Were Spanish, Irish, and Dutch subjects more picturesque because more geographically distant, less politicized, less threatening, and carried less social baggage?

Perhaps the most fascinating and successful aspect of Henri's portraits is their multivalence, their balance of realism and metaphor, and their open-endedness, which even today allows viewers of many different stripes to supply their own interpretations. Where some see facile stereotypes, others see insightful views into the human psyche; where some see historical specificity in the sitters' costumes or identities, others see shared human traits. While Henri, it seems, had quite specific ideas on what he hoped to convey in his portraits, he refused to supply narrative details that would more accurately convey his ideas to viewers. The goal here has not been to search for any authoritative reading of Henri's

portraits, but to situate them within their social and historical context, teasing out the various meanings for Henri and his contemporaries.

Above all, Henri's portraits are records of his search for authenticity, for a more natural, spontaneous, and instinctual life that would counter the alienating effects of capitalistic, industrialized modern life. His sitters were those that represented the past, specifically ages-old traditions and racial traits that were threatened by encroaching modernism. In Holland, Spain, Ireland, and the United States, Henri and other cultural nationalists' identification with "the folk," with traditional rural life and peasant customs, spoke to their nostalgia for a simpler life, for a preindustrial past with clearly identified and stable community, familial, and religious associations and traditions. Not surprisingly, Henri's search was predicated on his membership in a thriving, if alienated, educated middle class, and, as such, his search for authenticity in the lower classes constituted a bohemian backlash against an economically stratified American society. Clearly, he was a class above many of the individuals he most identified with in his portraits. Like many second and third generation immigrants, who seek their identity in their ethnic past to counter increasing alienation in mainstream society, so Henri sought a more authentic, pre-industrial lifestyle to counteract what he perceived to be the negative impact of progress and modernity on his own life and on American culture in general, even as he himself enjoyed the fruits of that progress. As the old commonplace about immigration goes, the grandson tries to remember what the son tried to forget: but only because the grandson is securely ensconced in the

dominant class can he afford the luxury of exploring his past and reacquiring a largely forgotten ethnic or pre-modern identity through academic discourse, national holidays, or in Henri's case, art and tourism.

Fundamentally, the appropriation of the past and other cultures in Henri's portraits speaks to the complicated nature of modernism and of the modern era's attempts to deal with a rapidly changing society that challenged long-held views on race, national identity, tradition, societal organization, and the place of art in daily life. How are races and nations distinct? How are they similar? What is national identity? What values and traditions can be jettisoned in favor of progress? What traditions must be saved? These questions are still pertinent, indeed, crucial today, a historical era which, even more than a century ago, is increasingly dominated by globalism and capitalism, which seeks to erase national boundaries in the name of market forces while also nominally preserving and commodifying difference.

National and ethnic stereotypes prevail even today, and are often appropriated for the sake of tourism and economic development. For example, Santa Fe and Taos still depend to a large extent on native American performances and crafts items to attract tourists, though many performances and items for sale reflect tourists' tastes more than native styles; much of Ireland's national tourist industry is based on stereotypes of the pristine western landscape and a traditional rural life untainted by modern pressures. Despite the efforts of many reformists a century ago as well as economic advancement since the fall of Franco, Spain is still

seen by many as the old Spain, a dusty land of gypsies and bullfighters, old castles and cathedrals, vineyards and olive groves, not new, modern Spain; the Netherlands still relies on tulips, wooden shoes, windmills, cows, and images by Rembrandt and Vermeer as selling points for tourists. In the “cannibal culture” of the United States, difference has been commodified, “playing Indian” is routine, we are accustomed to seeing “primitive art in civilized places,” and ethnic tourism is widespread. Handmade artistic productions by indigenous or folk peoples of the third and “fourth” world are still popularly viewed as “mystical” and more authentic than mass-produced items.² While Henri’s paintings were produced almost a century ago, they participate still in an ongoing dialogue with the major social and cultural trends that define life in a global society.

²Studies which trace this trend into the post-modern era include Nelson H. H. Graburn, ed., *Ethnic and Tourist Arts: Cultural Expressions from the Fourth World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976); Deborah Root, *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference* (New York: Westview Press, 1996); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Sally Price, *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988); Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).



1.1 Robert Henri, *Tesuque Papoose*, 1916, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Eiteljorg Museum of American Indian and Western Art,
Indianapolis



1.2 Robert Henri, *Himself*, 1913, oil on canvas, 32 x 26", Art Institute of Chicago



1.3 “Unrestricted Immigration and Its Results—A Possible Curiosity of the Twentieth Century, The Last Yankee”, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*, 1896, illustrated in Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*, between pp. 199-201.



2.1 Robert Henri, *Girl with Fan*, 1910, oil on canvas, 72 x 49", Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia



2.2 Robert Henri, *La Reina Mora*, 1906, oil on canvas, 78 x 42", Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine



2.3 John Singer Sargent, *La Carmencita*, 1890, oil on canvas, 90 x 54 1/2", Musée d'Orsay, Paris



2.4 Robert Henri, *Spanish Dancer*, 1904,
oil on canvas, 85 x 49",
private collection



2.5 Robert Henri, *El Tango*, 1908, oil on canvas, 77 x 37", San Antonio Museum of Art



2.6 Robert Henri, *La Madrileña*, 1910,
oil on canvas, 73 x 37", Terry
and Margaret Stent



2.7 Francis Luis Mora, *Art Students League Ball (Spanish Motif)*, 1910, oil on canvas, 47 ½ x 59", Hollis-Taggart Galleries, New York



2.8 Robert Henri, *El Matador Felix Asiego*, 1906, oil on canvas, 77 x 36", Estate of Robert Henri



2.9 Robert Henri, *Antonio*
Baños-Picador, 1908,
oil on canvas, 87 x 37",
Frye Art Museum,
Seattle



2.10 Ignacio Zuloaga, *The Toreadors*, 1906, oil on canvas, 197 x 154 cm, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid



2.11 Joaquín Sorolla y Bastida, *Segovian Peasant Girls*, 1910, oil on canvas, 251.6 x 207.5 cm, Hispanic Society of America, New York



2.12 Robert Henri, *Celestina*, 1908, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian
Museum, Washington, D.C.



2.13 Robert Henri, *Blind Spanish Singer*, 1912, oil on canvas, 42 x 33", Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



2.14 Robert Henri, *Spanish Girl of Madrid (Una Chula)*, 1908, oil on canvas, 60 x 40", Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond



2.15 Robert Henri. *Spanish Girl of Segovia*, 1912, oil on canvas, 40 x 33". New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut



2.16 Robert Henri, *Gypsy with Guitar*, 1906, oil on canvas, 78 x 37 3/4", Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk, Virginia



2.17 Robert Henri, *Maria y Consuelo*, 1906, oil on canvas, 78 x 38", Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery and Sculpture Garden, University of Nebraska-Lincoln



2.18 Robert Henri, *Wild Spanish Gypsy*, 1912, oil on canvas, 40 ½ x 32 ½", Frye Art Museum, Seattle



3.1 Robert Henri, *Laughing Child*, 1907, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York



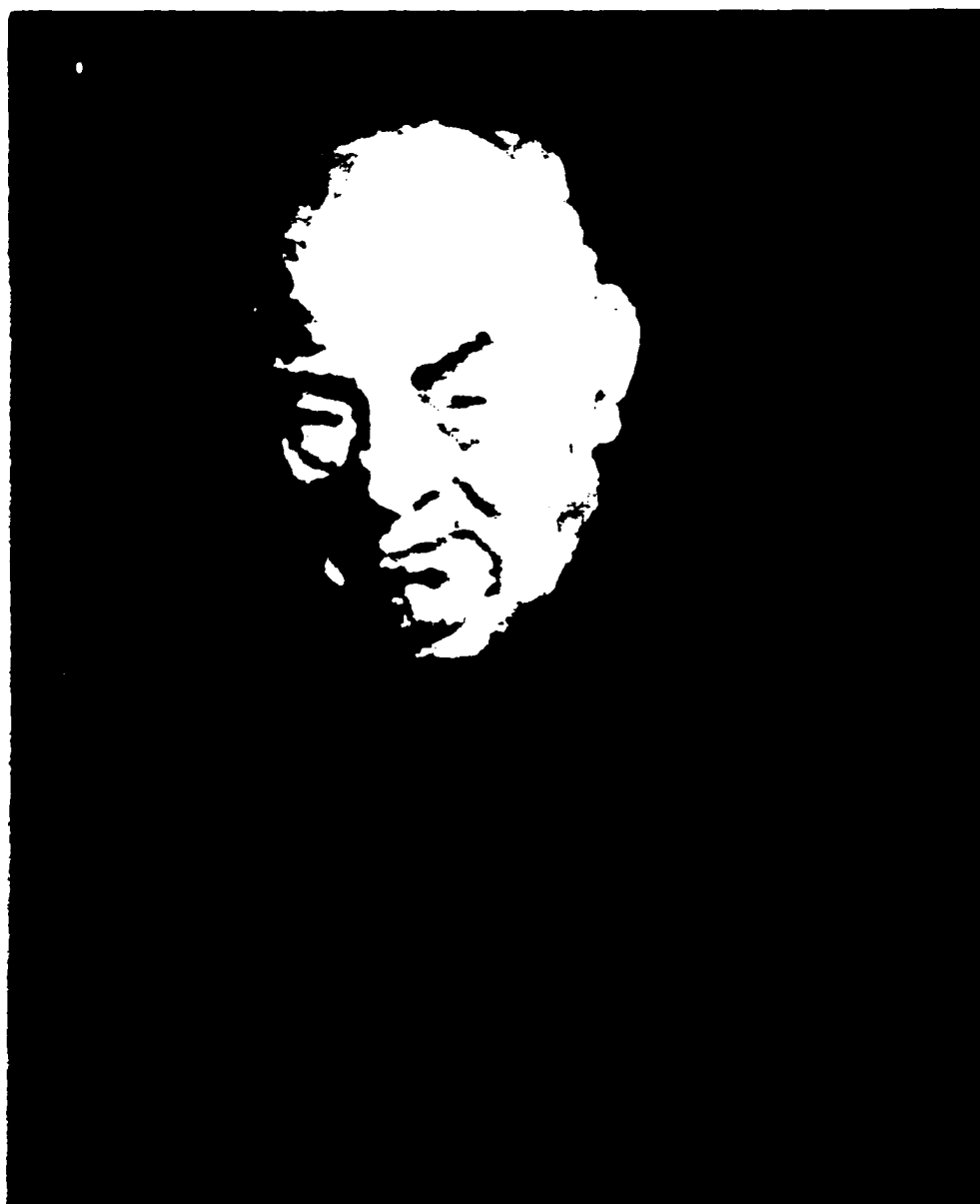
3.2 Robert Henri, *Dutch Joe*, 1910, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Milwaukee Museum of Art



3.3 Robert Henri, *The Stoker*, 1910, oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, New York



3.4 Robert Henri, *Dutch Fisherman*, 1907, oil on canvas. 24 x 20",
Westmoreland Museum of Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania



3.5 Robert Henri, *The Rum*. 1910, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Milwaukee Art Museum



3.6 Frans Hals, *Laughing Boy*, 1620/25, oil on circular panel, 11 5/8",
Royal Cabinet of Paintings, Mauritshaus, The Hague



3.7 Frans Hals, *The Merry Drinker*, c. 1628-30, 81 x 66.5 cm, oil on canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



3.8 Robert Henri, *Dutch Match Woman*, 1910, oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Sotheby's, May 22, 1996, lot 48



3.9 Robert Henri, *Volendam Street Scene*, 1907, oil on canvas, 20 x 24",
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



3.10 Robert Henri, *Dutch Soldier*, 1907, oil on canvas, 32 5/8 x 26 1/8", Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, New York



3.11 Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1624, oil on canvas, 34 x 27", Wallace Collection, London



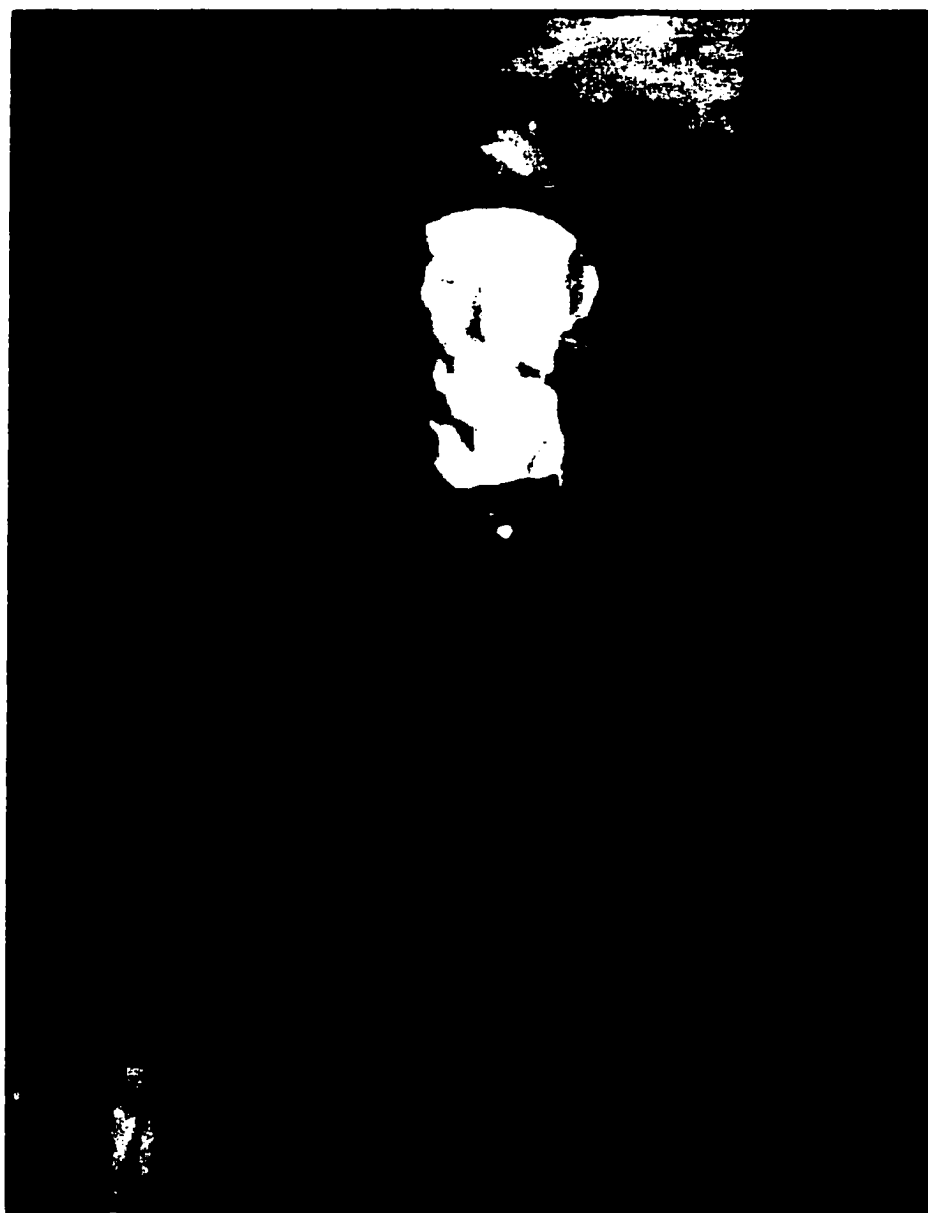
3.12 Robert Henri, *The Blue-Eyed Man*, 1910, oil on canvas, private collection



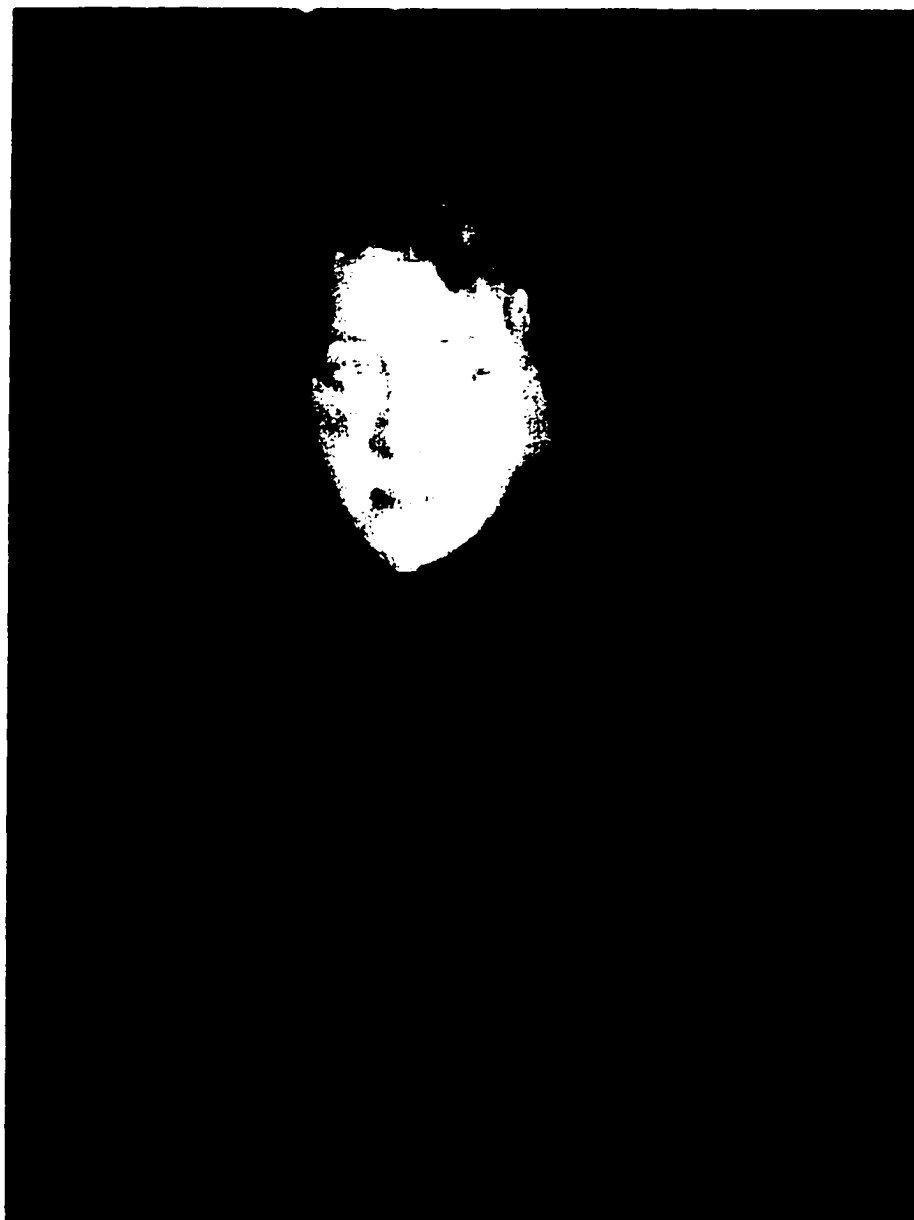
3.13 Gari Melchers, *The Communicant*, c. 1900, oil on canvas, 63 1/4 x 43", Detroit Institute of Arts



4.1 Robert Henri, *Herself*, 1913, oil on canvas, 32 x 26", Art Institute of Chicago



4.2 Robert Henri, *My Friend Brien*, 1913, oil on canvas, 41 x 33". Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina



4.3 Robert Henri, *Irish Girl*, 1913, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston



4.4 Robert Henri, *Catherine*, 1913. oil on canvas. 24 x 20", National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.



4.5 Robert Henri. *Irish Girl (Mary Lavelle)*, 1913. oil on panel, 16 x 12". Estate of Robert Henri



4.6 Robert Henri, *Nora*, 1913, oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Owen Galleries, New York



4.7 Robert Henri. *Irish Lad*, 1913. oil on panel. 32 x 26", private collection



4.8 Paul Henry, *The Potato Diggers*, 1912, oil on canvas, 20 x 18",
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin



5.1 Robert Henri, *Viv in Blue Stripe*, 1914, oil on canvas, 32 x 26",
Estate of Robert Henri



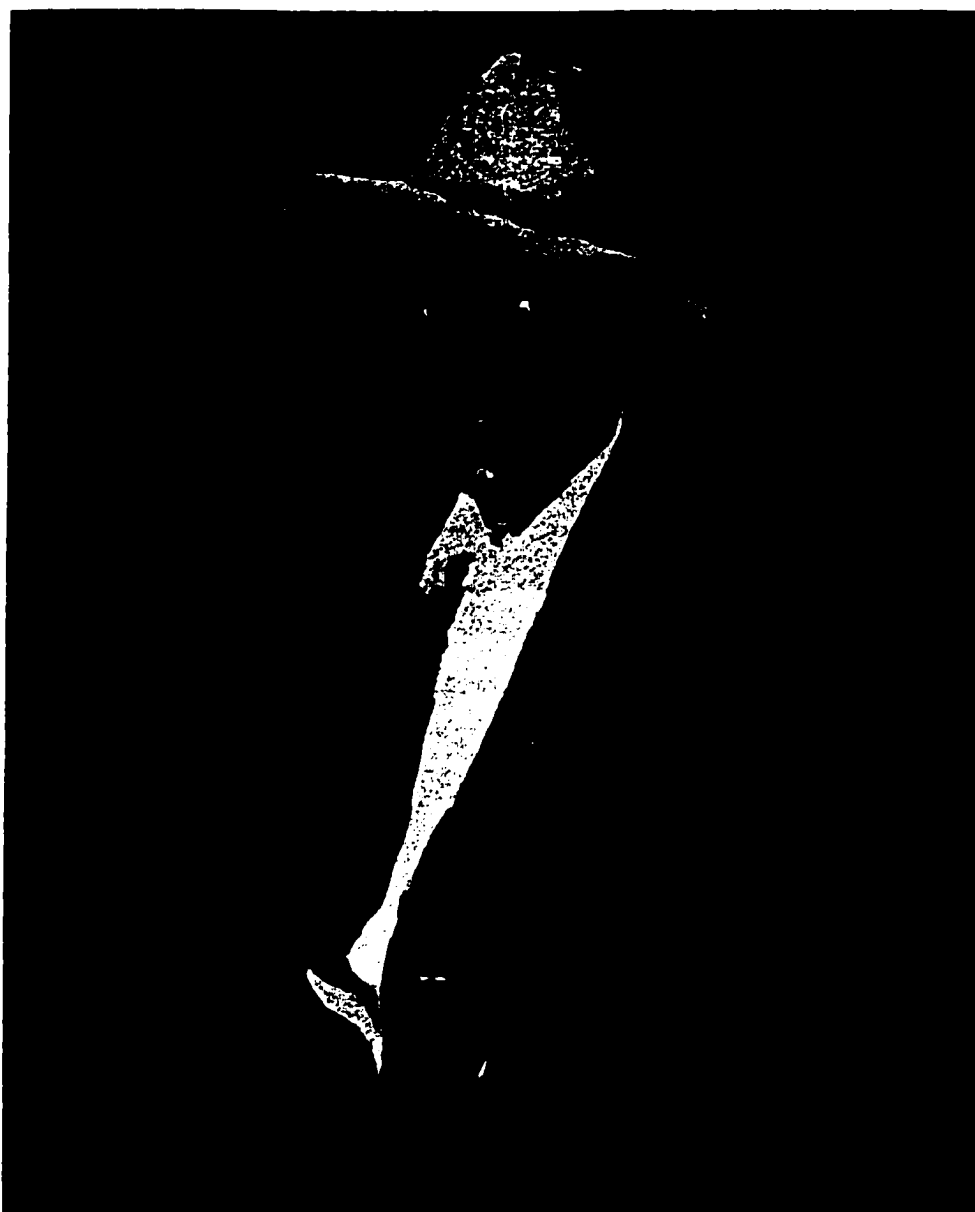
5.2 Robert Henri, *Jim Lee, The Vegetable Man*, 1914, oil on canvas, 24 x 20", Collection of Betty Cavanna Harrison



5.3 Robert Henri, *Chinese Lady*, 1914, oil on canvas, 40 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 20 $\frac{1}{2}$ ", Milwaukee Art Museum



5.4 Robert Henri, *Chinese Girl with Fan*, 1914, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Owen Gallery, New York



5.5 Robert Henri, *Ramon*, 1914, oil on canvas, unlocated, illustrated in Robert Henri, "My People," *Craftsman* 27 (February 1915): 465.

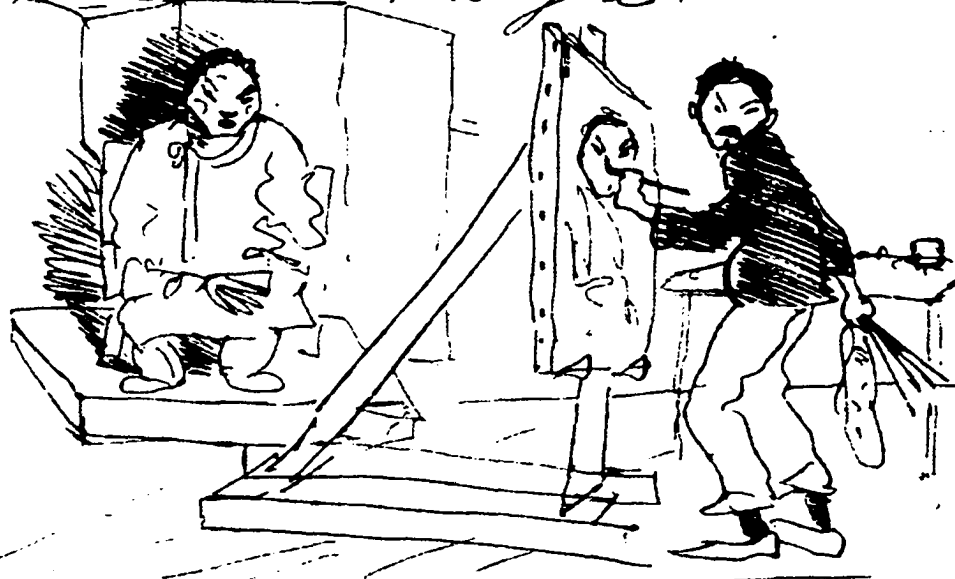


5.6 Robert Henri, *Sylvester Smiling*, 1914, oil on canvas, 24 x 20",
Rita and Daniel Fraad



5.7 Robert Henri, *Sylvester*, 1914, location unknown, illustrated in Bruce Weber, *Ashcan Kids: Children in the Art of Henri, Luks, Glackens, Bellows, and Sloan* (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1998), 10.

10 Gramercy Park
 Oct 24 1914
 Dear Glack. Mightly sorry
 to hear that you have
 been sick and want you
 well and back with us as
 soon as possible. I have
 brought home a tribe of in-
 dians a tribe of chinks and
 a tribe of quakers and I want
 to show them to you.



I found the chinks mightly interes-
 ting looking people and had
 a good time rambling them. The

- 5.8 Robert Henri, untitled sketch of Henri painting Chinese Lady, in
 Henri's letter to William Glackens, October 24, 1914,
 Robert Henri Papers, 1885-1929, Yale Collection of
 American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and
 Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven



59 Robert Henri, *Tom Po Qui, Water of Antelope Lake (Romancita)*, 1914. oil on canvas, 41 x 33", Harmsen Museum of Art, Denver



5.10 Robert Henri, *Po Tsi, Water Eagle*, 1914, oil on canvas, 41 ½ x 32", Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe



5.11 Robert Henri, *Indian, Ricardo*, 1916, oil on canvas, 28 5/8 x 24 5/8", University of New Mexico Art Museum, Albuquerque



5.12 Robert Henri. *Indian Girl*, 1916. oil on canvas. 24 x 20", Terry and Margaret Stent



5.13 Robert Henri, *Julianita, Indian Girl Ready for the Dance*, 1917, oil on canvas, 32 x 26", Betsy Bennett, Santa Fe



5.14 Robert Henri, *Gregorita with the Santa Clara Bowl*, 1916, oil on canvas, 32 x 26", Edwin Ulrich Museum of Art, Wichita State University



5.15 Bert Geer Phillips, *The Mysterious Olla*, c. 1917, oil on canvas, 25 x 29",
Archison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company, Topeka, Kansas



Robert Henri, *Young Buck of Tesuque Pueblo*, 1916, oil on canvas, 20 x 24", Sotheby's, New York, May 27, 1999, lot 36



5.17 Robert Henri, *Dieguito, Drummer of the Eagle Dance, San Ildefonso*, 1916, oil on canvas, 65 x 40", Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe



5.18 Eanger Irving Couse, *Elk-Foot of the Taos Tribe*, c. 1909, oil on canvas, 78 1/4 x 36 3/8", Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.



5.19 Robert Henri, *Little Indian School Boy*, 1917, oil on canvas, 26 x 22", private collection, Albany, New York



5.20 Robert Henri, *Mexican Girl, Maria*, 1916, oil on canvas, 24 x 20", private collection

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